

**Destabilizing Machismo:
Masculine and Feminine Constructions in the Theatre of Susana Torres Molina**

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis explores the construction of masculinity in Argentina, as represented in two plays by Susana Torres Molina, ...Y a otra cosa mariposa (1981) and Una noche cualquiera (1999). In these two plays, the construction of sexual difference is portrayed as occurring within a masculine point of view, wherein it is explicit that men have the power to define, from a self-referential standpoint, their masculine identity, through contrast with a construction of the female. Rather than consider masculine and feminine as two parts of the same whole, gender, Torres Molina's works represent *machismo* as a two-part system, with masculine and female as distinct wholes, fundamentally different. The self-referentiality of *machismo* rejects the participation of women, subordinating and reducing them to the level of the *object* of conversation, characterized by biological essentialisms, instead of a constructed, subjective identity.

In the theatre, every correspondence between things of the earth and the sky, and between gods and men, is focused like a burning glass in the relations between individuals before us here and now on the stage. In the relationships between children and parents, for example, is compressed the symbolic power of relationships between servants and kings, or between persons and gods. Any disturbance in these relationships shakes the society at its foundations. -Bruce Wilshire, *Role Playing and Identity*.

Theatre... is deeply implicated in the construction of gender and nation-ness. Social hierarchies, gender roles, and national values become visible (and are challenged) not only in the content of the plays or in the racial and sexual makeup of the cast and audience, but also in the spatial layout of the theatrical event. -Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*.

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Introduction

The present study has as its main purpose the construction and utilization of a multidisciplinary gender framework to discuss the construction of masculinity in Argentina, as demonstrated in two plays by Susana Torres Molina, ...Y a otra cosa mariposa (1981) and Una noche cualquiera (1999). In these two plays, the construction of sexual difference is portrayed as occurring within a masculine point of view, wherein it is explicit that men have the power to define, from a self-referential standpoint, their masculine identity, through contrast with a construction of the female. That self-referentiality rejects the participation of women, subordinating and reducing them to the level of the *object* of conversation. Masculinity is a discursive act, and *machismo* as a particular masculine construction, one of the central tenets of which is the rejection of female subjectivity. Rather than consider masculine and feminine as two parts of the same whole, gender, Torres Molina's works represent *machismo* as a two-part system, with masculine and female as distinct wholes, fundamentally different.

Gender constructions are the basis of social organization, and therefore, related to the reproduction of society. In order to understand the importance of gender constructions to society, it is essential to consider gender as a primary analytical concept, as the point at which, through social construction, society at large (the public sphere) invades interpersonal relationships (the private sphere). For the purposes of this study, I follow Joan Scott's concept of gender as a field in which socially constructed ideas, power relationships, and political negotiations are put into motion. In other words, what I propose to do is to bring the discussion of women and men's relationships into a broader

framework that understands them as gendered social constructions. Gender as a key analytical concept makes it possible to understand the construction of subjective identities, as well as the construction of objectivities (understandings of the other).

Specifically, Joan Scott's definition of gender is as follows: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1067). Later, she breaks the first part of her definition into four interrelated elements basing gender on:

culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations [...] normative concepts that set forth interpretation of the meaning of the symbols that attempt to limit and contain their metaphoric possibilities [... inscription within a context of] politics as well as [...] social institutions and organization [... and finally,] subjective identity.

(1067)

This system of gender as differentiation is well demonstrated in Torres Molina's play ...Y a otra cosa mariposa, wherein the four elements of the construction of perceived difference between the sexes can be observed in their operation on the characters of the play. Since the play has only four characters, and they are all male, the spectator receives a one-sided representation of Argentine gender constructions. Furthermore, since all the action occurs entirely among the same four characters and focuses on their perceptions of women, the audience gain extensive insight into masculine subjective identity construction (*machismo*) and the way in which the four characters impose the first three elements of gender differentiation (cultural symbols, normative concepts, and social institutions) on the female personages of the play (the objects of *machista* discourse).

Because the play does not range beyond these four characters' relationship, we gain almost no insight into the way culture imposes gender on men, nor into feminine subjectivity, a possibility that is rejected by the characters in any case, as their construction of women never gets beyond biological essentialist constructions; hence the expression I use to delineate the gender dichotomy in the play, "masculine-*female* constructions."

The second half of Scott's definition of gender as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power," is well exemplified in the other Torres Molina play Una noche cualquiera. This play demonstrates the operation of gender as an articulation of power in two ways: in terms of the power relationship between men and women (in both society at large and interpersonal relationships) and in terms of the use of gendering discourses to empower/disempower in the interest of specific political goals. In the former instance, the relationship of power between men and women is set forth in a sort of *sexual contract*. This contract is a variation on the idea of social contract as an unwritten, unspoken (and in this case, unequal) agreement between women and men, through which men gain access to and control of women's bodies, their *property in person*, which women exchange for protection and subsistence.

The use of gendering discourses to create power differentials is accomplished in the play primarily through the use of culturally available gender symbols such as homosexuality and female sexual impropriety (whores). That is, during their programmed torture of the other four characters, Sandro and Musetti, the two main characters, reduce the masculinity of their male victims by calling into question their sexuality and place the women in a position requiring absolution by calling into question their sexual propriety.

All four torture subjects are pushed (through various gendered tactics) to the point of begging forgiveness for their crimes against Argentine society, and thereby re-inscribed in appropriate gender performances.

One goal of my thesis is to contribute to the discussion of gender as a primary analytical concept for understanding fundamental aspects of social life, a concern that is no longer exclusive to feminists, cultural historians or literary scholars. However, as Scott observes, gender, as a primary level of study, was absent from the major bodies of social theory until the late twentieth century, and, despite a good reception in the humanities, it does not constitute a coherent or comprehensive body of theory. Although there is no agreement about what gender is or how it works through individual practices, scholars agree that the dualistic and hierarchical oppositions of public/private, society/individual, and production/reproduction that order social life are deeply related to the opposition of men and women, which, as Hélène Cixous points out, are sustained by gender discourses that portray sex differences as natural.

Researchers, however, have understood the problem of gender in very distinct ways. To be exact, during the 1960s and 1970s the general trend in gender studies in Latin America was that of framing the ‘problem of gender to one of women, and the problem of women to one of class.’¹ That is, class was the main analytical category and research on women presented women’s subordination as a product of capitalist society, rather than of gender constructions. Many of these efforts were put together in three main collections of essays: Female and Male in Latin America (Ann Pescatello, ed., 1973), Sex

¹ Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery, (New York: Verso, 1996) 10.

and Class in Latin America (June Nash and Helen Icken Safa, ed., 1980) and Women and Change in Latin America (June Nash and Helen Icken Safa, ed., 1986).

Although these works succeed in showing the connections between class, *women*, and ethnicity, mainly in the workplace, June Nash, co-editor of and contributing author to the third collection, points out that a decade of research was not enough to develop a research agenda focused on the interplay of cultural factors and the material conditions of existence particular to the capitalist accumulation system.² Recently, the proliferation of empirical studies on gender imagery has succeeded in understanding gender representations as a system of maintaining inequality, in conjunction with social class. My contribution to this body of theory is to analyze how sexual difference works as a system of inequality between men and women, regardless of class.³ Furthermore, my investigation into gender operations reveals that it can be used to create inequality among men, in the sense that gender is not only a system of differentiation between the sexes, but also constitutes a system of gradation within each sex (specifically in terms of degrees of masculinity, as evidenced in both plays). This use of gender to create hierarchies of empowerment is particularly involved in the military government's program of gendering Argentine society during the late 1970s and early 80s, which I discuss, elucidating the ways in which the military justified their domination of society by constructing themselves as the epitome of masculinity. Finally, these two specific plays offer, in my opinion, an original framing of *machismo*. Namely, they portray *machismo* as a socially inscribed, discursive act that, in essence, involves little more than

² June Nash, Helen Icken Safa et al. Women and Change in Latin America. (Boston: J.F. Bergin Publishers 1985) 14. I call the reader's attention to the use of *women* in this work as an ontological category, which serves to paint the problem of gender as a female problem, rather than a system that affects both men and women.

talking about women. The interpretations of womanhood that *machismo* arrives at involve little or no reference to femininity itself and are constructed from without. In this sense, the plays' project of *talking about* masculine subjective identity is a way to effectively destabilize *machismo*'s discursive hegemony.

Susana Torres Molina's Play Writing: Contesting the Constructed Nature of Experience

Much of my work in this thesis originates with the texts as such. That is, while the plays come from a very specific ideological and political motivation, that genesis affects an interpretation of them only in certain ways. For the most part, my study simply takes Susana Torres Molina's plays as cultural texts, meaning that it is of utmost importance to recognize from the beginning that they are embedded in a cultural, historical, and geographical context, which should shape any reading of those plays. The analysis here takes the almost tautological form of understanding the plays from a culturally informed viewpoint and in turn exploring what aspects of the plays' contexts are brought to life as the plays unfold. Although I do not focus on the forces involved in the creation of these plays, accepting them "as are" for the bulk of my work, some discussion of Torres Molina's life and the historical events that helped to shape her point of view bears inclusion here.

The issue that needs to be addressed at this point relates to the relevance of Torres Molina as a play writer to her play writing as production of cultural texts. What matters to the present discussion is neither Susana Torres Molina, the individual, nor her writing

³ This does not mean that social class is not a factor, but my analysis will focus on *machismo* as a

to provide some sort of “historical and cultural evidence.” Rather, I am interested specifically in *her experience*, as Scott uses the term, in two ways. First, Torres Molina’s experience shaped, in some way, her attempt to make heard *machismo*, which had been allowed to hide in the domain of “sanctioned public silence” (Scott “The Evidence of Experience,” 780). Second, I am interested in seeking to understand her experience as a *subject* positioned in some specific, local history, with a particular identity, and within the boundaries of a language. In other words, it is not my main purpose to document the experience of Susana Torres Molina in order to confirm some cultural “reality” by relating a historical pattern to the text as evidence, but rather to offer an understanding of her experience – how she came to have that perspective and how that perspective makes sense culturally.

Torres Molina’s increasing interest in “bringing [*machismo*] to light, making it more visible,” and questioning why it had been taken for granted is closely related with a desire to understand women and men’s relationships and her flight to Madrid between 1978 and 1980 (Interview, 90). During the time when Torres Molina was beginning to write, Argentina was reaching one of the most remarkable turning points in its political history, a military process of “social and political reorganization” that consisted of the mass murder of citizens, which was known as the “Dirty War.” In reaction to this tumultuous time in Argentine society, Torres Molina found her desire to write about certain topics incompatible with the system of terror that the military regime imposed. Specifically, she was interested in relating *machismo* to certain aspects of Argentine social organization, connecting it to interpersonal relationships and to the paternalistic

mechanism of power articulation/legitimation between woman and men and between the state and citizens.

structure of the military government. Her interest in writing about these connections was encouraged in Madrid, where she no longer had to fear losing her life.

The spectacles of terror staged by the military regime in Argentina had made it impossible, according to the author, to put her energies into anything more than surviving. The fact that she belonged to the “círculos más peligrosos” (the most dangerous social circles – artists, among others), resulted “in closing off various aspects of life such as art, creativity, sexuality, pleasure, feeling of happiness” (Interview, 115). That closing off is related with what Diana Taylor observes about the way that the military government made Argentines show their “adherence...not only by behaving in an orderly, obedient manner but by looking a certain way” (both of which were organized around a well-constructed masculinist gender system) (107). In other words, Argentines not only underwent changes in their bodily presentations, they also learned to close off several aspects of their lives and to be alert for their own and other people’s bodily signs or codes. Thus, going into exile was, for Torres Molina, to stop worrying for her life and to live in a country such as Spain at that time was to take advantage of what she describes as the society’s *destape* (taking off of the cover). This flourishing of themes such as eroticism resulted in an environment that was favorable and stimulating to writing her collection of erotic short stories Dueña y señora (1981), which came exactly as a response to her regained contact with the love of life and no longer feeling the looming threat of death or the constrictions of the military regime.

Written in Spain during 1981, ...Y a otra cosa mariposa (1991), which shares many of the themes present in her first play Extraño Juguete (1977), was first published and performed in Argentina for a few months in 1982, but then stopped, not because of

military censorship but mainly because of the buildup to the Falklands/Malvinas War with Great Britain. As Taylor observes:

There was not an obvious break down between “the pre-*proceso* and *proceso* cultures: plays were staged, television programs ran their usual hours, newspapers announced the same number of films [...] But the content changed radically as more as artists were gagged.”(11)

Indeed, the general atmosphere of War portrayed by the Argentine mass media as the masculine enterprise par excellence of the military government was unfavorable to any questioning of masculinity that at the end, would result in questioning the “fetishized male virility” around which they constructed the regenerating/regendering program of the Argentine society (Taylor, 62).

Although the military government fell in 1983, its effects are felt even today. The government of President Menem (1989-1999) effectively robbed the Argentine population of its coming-to-terms by pardoning some of the primary actors of the military government, who had been imprisoned following the fall of that government. Thus, Torres Molina’s writing of Una noche cualquiera in 1999 can be seen as a direct reaction to the widely held sentiments of betrayal and impotence after the release of the prisoners. Her goal was twofold: to voice the feelings of injustice at Menem’s decision and to demonstrate that the people’s business of reclaiming Argentine society was unfinished. The play shows characters that had been directly involved in the military regime still holding influence in Argentina as members of the *clase poderosa*, the “power-holding” class, a phenomenon evident throughout Argentina in the 1990s.

During my interview with her, Susana Torres Molina expressed that, although there were certain themes on which she wanted to work, the connections between social characteristics that appear in her work are not necessarily intentional. Rather, since her writing is culturally embedded, parallels and significances that become apparent in an analysis of her work are simply to be found in society itself. ...Y a otra cosa mariposa was intended to focus on *machismo* as a cultural phenomenon, and not specifically as an articulation of power in Argentine society, even though this analytical link can be drawn. Una noche cualquiera, written two decades later, was not about *machismo*, although that gender system is readily apparent. That these thematic connections appear in both works is telling of the enduring link between gender and power in Argentina, as well as of the fundamental connection between literature and culture. Exploring these connections forms an essential aspect of my thesis.

To that end, in Part I I employ Torres Molina's ...Y a otra cosa mariposa in order to examine a particular construction of sexual difference, *machismo*, as a system of differentiation between women and men. Specifically, I refer to a self-referential masculine gender system that uses culturally available symbols and norms to represent women as different *from* men. In Part II, I use Una noche cualquiera, seeking to show sexual difference as a specific articulation / legitimation of the power relationships between women and men as well as between the state and the citizenry in Argentina. In brief, both plays highlight the main argument that gender, as Scott points out, is a primary signifier of power relationships, and because of the operation of those discourses of difference, individuals and groups of individuals find themselves variously empowered or

disempowered, and manipulate these culturally available symbols to maintain or improve their social position.

The successful completion of this thesis would be not possible with the help and support of several people and institutions that enriched my work in several ways. I thank Virginia Tech for the funding that helped me take a trip to Argentina and let me interview Susana Torres Molina. The interview is included as an appendix and it is in Spanish because I plan to publish it in the *Latin American Theater Review* (a bilingual journal). I also wish to thank the people of the Interlibrary Loan for providing an excellent service (before the budget cuts). I send thanks to Susana Torres Molina for her time and because our discussions taught me about putting the plays in a more culturally embedded context. I would not have survived this process without the Tuesday meetings and encouragement (prodding) I had with Jackie Bixler, my thesis chair. I thank my husband Hugo for encouraging me to start together this enterprise of studying in the U. S. and making me keep trying despite all the obstacles. Thanks also go to my friends in the Area Studies Program; in particular I am deeply indebted to Daniel Russell, who has always been patiently ready to read, discuss, proofread, and argue with me about my study.

Part I. Gender as Perceived Sexual Difference

My goal in the present study is to develop the argument that gender is a way to signify and create the existence of perceived sexual differences, which serves in the end as a source of legitimization of the power differences between women and men. In this part of the thesis, I focus on gender as construction of sexual differences and leave for the second part the topic of sexual differences as a specific articulation of power relationships. Inspired by Joan Scott's essay, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," I organize my argument around the first part of her definition of gender as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes" (1067). Scott further points out that the constitution of social relationships, based on perceived differences between the sexes, in turn involves four intertwined elements: symbolic representations, normative concepts, institutions and subjective identity. With respect to these four components, I focus mainly on several symbolic representations highlighted in the play *...Y a otra cosa mariposa* (the frigid or easy woman, the psychologically unstable spinster, and the female-cousin incest taboo/fantasy) and some of the normative concepts (medico-scientific, religious, educational discourses) that the characters use to comprehend those symbols (the idle woman, the crazy hysteric, and the incestuous woman). First, I conduct a brief discussion of the cross-dressing called for by the script and consider the theoretical implications of having on-stage actresses dressed (and dressing) up as men. I argue that cross-dressing problematizes the differences between women and men precisely by exaggerating the oppositional character of that construction and thereby jarring the spectator's gender binary. Second, I propose the

possibility of a feminine writing, even though that possibility depends on a (feminine-masculine) distinction that this thesis is directly calling into question. Finally, I analyze several symbols and interpretations of the Argentine masculine construction of femaleness. Connections with social construction and gender theories of Michel Foucault and Hélène Cixous inform my analysis of ...Y a otra cosa mariposa and the significance of the gendered portrayals within. Finally, I arrive at the conclusion that the play represents masculinity as a process of subjectivity construction that operates without real reference to femininity, and furthermore, that masculine discourses construct femininity as an ontological form of *female-ness*, biologically determined and static in its imperfection.

1. 1. Cross-Dressing and Feminine Writing

Since writing, acting, etc., were unproblematic ideas until some time ago, there was no need to attach any adjective such as “feminine,” “female,” or “woman” to these activities because it was widely accepted that the production of knowledge was independent of any cultural or social marker such as gender, class or ethnicity; that is, that ‘neutral’ knowledge (as all authorized knowledge was) did not come from a cultural and social background.⁴ The predominance of European upper class, white, male knowledge, being both the product and the genesis of its own “officiality,” reigned until it

⁴ Marcela Del Río treats the exclusion of feminine works (textos dramáticos escritos por mano femenina) in terms, first, of the Europeanizing aesthetic hegemony and, second, of the masculine hegemony, under both of which feminine writing’s value was minimized (41). Kati Röttger also discusses this process of marginalization through discourses of the “theatrical sciences” (las ciencias teatrales) (10). In both cases, the exclusion of feminine writing was achieved through its “failure” to meet ostensibly objective criteria for the literary craft.

was called into question by the Post-Structuralist idea of power-knowledge.⁵ Once scholars called into question the connections between power and the production of knowledge, it was possible to inquire of the mechanisms that produce and reproduce the exclusion of certain stories, narratives, experiences, and interpretations from the process of knowledge production.⁶ To reformulate Foucault's idea, where there is knowledge, the power relation is already present. "Whoever stands in the place of knowledge is always getting a dividend of power" (Cixous, 51).

If the way that we understand and signify perceived differences between women and men is inextricable from power distribution, then it is understandable that the goal of feminine writing, as well as the goal in using cross-dressing, is to manipulate sexual difference in order to destabilize gender ontology.

1.1.1. "Wearing Gender:" The Disconnected Contingency of Cross-Dressing

In the opening stage directions of Torres Molina's *...Y a otra cosa mariposa*, the author frames the dramatic situation by introducing a disruptive element that as Marjorie Garber points out, "intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of the category itself" (11). In other words, the fact that "women" play "men" implies that, rather than simply producing a strict inversion – and therefore a reinforcement, in

⁵ Although I use Foucault's term here, because his idea fits so well, I do not wish to suggest that Foucault was the first to challenge the neutrality of knowledge. On the contrary, the Post-Structuralist idea of the relation between power and knowledge appeared in works earlier than Foucault's, and in practice even earlier. In short, any work that rejected the norms of white, masculine, bourgeois writing can be said to have called into question the hegemony of those norms, expressing an understanding of power-knowledge long before the first articulation of the term.

⁶ Scott's "The Evidence of Experience" offers a good delineation of the operation of this process, showing how the *understanding of experience* in a discipline such as history, leads to legitimize the historian's

the sense that inverting categories is just another means of reifying the existence of those categories – of a fixed sexual differentiation, instead problematizes the oppositional, stable, absolute construction of *difference* between women and men, or more precisely in Teresa de Lauretis’ terms, ‘of women from men, of female from male’ (1). The play text reads:

Esta obra tiene como única condición para su representación, que los cuatro protagonistas deben ser representados por actrices La obra comienza cuando una luz muy tenue ilumina a las cuatro actrices que lentamente comienzan a desvertirse de mujeres y vestirse como chicos.
(335)⁷

In the play, it is sex role-playing – players that initially appear as women, who dress up and enact some representation of men, then return to their appearance as women – that problematizes the constructed nature of gender. Because of the illusory nature of theater, the spectator must trust in nothing other than the appearance and behavior of the players, as the latter are what constructs the play’s reality – a reality composed of both the events on the stage and the audience’s larger reality. However, it is the players who easily change back and forth between (socially-contingent) gender performances during the play. Thus, the play conveys the idea that gender performance is not biologically determined, but most importantly, as Butler points out, that ‘gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female

‘selection’ of stories to tell, and as a consequence, how the ‘scientific veil’ represents some stories as important to be recalled, thereby excluding others.

one” (10). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that in order to communicate the idea of gender as a construction, to some extent, appropriated by an agent or, in Butler’s terms, a *cogito*, the play needs (seemingly paradoxically) to recreate and exaggerate the same static, absolute sexual differences that it purports to criticize. In other words, while on one hand, the play is devoted to divesting sexual difference of its agency, it seems on the other hand, as Lauretis points out, ‘in the uncomfortable condition of being at once inside and outside gender either by desexualizing it [...] or androgynizing it [...]’ (11). The fact that the play insists on showing the players dressed like woman at the beginning and again at the end, reminds the spectator that the players never cease to enact a feminine discourse (that of the author, through the voices of the actresses) about men.⁸

Asking herself about the destabilizing effects that cross-dressing creates on our supposedly stable understanding of the feminine and the masculine, Elizabeth Drorbaugh argues:⁹

When seeing a man cross-dress we may read the construction of “woman.”

When we see a woman cross-dress as a man, the ‘real’ in our culture, what do we see? We may read power. But if we read (a construction of) a man, that which is supposedly not constructed, faith in the real may begin to break down. (135)

⁷ The only requirement for the staging of this play is that the four protagonists must be played by actresses. “The work opens with a faint light that illuminates the four actresses as they slowly begin to take off their women’s clothing and dress as men” (translation by Jacqueline Bixler, 222).

⁸ Although this point is quite controversial among secondary literature I am not going to discuss it here for reasons of scope. Instead, I devote this part of my work to the theoretical implications of representing or questioning the construction of the *difference* between women and men.

⁹ I disagree with the traditional notion that associates gender with biological determinism. For decades feminist and gender studies assumed the existence, in Butler’s terms, of a ‘binary gender system [that] implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it’ (*Gender Trouble* 10). Contrary to the gender studies norm (the sex-gender system), I am assuming that sex itself is a gendered category. Thus, terms such as feminine, female, etc.,

This breakdown of faith is exactly what Torres Molina's play ...Y a otra cosa mariposa, seems to produce. On the one hand, it offers a stereotypical representation of some aspects of *machismo porteño* (native from Buenos Aires). The characters, as the author describes them, are four shallow, rigid, pathetic and misogynist archetypes who represent women as sexual objects, castrating mothers, and as daughters and wives in need of male protection and support. On the other hand, by showing in an ironic light certain aspects of the masculine mindset, the text deconstructs that mindset in order to play with the realness of "true" masculinity and femininity. As the author explains in our interview:

Yo no los saco (personajes) de la nada. Son personajes que de alguna manera, en algún momento, yo los he visto, los he escuchado, los tengo muy definidos, los encuentro en la calle, así como encuentro todo tipo de gente. (Interview, 118)¹⁰

Cross-dressing therefore seems a Janus-like prospect. It calls into question the "stability" of binary gender, but in order to produce a rupture requires an affirmation of the gender system – the system through which behavior become intelligible, and which is necessary to render a divergence from the norm perceptible as such. That is, the ontology that makes us understand certain behaviors as proper to woman and others as proper to man allows the changing of gender performances to be so jarring, and hence to have its strongest effect in the breaking down of that very ontology.¹¹

obfuscate the fact that, as Butler argues, gender is not "the cultural inscription of meaning in a pre-given sex," but rather that it is gender discourse that created this idea of sex as unconstructed (11).

¹⁰ "I did not take them out of the air; they are characters that, in some form, in some moment I have seen, I have heard... I have them very well defined, I meet them in the street just like I meet every type of person."

¹¹ I am thinking here also of Foucault's brilliant reflection about sex as the signifier of human being: "It is through sex... that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of a history)" (155-56).

1. 1.2. Feminine Text / Masculine Script

The reader may be surprised that, although above I consider the articulation of sexual difference as a product of gender discourses, later I support a sort of biological essentialism like Cixous' concept of an *écriture féminine*. Although Cixous was strongly criticized by some American and French feminist thinkers for reifying and essentializing sexual difference, the truth is that Cixous' assertion had opened an interesting discussion about why women's writing should matter, and most importantly, what exactly "feminine writing" means and why it is relevant in opposition to men's writing. This debate is extraneous to my study and I will discuss it only cursorily here, considering *écriture féminine* as a fundamentally political strategy intended by the author to show the fallacy of gender-neutral or apolitical writing.

Cixous dwells on the notion that language, the "Word," is anything but neutral or distinct from culture. Modes of thinking, expressing, and understanding are invested with politics, and, Cixous argues, "no political reflection can dispense with reflection on language, with work on language" ("Castration or Decapitation?," 45). She uses as an example something so seemingly harmless as the idea of "being," saying that "from the very moment [we pose the question] 'What is it?' ... *we are already caught up in masculine interrogation,*" in the masculine order (45). In this sense, it is understandable that writing cannot be gender neutral and much less apolitical. Returning to feminine writing, she states:

Women who write have for the most part until now considered themselves to be writing not as women but as writers. Such women may declare that sexual difference means nothing, that there is no attributable difference

between masculine and feminine writing... What does it mean to “take no position”? When someone says “I’m not political” we all know what that means! It’s just another way of saying: “My politics are someone else’s!”
(51-52)

What distinguishes feminine writing from masculine then, is not just that the former is “signed with a female-name.” A feminine writing implies seizing what Cixous calls “woman powers,” creating a text built upon her voice, her point of view, her potency, her themes (52). Not surprisingly, our playwright, Susana Torres Molina, argues something similar when asked about the time that she was beginning to write:

...Quería revelar algo tan enquistado en esta sociedad como es el machismo... ponerlo en el tapete, mostrarlo, exacerbarlo para que se vea mucho más nítido... Me interesaba escribir sobre ciertos arquetipos masculinos que eran muy identificables en la sociedad argentina... pero yo lo que quería, era *escribir con mi lenguaje*... [Por caso] me doy cuenta que cuando las mujeres escriben sobre erotismo, al menos lo que yo había leído, *parecían hombres*. Es decir, seguían siendo el objeto de deseo del hombre, en un lugar muy pasivo. Cuando el hombre escribía sobre sus experiencias íntimas, eróticas, lo hacía, como en el caso de Buckovsky con un desparpajo y con una... sin tener que estar pidiéndole permiso a nadie, las cosas eran como eran, y no las disfrazaba, y no hablaba de eufemismos. Yo dije, “yo quiero escribir como escribe Buckovsky,” no como escribe Buckovsky literalmente, *pero con la libertad... cómo nombra las cosas*, cómo se ríe de sí mismo y cómo se permite... y donde

la mujer es sujeto de su propio deseo... (Interview, 90-93) (My emphasis)¹²

In other words, Torres Molina's writing emerges as feminine, not because she signs with a woman-name, but because she is aware and willing, through her writing, to *affirm the difference*, from men's language, as well as earlier "woman" writing (which, in the quest for acceptance, took on the form of "neutral" writing – these earlier works to which Torres Molina refers were of women writing like men). The author sets a clear, two-part underpinning for her writing: it will be constructed from her view, her desire, her pleasure; and it will constitute an appropriation of the language and culture into which she was born.

In a newspaper interview given at the time of her first production of ...Y a otra cosa mariposa, Torres Molina was asked about her reasons for dealing with the vexing topic of *machismo*. In a remarkably simple answer, she summed up what I believe to be the key to feminine writing in general and her own writing in particular. Among several manifestations of *machismo*, she privileges in her play the act of "hablar todo el tiempo de mujeres" (speaking all the time about women). If *machismo* is the act of speaking about women, and as we know from Cixous, women talk endlessly but in fact don't actually *speak*, then the only method remaining to call into question the power gender

¹² "I wanted to show something so engrained into this society as machismo, bring it to light, show it, exaggerate it in order to make it more visible. I was interested in writing about certain masculine archetypes that were identifiable in the Argentine's society, but what I really wanted was to write with my own *idiom* (my way, from my own culture). [For instance,] I realized that when women write about eroticism, at least what I have read, they write like men. That is, they continue to be the object of men's desire, in a very passive role. When men write about their personal, erotic experiences, as with Buckovsky, they write without euphemism, without disguising words. I told myself, "I want to write like Buckovsky, not literarily as him, but with the freedom, the way he names things, the way he laughs at himself and permits himself...I wanted to write a play where the woman is the subject of her own desire."

holds through signification is to render *machismo* visible¹³. Putting it on stage challenges the legitimacy of the male power to construct the *symbolic representations* of women, and takes the form of *machos* presenting that *machismo*. Perhaps most importantly, such a presentation allows for the reinscription of new interpretations of the meanings of these symbols: “*Women haven’t said too much about women*, and to speak about *machismo* is to accept the task of investigating a question that is very tied to the problems of women” (“El machismo;” my emphasis).¹⁴

The importance of symbolic representations of sexual subjects is one of the four interrelated elements of Joan Scott’s understanding of gender as a system of differentiation (based on perceived sexual differences). An analysis of Torres Molina’s work will allow me to demonstrate specifically how the four main characters engage in the reproduction, implementation, and construction of symbols of “female-ness.” That is, they borrow and put into motion female symbols-as-technologies of power from their culture and in turn, construct a knowledge of what it means to be female. I begin with a brief summary of the play.

¹³ I believe that there is more than a coincidence to Torres Molina’s definition of *machismo* as a discursive act that legitimizes the taking away of women’s discursive power to construct themselves. In other words, women’s inability to speak comes from the fact that, as I will develop later on in my discussion of Cixous, they are outside of language, “excluded from any possible relationship with culture and the cultural order,” and as a consequence, unable to construct their experience as a linguistic event (46).

¹⁴ “*la mujer no ha dicho demasiado sobre la mujer y hablar de machismo es ocuparse de una cuestión que está muy ligada a los problemas femeninos.*”

1. 2. ...Y a otra cosa mariposa: Women's Place from Men's Space (with Women's Face)

Susana Torres Molina's 1981 play, ... Y a otra cosa mariposa,¹⁵ is about four male friends, el Flaco ("Skinny"), el Inglés ("The Brit"), Pajarito ("Little Bird") and Cerdín ("Piglet"), whose lives are represented through vignettes of their times together from puberty to old age. These dramatic snippets are ordered and organized around various particular events of cultural significance that evoke some fragmented but meaningful aspects of the Argentine masculine construction throughout their lifetime. The five scenes are titled: "La Prima" (The female cousin), "El Meteji3n" ("Madly in love"), "Despedida de soltero" ("Bachelor party"), "El Bul3n" (The extramarital apartment), and "Toda una vida" ("A complete life").¹⁶ Indeed, the representation of the Argentine masculine mindset in connection with some particular stages of the life-cycle seems to emphasize less the intertwined character of those stages but rather to portray the idea that this gender belief system reproduces itself in successive generations of men. That is, the play begins

¹⁵ The title refers to a colloquial Argentine expression ("That's enough of that") quite meaningless outside of the Argentine cultural scenario, and as a consequence, with a multifarious content. On one hand, the expression evokes the idea of the passage of time (achieved by a gradually pass from one act to another), following the lifecycle of growth and decay. On the other hand, the expression evokes some sort of futility with respect to the passage of time, and that is reflected in the play's twofold circularity structure: one cycle begins with the boys, follows them to old age, and ends with the initial boys. The other cycle begins with the actresses getting dressed as boys on stage and ends with the actresses returning to their feminine appearance before the curtain is dropped. Also, as I later elaborate, the title suggests the inescapable, repetitive, and ritualized character, in Butler's terms, of Argentine gender scripts (277). Finally, the title suggests, according to Flores, the passing from heterosexuality to homosexuality due to the fact that the term "mariposa" or "butterfly" designates homosexuals, as well as one of the characters, "Pajarito" (another expression with similar meaning) whose homosexuality is finally accepted by his friends (114-115). In the interview conducted for this thesis, nevertheless, Torres Molina discards this last interpretation.

¹⁶ It is very interesting to mention the possibility of different interpretations when authors translate terms from another language/culture. In my Geertzian perspective of culture, all interpretations (mine and the author's, and those used in other secondary works) are valid translations and at the same time unsatisfactory and contingent.

in a park with the four boys at age thirteen, and concludes with a scene portraying the same men between 65 and 70 years of age, in the same park.

The first scene, ‘La prima’ (‘The female cousin’), depicts the thirteen-year-old boys during their daily meeting at the park. While they have a casual chat, they closely observe a woman who is waiting for someone. As they watch her, their conversation revolves around the boys’ understanding of women and how women fit into their lives. Every detail discussed about the woman they observe (her tight pants, high-heels, etc.), serves to expose the boys’ gender beliefs, their expectations, and their understanding of their own masculinity, of the ‘nature’ of women, and of sexual desire. That is, what seems to be a simple, amusing exchange of jokes about women, including jokes about their respective sisters and mothers, becomes in fact a play of preparation for their masculine performance of safeguarding the family honor. For example, their constant concern for and defense of their own sisters is in fact an indirect concern for their masculine role of protecting the family by taking care of the supposedly weaker and dependent members.

In addition to their understanding of their masculine responsibilities, the ‘understanding’ of women is inextricable from the way in which they understand being male. Specifically, according to the boys, because they lack or have some damaged or deficient glands, women have a tendency to feel a compulsive need to get married; if they fail, they go crazy. Thus, having declared women irrational and incapable of being made sense of, and having found an ‘explanation’ for the fragile female biological imbalance, they find some consolation for their sexual desire in magazines of naked women. That is, women are desirable only when they can be transformed into objects, such as a picture,

conquered, and without independent sexual desire. If women cannot be mastered or if they have their own sexual desires, as happened with Pajarito's cousin, they cease to be desirable.

The case of Pajarito's female cousin is a tale that he recounts to the other three boys in the park. His telling of the story is inspired by their conversation about the woman they are observing. During a recent past summer, Pajarito had a sexual encounter with his cousin, which was cut short by his aunt's entry into the bathroom where the event was taking place. The conquest of his cousin would have been a victory for the Argentine boy, as "la prima" is a culturally significant desire (and event) in the Argentine context. The "prima" signifies the contention between sexual desire and social taboo, between proximity and prohibition, and Pajarito's tale exemplifies this cultural fantasy. The fact that Pajarito could not have sex with his cousin, however, is no strike against his masculinity; she is later found out to be of questionable moral character when her "belly grew" and she marries "in a hurry" (347). As long as she was nothing more than an object of sexual (almost fetishistic) desire, any advance made by Pajarito was a success, but the realization of the cousin's independent sexual desires (evidenced by her pre-marital pregnancy) made her no longer of interest to the Argentine boys.

The same happens with the woman waiting in the park; she is desirable while she waits -a static image not possessing of its own qualities except through the boys' look- as soon as her boyfriend arrives, though, and the two begin to kiss, the boys lose any desire for her and re-focus their desire on pornography, images whose sexual desire can be controlled. The act ends with the four friends coming back to the magazine, an object in which they can un-problematically invest their sexual desires.

The second act, ‘El Meteión’ or “*Madly in love*,” focuses on the main characters at sixteen or seventeen years of age, in particular on el Inglés’ expectations and frustrations as he falls madly in love.¹⁷ Set in a café, el Inglés struggles to approach a woman, rehearsing and worrying about what he should say to her, when abruptly, the other friends arrive and frustrate any attempt to communicate with her. They remain in the café, and as a reaction to her indifference, the four friends begin an extended conversation that reflects their resentment of the inefficacy of all their attempts to capture her attention. Her impenetrable indifference inspires all sorts of guessing about what ‘kind’ of woman she might be. They attempt to apply different labels ranging from being frigid to being a whore, from being “an easy woman” to a more selective “gold-digger.” As with the fable of the fox and the sour grapes, they despise her because they cannot reach her. However, they understand that impossibility not as damaging to their own masculinity but as bad luck; they lack sufficient money to make her accessible. On the other hand, they are equally unhappy with a woman overtly interested in them. That is, in their understanding “las busconas” (searchers – women *actively* looking for a man) are as despicable as disinterested ones.

Their conversation is accompanied by an intense, frequent movement of sitting down and standing up among the teenagers, which exasperates el Inglés when he realizes that all this agitation has made the girl (or at least himself) uncomfortable, to the point that she prepares to leave. When el Inglés asks them to calm down, el Flaco becomes suspicious about el Inglés’ sudden interest in her, a *thing*, they agreed, that does not have

¹⁷ The emphasis placed on “*Madly*” is mine. “Meteión” does not translate very well to English, but is somewhat akin to a very passionate, superficial infatuation. I use the expression “*Madly in love*” to emphasize first the irrationality of el Inglés’ infatuation, but also, as I will shortly discuss, his “insanely”

any value. After interrogating him about his feelings, suggesting that his interest in her or his being “calentito” (horny) is a kind of weakness, el Flaco offers to play the game of conquest with her. In this game, el Flaco seeks to demonstrate two important lessons to his friend: one, that he himself has the right masculine attitude toward women, that is, of conquering; and second, in the event of “winning” her, to prove them finally right in their assumption that she did not have any value to begin with. As soon as el Flaco stands up, however, she leaves the café, and although he begins to follow her, he soon gives up. The reason, according to el Flaco, was because he did not feel “in the mood” to talk with her, the same feeling of speechlessness that el Inglés experienced with her at the beginning of the act. This lesson to be learned from this is that, while the boys can speak endlessly *about* women, they are incapable of speaking to or with them. After harassing her on her way out of the café with catcalls, jeers, and laughter, the earlier feelings of excitement and enthusiasm are replaced by those of frustration and boredom. Everyone leaves the café except el Inglés, who remains until curtain falls, staring into nothingness, apparently reconstructing the pieces of a vague image of the woman he could not reach.

The third act is about el Flaco’s “Despedida de soltero,” or “Bachelor party.” A theme carried over from the second act, the desire to “get a woman,” moves from seeking a woman for companionship, love, or desire, to seeking a woman in order to satisfy social requirements. First el Inglés (he has married during the time elapsed between the two acts), and now el Flaco, decide to settle on a woman and get married, performing the required masculine role of having and providing for a family. As el Flaco states later, he chose his wife to be “la madre de mis hijos” (the mother of my children) (408). However,

ardent affection for the woman. To the other three characters, el Inglés is crazy for his inability to live up to their standards of masculinity because he cannot coolly operate the game of conquest.

they assume from the beginning that they cannot renounce their sexual desire for other women. In both men's perspective, marriage implies a particular kind of contract, which includes a "prudent" unfaithfulness that a wife will tolerate, using it as a bargaining chip in negotiations for spending money, home improvements, and vacations to repair her damaged trust.¹⁸ This twofold masculine performance is more or less overtly resisted by Pajarito and Cerdín, but the attitudes of the other two toward Pajarito and Cerdín are very distinct. Cerdín's persistent dependence on his mother, despite his age and his determination to satisfy his "urges" with prostitutes, does not challenge the friends' beliefs about their masculine performance. On the contrary, despite his poor and pathetic life, Cerdín enacts a masculine performance that is different from that of el Flaco and el Inglés but still acceptable, taking care of his mother and satisfying his masculine needs with prostitutes.

Pajarito's strategy, on the other hand, complicates the friendship but in no way problematizes their masculine mindset. When he says during the party that he is moving in with another man, el Flaco and Cerdín assault him until he confesses to being a "marica," a "fag." After a few minutes of unease, el Flaco attempts to calm Pajarito and begins to reminisce about some childhood memories, which serves a double purpose. On the one hand, it reaffirms the friendship they share, and on the other hand, the choice of memories serves to support a "friendly disbelief" in Pajarito's decision to take on a homosexual lifestyle. That is, by remembering the times when Pajarito played tricks on them with incredible stories, they are able to relax and continue drinking. At the end of

¹⁸ In fact, the idea of a contract (as a fundamental part of a relationship) is central to my discussion in Part II.

the act, the earlier tension evaporates with a toast in the name of their ‘friendship of machos,’ ignoring Pajarito’s announcement of his sexuality as if nothing had happened.

The fourth act is set in el Flaco’s ‘Bulín’ – the apartment he keeps for extramarital affairs – with the main characters in their mid-forties. The four friends meet together for a sort of sex party (which doesn’t seem to be the first one they’ve had) with some women that el Flaco has rounded up. After showing his friends around and bragging about the functionality of the place, el Flaco jokes about his neighbors and their complaints about his lifestyle and his noisiness. Their conversation about women in general is intertwined with their reflections about el Flaco and el Inglés’ daughters. Indeed, they seem to see no contradiction between their perspective of their teenaged daughters as little girls that need to be protected and sheltered from men and the fact that they themselves are, at that moment, preparing to receive a group of young women only slightly older than their daughters. When el Inglés mentions that his daughter is dating a young man, the three friends ask him about what he would do, in his masculine, paternal role, in the event that his daughter got pregnant. The fear-problem of (extra-marital) pregnancy, a direct strike against their masculinity, is responded to by el Inglés, whose hypothetical response includes kicking his daughter out of the house. El Flaco diverts the question by pointing out that his daughters are still too young to have such a ‘problem,’ while Cerdín confesses to having already paid for an abortion after getting a woman pregnant.

During a moment of solitude, el Inglés and Pajarito have a conversation about Pajarito’s homosexuality that is later interrupted by the return of el Flaco and Cerdín. The friends now must acknowledge Pajarito’s sexuality because of rumors they have heard.

The friends' discomfort with having a homosexual friend (and with the social implications) disturbs them enough that el Inglés asks him to date a woman as a facade. Remembering the time when, as a child, el Inglés taught him to defend himself from bigger boys, Pajarito mimics a fighting scene, showing with his fists that he is no longer a child, and despite some moments of weakness, that he will not give up on his sexuality.

While they wait for the women, the men entertain themselves with an inflatable doll. After reflecting on the advantages of a doll over a woman, el Flaco and el Inglés suggest to Cerdín that the doll is "la solución de tu vida" (the solution to all your problems). The friends muse about its benefits, and engage in playing a sort of conquest game: without realizing what they are doing, the three assume male roles while Pajarito performs, moving the doll as a puppet, the female role. Gradually, Cerdín takes possession of the doll, which provokes a great deal of excitement among the friends, except Pajarito, who finally suggests that they "leave Cerdín alone" with the doll. With shouts and gestures, they prompt Cerdín to lay down with it on the sofa. The moment of greatest excitement disappears, however, when Pajarito deflates the doll, with the excuse that it is almost time for the women's arrival. After a few seconds, everything seems to come back to "normal;" el Flaco and el Inglés prepare for the encounter, while Cerdín remains in a state of shock, dragging around the deflated doll, and Pajarito disappears to the bathroom, where he puts on makeup.¹⁹

The fifth and final act, "Toda una vida" or "A complete life," focuses on the main characters at sixty or seventy years of age, while they are having an ordinary meeting in

¹⁹ The fact that Pajarito returns dressed in drag from the bathroom (actually a double drag -female actress playing a male character dressed as a woman) is controversial enough to polarize the interpretations of the role of homosexuality in the play. For scholars such as Laurietz Seda and Yolanda Flores the circumstance that the friends "seemed to not notice" that Pajarito is wearing makeup and is in drag, is understood as a

the same park they met in when they were boys. However, not much seems to have changed; they still regularly meet together in the park, and they have the same child-like conversations. The title of the act implies that these four men have been searching for something their whole life. That is, they have spent their lives seeking to perfect their masculine performances and the satisfaction of their sexual desire, regardless or in spite of women's participation. Divided in their desires, and in the ways to satisfy them, it seems that at the end of their lives they have become *domesticized*, at least in part. They only come back to the "matrimonial life" because they are no longer attractive and have thus given up the quest for masculine conquest. El Flaco, after his wife's death, misses her because of the "lack of noise in his house"(409). El Inglés seems to accept a relationship of submission to his wife, as does Cerdán to his mother, who is still alive. Finally, Pajarito lives alone, stating that he would rather live alone "than in bad company" (412). The ending cannot be more pathetic; these men have spent a lifetime chasing after an essentialist masculine construction, only to find themselves solitary and incomplete. Ominously, the play ends with the four old men watching a group of four boys, who are playing near them, telling the same jokes they enjoyed at that age, carrying on the cyclical reproduction of the same gender beliefs that impoverished these men's lives.

normalization of homosexuality. In my opinion, which is shared by the author, Pajarito's friends seem to not notice him because they deny his homosexuality and circumvent the problem altogether.

1. 3. Argentine Masculine Constructions and Female Hysterization.

Throughout the play, but particularly in the first scene, ‘La prima’ or ‘The Female Cousin,’ the boys make explicit their gender beliefs, expectations, and understandings about their masculinity and their sexual desire, which are all strictly connected with some understanding of the ‘nature’ of women. Indeed, it seems that their understandings and experiences are intimately connected with their family life. They learn about themselves and their masculinity by enacting a performance as son/brother, and about ‘women’ by interacting, observing, and comprehending their sisters’ and mothers’ feminine performances.

El Inglés. ... Mi hermana cada vez que se tiene que poner un lompa, la llama a mi vieja... y entre las dos, a tirones se lo suben hasta la cintura. Después mi hermana se tira en la cama, respira hondo y esa es la señal para que mi vieja se le tire encima y le suba el cierre.

...Pajarito. (*Mirando a la mujer imaginaria*). Che, miren cómo hace equilibrio...

No puede caminar con esos tacos finitos (*La imita*).

... El Flaco. ¡Callate!... que tu hermana usa unos... que parecen ortopédicos.

El Inglés. Vamos nene que la tuya estuvo dos meses enyesada cuando trató de alcanzar un colectivo, ¿Te acordás? (*Amague de pelea*). (338)²⁰

²⁰ El Inglés. ... Every time my sister has to put on pants, she calls my mom... and between the two of them, they tug and pull them up to her waist. Then, my sister throws herself down on the bed, blows out a deep breath, and that’s the signal for my mom to jump on top and zip them up. ...Pajarito. (Looking at the imaginary woman) Hey, look how she has to balance herself... She can’t even walk with those spike heels (He imitates her). ...El Flaco. Oh, Shut up!... Your sister has a pair... that look orthopedic. El Inglés. Come on! little man- your sister spent two months in a cast after she tried to jump on a bus.. Do you remember? (Threatens to punch him).

It is through this context of everyday family interaction that they construct and extrapolate their gendered understanding of women. Thus, their masculinity may seem to be understandable as a bi-directional process of construction by reference to their other family members, in particular their female counterparts. However, the fact that female characters never appear physically in the play is of key significance. Women and womanhood pervade most of the boys' conversations, but always as an object of masculine concern. In other words, women seem to be of utmost importance, but are only present in a figurative sense.

The lack of visible female characters clearly indicates that it is impossible to interpret the process of masculinity-*female* construction as an interactive or bi-directional process.²¹ It seems that the boys rehearse a gender framework through which they feel able to construct both their own masculinity and "female" (as a finite series of sexual essentialisms), with the latter as a secondary product. The place that women represent in the play – as an imaginary point in space animated only by the boys' attention – is that of a doubly silenced presence; women are reduced to talking through the boys' tongues, indicating the masculine construction/animation of the female. That is, as Cixous observes in "Castration or Decapitation?" the woman's domain is sound (as opposed to speech):

[Women] talk, talk endlessly, chatter, overflow with sound, mouth-sound;

but they don't actually *speak*, they have nothing to say. They always

²¹ I emphasize "female" here to call the reader's attention to my opposition of masculinity-female, which is not accidental. I will argue later on that, whereas the boys understand themselves unproblematically as males fundamentally, with their masculinity being a daily performance, pursuing some stable and fixed idea of *masculine* acts, they see their female counterparts as statically determined by their biology.

inhabit the place of silence, or at most make it echo with their singing.

And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside knowledge. (49)

This play conducts/operates on a further silencing – a double silencing. Not only do women not speak, but also since they are absent from the stage, they do not even talk. The boys talk for them, thereby reinforcing the idea of female as nothing more than a secondary product, a by-product, of masculinity. While examples of this process of construction abound throughout the play, it is most visible in this first scene.

The scene begins with the four friends having their daily meeting in the park, carefully observing a woman on the street. While she waits for someone – suggesting the idea that women have nothing better to do than to wait (for men) – they construct her *in absentia*. They “make her up” as *their* woman, by applying to her *their* personal experiences, *their* beliefs, and cultural significances from their daily lives (I borrow the expression “make her up” from Cixous, 46). As their conversation goes back and forth, sometimes very related, sometimes only vaguely related to the “woman who waits,” they perform a contest based on the size of their penises (size being a proof/extension of their masculinity). The fact that they seem to be only a few meters away from the woman and do not hesitate to open their pants and pull out their penises (with their backs to her) confirms that her presence does not matter to the boys. She represents, in the play, a static image constructed by the boys’ own cultural significances, indicating that she is a woman, and thus passive and has nothing to say. The situation is complicated, though, by her boyfriend’s arrival, which seems to disturb the boys’ solitary construction of her. Their reaction could not be more dramatic. Frustrated at having their *plaything* taken away by another man (specifically by his kiss, which, in a Sleeping Beauty-like moment,

animates her), they yell at the couple, teasing them with the self-reference to “children” present in the park. In short, the boys rehearse a masculine (adult) discourse while taking advantage of the fact that they are still children, if only ironically and out of spite. As a consequence of the loss of their object of desire, the boys re-focus their energies on naked pictures of women, objects in which they can un-problematically invest their sexual desires.

Going one step further, let us consider how the boys’ construction of their own masculinity is linked with a kind of female sexual essentialism. In Simone de Beauvoir’s terms, “a man never begins by establishing himself as an individual of a certain sex: his being a man poses no problem” (cited in Bauer, 1). That is, having and exhibiting their penises confirms without any doubt they are “men.” However, the boys recognize that their masculinity is always at stake; and that any circumstance may represent a challenge that they must overcome *actuando(se) como machos*.²²

Women, as noted above, are represented simplistically in the boys’ perspective as females, that is, materially determined by their sex. Locking them into a vicious circle, the boys apply the following tautology: “women behave differently because they are female, and because they are female they behave like women.” In brief, the boys’ masculine construction develops around the idea of the female as a *beste imparfaicte*: determined by its anatomy, complete in their physical incompleteness, irrational and chaotic in its mental imbalance.²³ Women wear pants that are so tight and heels that are so high that, unable to walk, they need their male counterparts to protect them; because

²² With this term, I want to stress Butler’s idea that any action, in our case any boys’ action, represents “an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities” (272). In other words, the boys’ performance reflects a socially and culturally established Argentine way of understanding masculinity.

²³ I borrow the term from Natalie Zemon Davis (147).

they are easily fooled or passionate they need their brothers to watch out for their ‘honor;’ they do not know how to avoid pregnancy, thus, they need the male to ‘solve the problem’ (matrimonially); because they have more of a tendency to go mad, they need a male to take care of them. In other words, the boys construct their masculinity as a sort of discourse that understands the “cause” of female feebleness as a *lack*, a double lack in Cixous terms, as a physical failure. Women in this construction are constantly in need: in need of masculine compensation (domination): protecting (conquering) her, caring for (watching over) her, domesticating (subduing) her (48).

However, the fact remains that the boys cannot even mention the other half of the story of the woman-man relationship, that is, that both need each other. The relationship between women and men is only one-sided, a half relationship that is incomprehensible, as one of the characters expresses reflecting on his own family:

Cerdín. Yo no sé por qué las minas tienen tanto apuro por casarse... Si después se pasan puteando todo el día. Mi vieja desde que se levanta, empieza: ‘para qué me habré casado con este infeliz’ ... ‘con este mamarracho’ ... ‘arruiné mi vida’... ‘le di los mejores años a este imbécil’ ..., y así todo el día. Yo no entiendo... Y si no se casan, se mueren... Se vuelven locas, como mi tía Rosita, la solterona... (48-49)²⁴

In other words, what the boys see in their homes is an experience distant from the picture they have in their heads, that of an idealized “normal” state of complementarity and peaceful dependence. On the contrary, their parents share, as Cixous remarks,

²⁴ I do not know why women are in such a hurry to get married... Afterward, they go around bitching all day. My mom from the moment she gets up, starts in: “why did I have to get married to this jerk” ... “with this loser” ... “I wasted my life” ... “I gave the best years of my life to this idiot” ... , it’s like that all day. I do not get it...and if they do not get married, they die...They go crazy, like my aunt Rosita, the spinster...

relationships where love is “merely a cover for, a veil of, war” (46). Cerdín’s commentary portrays two dramatic Argentine symbols of women: first, the distressing image of marriage represented by his hysterical mother (set in a state of permanent battle with men, dissatisfied with her marriage); and second, the painful destiny of the *solterona*, who because of her disordered nature is unable to “fit in” – unable to find her proper place in the service of the social body.

Having drafted some of the symbolic representations of woman in the play, I develop, following Foucault’s process of hysterization of women’s body, some of the medico-scientific, religious, and educational discourses that the characters use to comprehend those symbols.

1. 3. 1 Masculine Constructions of Female-ness: Putting Together the Pieces of the Masculine Universe *Inhabited by Women*²⁵

Cerdín’s treatment of women as irrational, or even insane, is representative of a process described by Michel Foucault in The History of Sexuality, as the “hysterization of women’s bodies.” In his discussion of the deployment of sexuality in western society since the Enlightenment (that is, the construction and emergence of a knowledge-power about sex, or *scientia sexualis*), Foucault identifies a threefold process of hysterization of women’s bodies to depict the construction of a sexed society, that is, as a univocal construction that materializes sexual difference in the service of reproductive interests (104).

²⁵ This term alludes to Griselda Gambaro’s interest in “d mundo de los hombres,” which like Torres Molina’s play, is a masculine world in which women have only to live or inhabit (and have no part in shaping that world) (Flores, 91).

In the first stage, the female body is analyzed, understood, as a locus of sexual saturation (referring to another point expressed in the work, that society is organized around identified zones of sexual saturation and dilution). Secondly, that sexed body becomes a subject of medico-legal discourses; that is, its place in society is determined by its *biology*, some “pathology intrinsic to it.” The final portion of the process of hysterization places the female body:

In organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which it had to be a substantial and functional element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biological-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children’s education) (104).

It is important to mention that these three processes are interrelated; that is, it is impossible to understand the deployment of sexuality, for instance, outside of its important connections with the family realm. In other words, while sexuality refers to control over the social order through the production of sexed bodies, the family is concerned with *reproduction* – of itself, of the social order – with definite statutes that govern and maintain the means of reproduction.

Not surprisingly, the boys of this play engage in this threefold process of hysterization, viewing women as entirely hysterical and saturated with sex. Hysterization by sexual saturation means that the female body, much like other zones such as the family, according to Foucault, has become a loci of sex discourses. That is, a set of new knowledge has problematized feminine sexuality around the idea of its “potential

pathology [and as a consequence,] the urgent need to keep it under close watch and to devise a rational technology of correction” (120). Among the numerous *cases of deviancy* constructed by these sexual discourses regarding the pathologies of women, the figure of the “idle woman” is remarkable. Although Foucault never explains exactly what he means by this term, he understands its emergence as a result of the gradual change, through subjection and marginalization, of women due to the new conjugal and parental obligations imposed from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Likewise, Cixous understands the emergence of the idle woman mainly as a construction of the psychoanalytical discourse, another product of the deployment of sexuality, which describes her as in a “state of distressing and distressed undifferentiation, unbordered, unorganized, ‘unpoliced’ by the phallus...” but fortunately, Cixous adds with biting sarcasm, woman has only to wait for the fairy tale Prince Charming to activate and stimulate her (46).

The idea of the idle woman, or as a *masculine by-product*, is conspicuous from the first scene of the play, “La prima.” Indeed, this act seems to establish most of the boys’ gender beliefs, which are later confirmed in the following acts. The second act “el Meteón” or “*Madly in Love*,” although focused mainly on the feelings of one of the four friends, el Inglés, and his expectations and worries about approaching the woman/object of his love, is in fact a more in-depth look at the four friends’ understandings (at sixteen or seventeen years of age) of love, desire, their masculine performance and their expectations about feminine performance.

“El Meteón” is set in a *porteño* café; el Inglés is already seated, and suddenly, an invisible woman takes a seat in the same café. Her presence triggers in el Inglés a storm

of thoughts about how to conquer her: write her a love letter, grow his moustache (a symbol of masculinity), bring a serious book to catch her interest, or save some money to invite her to the theater. He imagines taking very considerate (genteel) care of her: open doors for her, take her arm while crossing the street, ask her how she feels, inquire if she is having a good time or if she wants anything (355).

In other words, by exposing el Inglés' inner thoughts of love (*as a conquest*), the play reveals that any feelings or expectations are saturated with certain available sex discourses that prescribe female passivity and male activity. Worried about showing her any sign of being nervous (weakness), el Inglés tries to calm himself down from the fear of being *rebotado* or "bounced" (rebuffed) by her. That is, from his perspective, he acts to conquer her, and she, like a self-moving wall can close herself off and bounce him away:

Tranquilízate, infeliz... no es para tanto... Total, si reboto, reboto... Bah, seguro que reboto... casi seguro... Bah, ¿quién sabe?... En una de esas...
(355)²⁶

Before el Inglés is able to approach the woman, the other friends abruptly arrive at the café. As with the "woman waiting in the street," the teenagers engage in a game of guessing about the "kind" of woman she might be. That is, it is very important to them to determine/assess whether the woman is "worth" being the object of their conquest. Let us examine the logic at play in the teenagers' mindset: the conquest game is, from the beginning, a game of sex saturation *par excellence*. Women are classified into categories of *frigid*: "vinagreta," "frigideli," "mosquitas muertas" or *easy* women: "loquita,"

²⁶ Calm yourself, stupid... It is not so much... In the end, if I bounce, I bounce... Ah, I will definitely bounce... almost definitely... Ah, who knows? Maybe not...

‘regalada,’ ‘buscona,’ ‘reventada.’ In other words, women are classified by criteria related with their attitude toward male (sexual) advances. In the boys’ understanding, easy women are as despicable as frigid women, but the latter ones are the only ones worthy of conquest. That is, because it is expected that the woman wait for the man, the frigid becomes the worthy object of conquest. Therefore, saying “no” to a man is understood as testing the man’s interest and perseverance, and not as a real “no.” For that reason, the more the girl seems impenetrable to the teenagers’ comments and movements, the more their interest in her increases. Without admitting it, el Flaco becomes increasingly excited about her, but in the end fails to conquer her (finally offering the excuse that he is not “in the mood”). The last attempt to provoke in her a *reaction* is a series of (sarcastic) compliments about her beauty, aggressive regards, laughs and insults, which in the end show the teenagers’ perspective of her as being nothing more than a composite of body parts (and their attributes):

Cerdín. De qué te la tirás, ¡enana!

El Flaco. ¡Morite flaca!

Cerdín. ¿Vieron... tenía el... (*señalando el traste*) qué te dije, ¡caído!

Pajarito: Con razón anda con jovatos.

El Inglés: ¿A quién le ganó? (367)²⁷

Reduced to this sexually saturated space, the woman is not allowed to speak, because it is the man who is expected to speak and conquer her. She also is not allowed to choose, because the (masculine) decision to be conquered or not is made by someone else. She is only able to leave, which in the end is only a reaction, caused by the boys’ harassment.

She is not able to express desire (an affirmative), because only the man can make that decision; she is not able to express disinterest (a negative), because in the conquest game “no” is only a starting point in the male hunt. She is only able to *contingently* leave the game-space by leaving the café. Because there is no way to escape permanently, she is forced, as Cixous states, to “inhabit the place of silence” (49), or in Foucault’s terms “the outer edge of the ‘world’” (121).

The second process of hysterization described by Foucault is through the materialization of the female body by the problem of reproduction, and moreover, by materializing the body upon a fundamental pathology. *Materia*, as Judith Butler observes, denotes “the stuff out of which things are made” (32). Referring to the female body, the “materia” is, of course, its anatomy. The basic argument, as Sandra Gilbert points out, is that “women’s reproductive functions identify them with the (animal) body,” in contrast with the (human) or social body, placing women as “something intermediate between culture and nature, lower in the scale of transcendence than man” (13). That is, women have a doubly unstable nature. On the one hand, Cixous states, “women are allied with what is regular, according to the rules, since they are wives and mothers, [and on the other hand,] they are allied as well with those natural disturbances, their regular periods, which are the epitome of paradox, order and disorder” (8). It is precisely these medico-legal discourses, developed over centuries, that have produced a sexual essentialism of the female body, materializing it as biologically anomalous, differentiated from the male body. As a consequence, the intervention of doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists has been legitimized. In short, the very same discourses

²⁷ Cerdín. What’s so special about you, shorty?! El Flaco. Die skinny! Cerdín. Do you guys see?...Her... (indicating his backside) like I told you, it’s sagging! Pajarito. For good reason, then, she only goes out

that created the body created the medical professions, and in turn, authorized their intervention in their specific zone of interest, the body.

Foucault argues at a later point that, from the eighteenth century on, western society created a new apparatus that was superimposed onto the traditional system of marriage and kinship ties. Whereas the older “deployment of alliance” operated as a system of static regulations (whose authority was created by their very existence) to perpetuate a static social order, the newer “deployment of sexuality” used the body as its vehicle to push itself, in varying ways, deeper and further into the social body, to create a dynamic order by continually expanding its influence. This new apparatus transformed the family completely (with respect to the earlier system) by placing the parents as the chief agents of the deployment of sexuality, drawing their support from the medico-legal discourses. It is through this process of medicalization that the new “clinical subjects” appeared (110).

We now return to Cerdín’s comments about women’s rush to get married and the example of his aunt, Rosita, who went mad because she never got married. To the extent that he equates insanity with death, he applies to her the clinical label of *solterona*, or spinster; a sort of social death. Furthermore, much like the “frigid wife” or “the nervous woman,” the “solterona” constitutes an anomalous case that, as Foucault observes, gives the family and the doctors jurisdiction to take “care” of her. The disturbing image of a woman who runs naked through the house and messes her pants drives el Inglés to ask Cerdín why they have not put her in an asylum. After Cerdín justifies his father’s decision to keep his aunt in the house because the family does not have enough money to afford an asylum, and explaining that, even worse, mad people have a prolonged

with old guys. El Inglés. Who gave her first prize?!

existence, the four friends embark on a discussion about the propensity of women to go insane, compared to men. Pajarito opens the dialogue with the question:

Pajarito. ¿Vieron que hay más locas que locos?

El Inglés. Y sí... Yo leí en un libro, que las minas son mucho más idiotas que los hombres y por eso se vuelven locas más fácilmente.

Pajarito. Parecen que ya vienen con una glándula de menos, o algo así.

El Flaco. ¿Qué glándulas? Si no tienen glándulas... Si vienen con la mitad de piezas de fábrica... (347-48)²⁸

Influenced by scientific, religious or educational discourses, the fact is that the boys understand the female body as biologically anomalous. While Pajarito's reflection about mad women seems to come from his personal experience, el Inglés, as Flores points out, supports his observation from a book (103) The importance and concern about the body, that the boys understand as exclusive of their female counterparts, represents for the boys a sort of feminine obsession that finds explanation in their anatomy. Exemplifying his understanding of female anatomy as an explanation of female psychology, summed up by their lack of glands, el Flaco continues:

... Mirá, anoche estaba mi hermana en casa con una amiga, dele mirarse al espejo y una le decía a la otra, 'Se nota que tengo las piernas torcidas?'

'No para nada' le contestaba la otra y después le preguntaba a mi

hermana: 'Decime la verdad, ¿cómo te gusta más, con flequillo o sin

²⁸ Pajarito. You know there are more crazy women than men? El Inglés. Yeah... I read in a book that women are a lot more mentally weak than men so they go crazy more easily. Pajarito. It seems like they are born missing a gland or something. El Flaco. Glands, what glands? They do not even have glands... they are already a few sandwiches short of a picnic...

flequillo?” ‘Con flequillo toda la vida’... ¡Y así se pasaron como tres horas! ¡Tres horas así! ¡Las hubiera acogotado! (349)²⁹

The young woman’s body concerns confirm that beyond the boys’ perplexity about their sisters behavior, these latter have already realized the rules of the conquest game. That is, the worth of young women rests in their attractiveness to men, and as I argued before, worthiness is also measured by a woman’s ability to wait for the right man. If we imagine the game as a market of bodies whose final transaction is getting married, it is understandable that the boys’ sisters are concerned about adjusting their beauty to the market standards, in order to avoid missing the opportunity to get married, like Cerdín’s aunt Rosita.

The third process of hysterization of women’s bodies described by Foucault refers to the process of consecration of the body to the service of the reproduction of the social body. This was possible, as we explained before, by locating the family as the place *par excellence* of sexual saturation. That is, there is no relationship or body within the family, according to Foucault, that is not regulated by sex discourses: “the feminine body, infantile precocity, the regulation of births, and the specification of the perverted” are the examples he offers (108). Nevertheless, as Foucault points out, the intra-family balance between the alliance (marriage and kinship) and sexuality (reproduction and body regulation) is less than ideal. Incest still represents a central tension: “it is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction, a dreadful secret and an indispensable pivot” (109). This unbalance is portrayed in the play in the story of

²⁹ Look, last night, my sister was at home with a friend and they started checking themselves out in the mirror and my sister asks her friend, ‘Does it look like I am knock-kneed?’ ‘No, not a bit,’ answers the other, and then she asks my sister: ‘Tell me the truth, which do you like better, with bangs or without?’

Pajarito's female cousin. *La prima* (as an Argentine collective sexual fantasy) represents, on one hand, the result of the sexual incitement placed within the family space (because as Foucault explains, the deployment of sexuality discourses creates the family as a zone of maximum sexual saturation), while on the other hand, she represents what is strictly prohibited by the way of social taboo (in the way that Foucault's deployment of alliance requires that the family be a zone of maximum sexual dilution).

Inspired by the conversation about the women that the boys are observing in the park, as well as a pornographic magazine, Pajarito tells the story of his female cousin to the other three boys. In a recent past summer, Pajarito visited his uncle's house in a smaller city: "Che, les conté una vez que estábamos en la casa de mis tíos en Córdoba... y la vi a mi prima" (343).³⁰ The summer trip and the truncated sexual encounter with his cousin recreate the centrality of incest as a bifurcated source of desire and fear. On the one hand, the trip symbolizes a sort of movement from the rigid sexual control wielded by the nuclear family to the lessened control of the extended family. On the other hand, the trip represents the masculine sexual fantasy of taking possession/conquest of opposites: Buenos Aires (city) – Córdoba (province); city boy-country girl; society-nature, and so on. That is, in the male Argentine fantasy, Córdoba represents, despite its urban nature, the countryside, a sort of wild place, a Lockean "state of nature," where life seems to stay in a harmonic state, transparent, as naked as his female cousin in her bathtub. The fact that she is sleeping in the bathtub, because of the hot summer weather, and not in the place where she should be sleeping – in her bed – interrupts the normal

"With bangs definitely with," and they spent like three hours doing that! Three hours! I almost strangled them!

³⁰ Pajarito. Hey, did I tell you guys about the time I went to my uncle's house in Córdoba... and I saw my cousin.

balance of the rigid power of the incest taboo, which keeps illicit sexual desire in check. Her presence in the bathroom signifies an invasion of one important space of the family economy, understood (in the Argentine context) primarily as a place of male (masturbatory) pleasure, and because she is *out of place*, the incest taboo – part of Foucault’s system of alliance, which relies on a rigid order – fails to arrest Pajarito’s sexual desire (and perhaps that of the cousin, as well).

Pajarito. Era una tarde, hacía mucho calor. Estaban todos durmiendo la siesta. Yo estaba en mi cuarto aburrido y se me ocurrió ir al baño a tomar agua...

Cerdín: (*cargándolo*). ¡Dale! A tomar agua... (*Hace un gesto de masturbación*). (344)³¹

The transgression allowed by the lack of alertness of Pajarito’s parents in watching him, is solved by the entrance to the bathroom of his *nervous* aunt (a role rehearsed later by his mother), who not only truncates the sexual encounter, but also expedites the end of his summer vacation:

Al día siguiente nos volvimos a casa. Mi viejo en el tren... Me guiñaba el ojo todo el tiempo y mi vieja me decía, que si seguía así me iba a quedar enano. (347)³²

The ambiguities of incest are neatly represented by the permissive man (father) and the nervous women (mother and aunt), as well as the threat of the biological-moral discourses that controls that perversion. Precisely, the moral of Pajarito’s story is that the

³¹ Pajarito. It was one afternoon and it was really hot outside. Everyone was taking a nap. I was just sitting around bored in my room when I thought to go to the bathroom for a drink of water... Cerdín. (jibing him) Yeah...for a drink of water...(Makes a gesture of masturbation).

lack of effective control by his aunt over his female cousin allowed *her* transgression, a situation which is later proved to be systematic by his cousin's rush to get married because of a pre-marital pregnancy. The idea that the transgression was the cousin's, and not Pajarito's, is supported by the father's acceptance/encouragement of Pajarito's actions and the ridiculization of his mother and aunt, as well as the fact that Pajarito's aunt accosted the girl and not Pajarito when she interrupted the encounter. In other words, *la prima* was not allowed to enact her sexual desire, except within the auspices of a system of marriage and kinship alliance. Returning to the threefold process of women's hysterization outlined by Foucault, the third process was clearly at work in this case: *la prima's* connection with the social body relegated her sexual desire to a specific domain, that of the family (leaving intact all the apparatuses of domination inherent in that discourse).

1. 4. Conclusions

In this part I have focused on gender in terms of, as Scott puts it, perceived differences between the sexes. That is to say, gender's primary function is to create and signify difference, to which hierarchies of power can later be applied and along whose lines that power can be organized. I have used Torres Molina's play ...Y a otra cosa mariposa as a text that relies on gender differences for its plot and subject matter. The play is gendered throughout; that is, gender distinctions are critical for the play's communication and begin even before the first scene.

³² The next day we went home. On the train, my dad... he kept winking his eye at me the whole time, and my mother was telling me that if I kept on like that, my growth would be stunted.

One of the most distinguishing uses of gender in the play is the fact that the characters, all-masculine, are played by actresses, who appear first as females and change before the spectator's eyes into their masculine roles. This detail places gender as difference at the center of the play thematically. The actual significance of the play's use of cross-dressing is an issue of debate; I have understood it as a destabilization the gender ontology. I concede that the act of cross-dressing relies on a reality of gender as ontologically discrete to support the assertion that the project of breaking down that structure relies, rather than on a gradual or gentle blurring of those distinctions, on a violent jarring of that structure, to destabilize and ultimately dismantle it.

Another gender theme associated with Torres Molina's play is that of feminine (as opposed to masculine) writing. Hélène Cixous' concept of an *écriture féminine* brings the act of writing as a woman to light not as a biologically-determined act, but as a political act. That Torres Molina *chose* to write "as a woman" places her work firmly within a discrete gender framework, wherein "woman" is an identity to be embraced and an experience to be drawn from. Furthermore, the author's political act in writing includes a component of seizing the power of masculine writing and reappropriating it for a feminine writing, as well. While she wanted to embrace the feminine in her writing, Torres Molina rejected the social norms that would restrict the freedom to express what she desired to express. To that end, ...Y a otra cosa mariposa can be considered as a work of empowered feminine writing, drawing from feminine experience and the masculine liberty of expression.

Returning to Scott's definition of gender, she further breaks down the definition of gender as difference into four elements of the constitution of social relationships:

culturally available symbols, normative concepts, social institutions and organization, and gender's role in subjective identity constitution. In the play, we observed three specific female personages that the boys subject to gender and which, in connection with Scott, can be understood as exemplary of cultural gendering. That is, we can observe the first three elements of gender as difference in each of their personages (the fourth, subjective identity, is not present because these female personages are not characters in the play).

The first exemplary personage we encountered in the play was Pajarito's cousin, with whom he had a sexual encounter. In the case of this cousin, the applicable cultural symbol is, simply, that of the *prima*, the collective Argentine sexual fantasy. In this sense, Pajarito's cousin acts indeed as more of a symbol than a real person. We do not know if Pajarito had such an encounter or if he even has a female cousin; it does not matter. The personage of the *prima* is surrounded by normative concepts, most of which are directly related with the incest taboo. That an unmarried sexual encounter can take place, within the family structure, and with no procreative goal flies in the face of a number of norms, all of which are aspects of the rigid kinship system, called by Foucault the "system of alliance." For the masculine character, on the other hand, the encounter with his *prima* constitutes a victory for Pajarito, even in spite of the encounter's truncation. The social norm of masculine conquest, in spite of taboo and other obstacles, is reinforced by Pajarito's friends' excitement at hearing the story and his father's winking eye.

The family, of course, is the social institution attacked in this transgression; its integrity is threatened by any violation of the incest taboo. The associated social organization depicts the feminine place as the hearth and her responsibility as upholding

the family honor. The failure of the family organization is its allowance of the *prima* to be first, irresponsible with the family honor and second, to be in the wrong place (the bathroom, a masculine space in Argentine contexts).

The second personage encountered in the play is Cerdín's aunt, Rosita. she is a well-established cultural symbol, that of the crazy *solterona* or spinster. The social norms and institutions that place the spinster as a divergent personage are the same as those applicable to the *prima*, and moreover, are the same norms that *create* her personage. That is, without the predominance and centrality of the family structure, and the requirement of women to be in communication with the social body through the family structure, the spinster cannot exist. She originates as a violation of the social norms and a failure to meet the exigencies of the social organization, rather than becoming a symbol through some active violation. The end result of the *solterona's* deviance is her social death, her complete exclusion from social life, simply by her very existence.

The third feminine personage encountered is actually an amalgamation of personages, women defined by the social institution of family, although not by any preexisting deviance. This composite personage is made up of the various young, unmarried women of the play. They exist almost exclusively in public spaces, and I would suggest that this is because they *have not yet* been taken into a private, domestic space. The first example of the (as yet) public woman is the woman in the park. The second, and most well-developed example is the woman in the café, the object of El Ingles' *metejón*. The third example can be found in the women expected to arrive at El Flaco's *bulín*, although they never actually arrive within the scope of the play. The symbol of the available woman can fall into two categories, those *not yet* married and

whores (and this is not to imply that such labellings are objective or permanent by any means). Regardless of which side of availability they fall on, these women are bound by the same rules of normativity; the available woman should not be a whore (too “easy” or seeking sexual pleasure) and she should be actively being sought after for marriage. The awkward phrasing of the latter norm reflects the awkward social regulation of the courtship process. While she should actively want a man (for marriage), the available woman should not be the active party of the courtship process; that could all too easily be misinterpreted as her being a *buscona*, a desirous woman, and would thus push her into the other category of available womanhood. Thus, the available woman’s role, as outlined in my discussion of “El Metejón,” is to be a passive participant in courtship, always saying “no,” but meaning “maybe.”

In all three of the cases detailed above, we can observe Scott’s three levels on which gender can be imposed on individuals. Whereas she does include subjective identity as a role of gender, symbols, norms, and social institutions, all serve to inscribe the female personages of the play in their gender, from the outside. Gender, then, serves in the play as a system of difference and creates masculine and female not as two parts of the same whole, but rather as distinct beings, defined by machismo, from the point of view of men.

Part II Disciplining the Body: Gender, Power, and Social Regeneration

In Part I of this thesis, I focused specifically on showing gender as a construction of female as different from masculine, using the play *..Y a otra cosa mariposa* to demonstrate the first part of Joan Scott's understanding of gender, that it is "based on perceived differences between the sexes" (1067). In Part II, my goal is to explicate some of the ways in which gender operates as a discourse invested with power and as a discourse useful for the manipulation of relationships of power, making reference to Torres Molina's work *Una noche cualquiera* as evidential of the interplay between gender and politics. I continue the discussion of *machismo* as a particular gender construction that makes no reference to women as subjects, yet which is characterized by a constant *talking about women*.

2. 1. State Terrorism and Violence: A Brief But Necessary Discussion

In this section, I propose to shed light on certain aspects of the woman-man relationship in an effort to provide a different understanding of the terrorist state in Argentina during the late 1970's and early 1980's. I would argue that most of the scholars who have studied this regime support a dominant discourse regarding the Argentine state-society relationship, and to a lesser degree some aspects of the woman-man relationship shaped by this regime, that frames both relationships as pathological.³³ In the end, scholars naturalize these relations outside of the power relationships among individuals

³³ One characteristic expression of this characterization as pathological can be found in Maxine Molyneux's "Twentieth-Century State Formations in Latin America." As Molyneux puts it: "The subsequent and unexpectedly ferocious repression that these dictatorships presided over in more than a dozen Latin

and institutions, framing the use of power in terms of atrocities and spectacles of violence. Even a study that reveals the connections between Argentine nationalist ideologies and gender constructions, as does Diana Taylor's Disappearing Acts, can misconceptualize the state-organized torture and murder of its citizens. As I will show, it is simplistic to analyze, as Taylor does, the military process of reshaping the social body or *setting up the national being* as a struggle for constructing a new, oppositional masculinity through the feminization of the Argentine population. Representing the multidimensional *proceso militar* simply as a "masculinist construction" that opposed and sought to annihilate some vague, blown-out-of-proportion idea of femininity leads Taylor to focus on misogynist, nationalist ideologies as an overarching explanation for "violence" that was perpetrated mainly against the "feminine" (156). Although I agree with Taylor regarding the importance of analyzing national ideologies and myths as a gendered construction-legitimization of the organization of social life, her use of global concepts like "the feminine," "feminization of the population," and the "violence" perpetrated against them obfuscate the study of the multifarious character of the social and political body and the program of reconstruction effected by the *proceso militar*. Indeed, amorphous labels such as "feminine" serve, in the end, to produce an oversimplified understanding of the ways in which the military used gender discourses to make possible ever-widening interventions into and the ever-expanding disciplining of the social body.³⁴ Finally, the failure to call into question the nature of "violence"

American countries was confirmation for many scholars of the underlying fragility of Latin American democracies" (61). Another example can be found in Taylor's work, a discussion of which follows here.

³⁴ "In a cruel inversion of the tree of life, the Air Force Academy in Buenos Aires drew up a Tree of Subversion with forty-seven branches representing various crimes. The crimes ranged from progressive Catholicism to Protestantism to Judaism, from alcoholism and prostitution to divorce and homosexuality, from human rights to women's rights and pacifism [but the list does not end here]. Any not covered by a specific branch fell into branch 16: *others*" (Taylor, 150).

(disregarding its ultimately constructed, contentional nature) and treating it as something proper, even exclusive to authoritarian, fascist ideologies leads researchers such as Taylor to place the study of the military control of the Argentine population in the domain of pathology and to frame this example of the exercise of power as aberrant, brutal, and criminal political behavior.

In my perspective, on the contrary, I consider the Argentine state “terrorism” within the framework of what Foucault calls state “techniques of power” or “biopower.” Biopower, for Foucault, is the process by which political power is constructed, administrating and promoting, through diverse techniques of regulation of bodies and control of populations, every dimension of people’s lives (136-45). Indeed, to this construction-legitimization of the state’s power as a positive influence on the life of the population, correspond initially shocking, never-before seen “holocausts on their own populations” (Foucault, 137). That is, only a system where state power is constructed as a responsibility to promote the health of the social body can the isolation and excision (extermination) of a certain portion of the population be justified.³⁵ It is within this framework that I understand the military process of re-arrangement of the dislocated parts of the Argentine social body.³⁶

³⁵ Asking himself about the apparent contradiction between a power that legitimizes its influence with the argument of promoting life, and at the same time exercises its prerogative to put people to death, Foucault replies, “One had the right to kill those who represented a kind of biological danger to others” (138).

³⁶ It is important to mention that, contrary to traditional works that emphasize mainly torture as the means and method of social body control, Taylor’s study interprets torture as both an act of inscription or writing of the nationalist narrative on the population’s body but also as act of writing a masculinist ideology on the military body (152).

It is more or less assumed in several studies that some forms of state-organized violence are proper to societies immersed in deep “crises of beliefs.”³⁷ Most democratic ideologies rely on pluralist national myths, implying (cursorily) that any political power (regulating the many aspects of citizens’ lives) that is masked by democratic discourses would be less strong, effective and negative. I argue, on the contrary, that what differentiates the dominion/power over life (in a regulatory manner), as we usually denominate a “democratic system,” from the taking of life by the state (in a murderous manner), as “terrorist systems” are usually understood, is what these discourses construct as *their limits*. In other words, in a democratic system, the law is the limit and justification (legitimation) of the power: we obey the law because “we created it” (by social contract) and it is our defense against the “abuse of power.” Meanwhile, in the case of the “terrorist” state, the cleansing of the diseased (social) body is the limit (even when the state intervention seems without a clear-cut limit) and it legitimates the state’s power.

My assertion that it is problematic to call the regime under the Argentine military dictatorship “terrorist” comes neither from an understanding that the regime was in fact *not* terrorist, nor from an idea that democratic society *is* terrorist, but rather from the notion that the use of the discursive marker “terrorist” serves more to obfuscate than to illustrate an understanding of the ways in which power operates. To describe the military dictatorship, “terrorist” fundamentally sets it apart from democratic society, enabling it to be regarded as different, marginal, and pathological. In addition to coloring our understanding of that system, such categorization encourages us to focus on the ways in which it differs from what is “normal,” rather than to see its remarkable similarity to any

³⁷ Graciela Scheines’ study Las metáforas del fracaso, is representative of an important number of studies interpreting “Argentina’s lack of founding myths... A real foundation... accompanied by epics, heroes,

other system of governance, in that they all involve mechanisms for the use of power. “Terrorist” implies an abuse of power, but “abuse,” as is often forgotten, is simply a variation of the word “use.” We are able to understand much more clearly how power operates within such a regime if we employ a Foucauldian analysis of power, rather than an ideologically charged analysis of the “abuse of power.”

This tangential and brief discussion about what exactly constitutes terrorism is an economic, authorial decision. I prefer not to spend additional pages debating to what degree the term is applicable to the Argentine regime, since the question is a moot point to belabor in any case. Whereas my avoidance of the term “terrorist” may be perceived as a normalization of the military dictatorship (which it is, as much as it is an “abnormalization” of the ostensibly natural, socially contractual democratic system of repression of the citizenry), the purpose of this omission is to return the dictatorship to the domain of systems of social control, where it can be analyzed with the same tools one might use on democracy, monarchy, or fascism. Another pair of terms that will be consciously omitted are “justification” and “legitimacy.” These two, which work in tandem, are an integral part of the basis for the application of the term “terrorist,” and as such, discussion of them is not a necessary part of my analysis of power. Nor do discussions of “justified,” “legitimate,” and “terrorist” appear in much of the secondary literature that focuses on the Argentine military dictatorship. Although their use abounds in texts such as Taylor’s, very seldom is their discursive implication discussed or called into question. They are simply used as adjectives no more problematic than “large” or “green.” Such value-laden modifiers serve to set dictatorial and democratic regimes as binary opposites of one another, rather than variations on the same theme, thus limiting

revolutions and heroic gestures as the cause of violence persistence (cited in Taylor, 72).

our ability to understand the ways in which power operates in general as a means and a method of social control.

Torres Molina's recent play, Una noche cualquiera (1999) illuminates the analysis of the conceptualization of gender offered in the second part of Joan Scott's gender definition, "as a primary field by means of which power is articulated" concretely and in specific ways to distribute power between women and men and between states and citizens. The play also illustrates some unexplored connections between certain gender concepts that flow easily and still remain between the domestic microcosms of women and men's interactions and the political community.

First, following the theory of Carole Pateman, I develop a theoretical discussion about the subjugation of women through the implementation of a "sexual contract," and that contract's relation to the constitution of the political community. I argue that contract theories, the main pillars of Western liberal-democracies, legitimize sexual difference as a natural reason for excluding women from participating in the social contract, and as consequence, their subordination to men. Second and in accordance with Taylor, I show that the military regime developed a "self-referential gender system" to reorganize the social body (156). Finally, I argue that two characters of the play, Sandro and Musetti's invasion of the house and psychological torture of those present represents a reversal of social and political power in Argentina. That is, by taking control over the lives of the people in the house Sandro and Musetti are able to disempower (if for only one hour) a small but symbolic sample of the "power-holding" class in Argentina.³⁸ Also, their

³⁸ While it certainly constitutes a seizure of power, Sandro and Musetti's disempowerment of the four other characters differs from more traditional conceptions of seizing power. Specifically, while they do reappropriate many of the same discourses and tactics used by the power-holding class in order to accomplish their program, Sandro and Musetti's goal is not to grab and hold the power, but rather to effect

actions, as occurs with most rites of reversal, produce a quasi-reinforcement of the military's gendered discourse as well as the power relationship legitimized by that discourse. Finally, I argue that the results of this "inversion" are mixed, but mostly constitute a partial reinforcement (through the characters' seizure of power by reappropriation of the military dictatorship's techniques of power) of the gender discourses of that regime.

2. 2. Social Contract: Civil Freedom for Whom?

For centuries, political philosophers have been concerned with understanding the constitution of the *polis* or political community. During the modern era, they have constructed a variety of conjectural histories that, as Carole Pateman points out, tell the story of "how a new civil society and a new form of political right [*sic*] is created through an original contract" (The Sexual Contract, 1). That is, philosophers have justified the legitimacy of political obedience with the argument that the authority of the state is nothing more than the result of an agreement entered into by free and equal men. In other words, there is no reason to resist an authority that was constructed by individuals who have "voluntarily" (born free and equal to each other) "subject[ed] themselves to the state and civil law" (7). The reason that men were willing to abandon such an ideal *natural state* of freedom and equality, according to contract theorists, was because of the uncertainty of its social conditions. In terms of property and life, it becomes reasonable

a temporary shift of the power balance (in their favor). To this end, and as I demonstrate in my discussion, their project consists more of a disempowerment of the others than an empowerment of themselves.

for individuals to exchange the ‘insecurities of natural freedom for equal, civil freedom which is protected by the state’ (2).

Since most contract theorists agree that women have no natural freedom, the latter cannot participate in the original contract ‘through which men transform their natural freedom into the security of civil freedom’ (Pateman, 6).³⁹ Among the reasons that philosophers offer to explain what prevents women from being born free and able to contract in the same way as men, the most common has been to understand the supposed sexual difference between men and woman as the ‘natural’ criteria of political difference. The knowledge that supposedly women are not born free – they are in fact born as inferior and subordinate to men – provides for the rationale that only men can be born as equal, free individuals, hence only men can enter into the contract. Women can only be born as subjects, with their bodies constituting little more than property that can be exchanged or to which public access should be guaranteed as free and equal to men entering into the social contract.

What makes the individual is one’s property. In other words, the existence of a system of relations between woman and man, marriage and family (which already existed in the state of nature) creates man as a property holder, and thus an individual. Men’s dominant status in the state of nature made them capable (in both a logical and conceptual way) of entering into the social contract. Logically, if a man can hold property (a woman), then he is an individual and can enter into the social contract. Conceptually, the idea of being born into a certain social standing (men are inherently socially superior to women) allowed contract theorists to understand that individuals can be born with a

³⁹ Contract theorists is a wide-ranging term that includes the political thought of contrasting philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and more recently, John Rawls.

certain social standing with respect to entry into contracts (men are supposedly born free and equal to one other). Thus, contract theorists downplay or overlook the fact that the story of the constitution of the political community is based on a social contract as well as a sexual one (2). Put differently, the new political order is inextricable from “the law of male sex-right,” or the sexual *contract* by which women were set (specifically their bodies) as a form of property and men as owners (Adrienne Rich, in Pateman, 2).

As Pateman notices, however, this idea of a *sexual contract* is problematic. If women cannot be born as individuals, free or equal, then they cannot enter into a contract. Finally, the sexual “contract” resembles something more like a sexual *order* or *natural dominance*. Furthermore, referring to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s understanding of contractual legitimacy, Pateman points out that no contract can be legitimate if it stipulates that one individual loses her or his freedom. If the sexual “contract” makes women subordinate to men, it cannot be considered legitimate.

Pateman examines the concept once again, however, and demonstrates that the conditions of entry into the contract are irrelevant once the contract is in force. Using the example of slave versus free labor, she outlines that, although the *free* worker enters the contract of his own individual will and the slave worker is forcibly subordinated, the end result is that both workers are parties in a contract that exchanges their property in person, their labor power, for protection (subsistence). Nonetheless, the terms of entry into the contract are less important than the social relationship established by the contract. Rather than contend with the question of whether or not the process of entry into the contract is legitimate or whether the reality of male superiority and female inferiority is natural or artificial, Pateman simply grants that the contract already exists as a contract

and that its terms reify the social order that makes women inferior to men. She closes her chapter on “Contract, the Individual and Slavery” by returning to Rousseau’s understanding that no contractual agreement can be legitimate if it denies the individual’s freedom, thus calling into question the validity of the sexual contract.

Contract theory, including Pateman’s sexual contract theory, takes on interesting clarity when applied to the sexual relationships presented in Susana Torres Molina’s Una noche cualquiera. The play portrays several contractual situations that elucidate the ways in which gender concepts pervade, organize, distribute and legitimize power in the domestic “private” order, as well as in the public sphere. Before beginning, however, I begin with a brief summary of the play.

2. 3. Una noche cualquiera: Coming to Terms with the Military’s Gender Script Legacy

Susana Torres Molina’s 1999 play, Una noche cualquiera or “Any old night,” is the story of four people: Luli, an upper-class woman, lover of Pepe, an important politician; Marcelo, a talentless actor and Pepe’s best friend; and Marisa, a fashion model and Luli’s best friend. One night, Pepe and Luli plan to get together in Luli’s house in order to “do a favor” for their friends; they plan to have Marisa meet Marcelo in person. However, this initial plan proves to be a facade when Luli reveals that she is the one who, in fact, was interested in personally meeting Marcelo, and that she had plotted with Marisa to use the latter as “bait” to convince Marcelo to go to Luli’s house.

In turn, Pepe comes to regret his half of the favor for Marcelo, having “lent” Luli’s house to make possible the encounter with Marisa. Soon after the initial meeting,

Pepe learns that in fact it was Luli who was interested in Marcelo, his best friend. He then leaves the house, threatening to punish her for her unfaithful plot with Marisa. After a brief sexual encounter, Luli, Marcelo and Marisa are interrupted and interrogated by two apparent policemen, Musseti and Sandro, who as it turns out, were paid by Pepe to intimidate (mainly) Luli and her friends. These “policemen” force Luli, Marcelo and Marisa to provide an explanation for a supposed “denuncia” (this term implies that someone has accused someone in Luli’s house of some illegal act, thus justifying the policemen’s arrival). The use of the term “denuncia” is ambiguous enough to let the supposed policemen enter the house and for them to require a cooperative attitude from the people in the house. The fear to being involved in something illicit makes each of the individuals try to escape indictment by convincing the supposed policemen that they do not know each other well. Also, all three use different resources (prestige, money, influences, and seduction) to convince the policemen that they are upstanding citizens and that they should be excluded from any investigation.

As time passes, and as more information comes out in the conversation, Musseti and Sandro continually step up the tactics and aggressiveness of their intimidation, with no apparent purpose. Their motivations become even more enigmatic after Pepe arrives and orders the men to stop and leave, and they refuse, continuing their rampage of intimidation and psychological torture throughout the night. At the end of the play, “denuncia” takes on a second, particularly potent implication, referring to the making public or manifest, possibly to society at large, something that is wrong and needs to be exposed, by whatever means, about Argentine society. That is, that people such as Pepe and Marcelo, during the military dictatorship (the late 1970’s and early 1980’s) advanced

themselves at other people's expense, in particular by informing against and causing the death of innocent people like Musseti's and Sandro's brother, Martin, and his wife Laura. Most important, despite promises of democratic transition, people such as Pepe and Marcelo have amassed enough power to stop any attempt to reveal the injustices they committed. Musseti and Sandro emerge at the end of the play, as the witnesses of a broader political system of terror, a system that takes away the lives of many citizens, and in which Pepe and Marcelo are only a small part of an immense mechanism. Instead of waiting for a justice that never seems to occur, Musseti and Sandro find their own way to sort out the Argentine dilemma by solving the problem of military violence with more violence. After extracting a confession from each one through verbal torture and personal humiliation, and making them beg forgiveness, Musseti and Sandro abruptly leave the house. Although not quite similar to the military style of extracting confession, Musseti and Sandro have performed an but personal way to avenge the death of their brother and sister-in-law.

2. 4. Sexual Contract: On How Woman Lost Her Body

In Una noche cualquiera, Pepe is introduced as an entrepreneur who has become an important politician, while Luli is an upper-class woman and the widow of another important entrepreneur who, during the military dictatorship, was kidnapped and *desaparecido*.⁴⁰ Later in the play, following Musetti and Sandro's use of psychological torture, we learn that Pepe, in agreement with Luli and in exchange for her agreement to

be with him, made her husband disappear. In other words, they established a sexual contract by which Luli exchanged her *property in person* for a specific service from Pepe. However, Luli's current desire to be unfaithful to Pepe makes it clear that each of the two have understood their contract differently. Pepe understood that through their "contract" he established a permanent relationship with Luli (the law of the male sex-right), which includes Luli's subordination and his exclusive access to her body. Luli, however, understood that Pepe not only had to get rid of her husband, but also she claims from him the right (thereby challenging the original contract) to some amount of sexual gratification.

In contrast to most common contracts, the sexual contract (and the marriage contract alike) constitutes a very broad set of rules that the parties cannot read and understand because there is no *document*. The sexual contract is far more implicit than explicit. Nonetheless, it demands from the parties specific performances (Pateman, 164). From Pepe's perspective, the use of force to punish Luli's unfaithfulness is legitimate because one of the aspects that the sexual contract clearly (in his mind) guarantees him is sexual exclusivity over her body. It does not matter if he hits her or hires other men to threaten her; what is important is that he is exercising his right to discipline Luli. In other words, Pepe's sexual dysfunction is not considered by him a relevant or justifiable reason for Luli's invalidation of their unequal contract. However, Sandro and Musetti's invasion of two couples' daily lives precipitates a specific "invalidation" of Luli-Pepe's contract. After they destroy Luli's house and threaten to set fire to the apartment, she confesses her will to admit access to her body according to her desires, thereby negating Pepe's claim

⁴⁰ The fact that Pepe's character was inspired by the feared and hated figure of Emilio Eduardo Massera (as we learned in an interview with the author), the Chief of the Argentine Navy during 1976-1978, is a key

of exclusivity. In other words, by breaking the silence about her first husband and exposing Pepe's impotence she denounces the contract, exposing the unequal basis on which it was constructed.

Luli's resistance to this inegalitarian contract, which denies her the right to claim reciprocal ownership over his body, becomes evident when, pushed to tell the truth about her first husband, she articulates her understanding of the contract as based not on her voluntary subordination to him, but on her right to claim from him equal return in sexual pleasure:

Pepe. (*A Luli*). Pensá muy bien lo que vas a decir.

Luli. (*A Pepe*). Esto es mío [apartment], ¿entendés?... y no voy a dejar que lo quemen por vos. ¿A ver?... ¿quién empezó esto?, ¿eh?... ¡Hacete cargo de tus cochinas!. ¡Y no me jodas más!

...Luli. El... (*Por Pepe*) mató... mandó matar... a mi marido.

...Pepe. Está [Luli] con rabia porque yo los traje y le destruyeron la casa, y ahora me quiere destruir a mí... ¡Yo nunca mandé matar a nadie!

Luli. ¡Ahora me querés hacer pasar por mentirosa!

Pepe. ¡Si sos mentirosa! Ustedes vieron (*A los otros*) cómo me hizo creer que Marcelo era para ella (*Por Marisa*) y en realidad... ¡No me hagas acordar!

Luli. ¿Y qué querés que haga?... Si con el stress y la ansiedad por los negocios, con vos no pasa nada.

Pepe. (*Con ira, a Luli*) ¿Por qué no decís la verdad? ¡Decí la verdad! ¿Por qué no decís que para andar con vos, pusiste como condición eliminarlo a tu marido?... y

element that illustrates the interpenetration between public and "private" sphere that we mentioned before.

que yo no acepté... y que igual desapareció. ¡Vos sos la asesina! (Torres Molina, 62-67)⁴¹

The sexual component in this extended argument between Luli and Pepe seems to represent without doubt the main motive for Luli's rebellion. The fact that Pepe cannot punish her by imposing his body on her, indicates that, as Cixous states, "they cannot end the struggle up in bed" – if the bed is understood as the place where woman should be subdued (47). In other words, the discussion held in front of Sandro and Musetti demonstrates Pepe's loss of dominance over Luli, which Sandro mockingly describes, as an "... escena... típica de una pareja que ya no se calienta más" (typical scene of a couple who no longer turn each other on) (67).

If the "empire of woman" resides in *rationing* her partner's access to her body, as Rousseau recommended to his daughter-in-law Sophie, then it is not difficult to understand how easily that empire can fall, for it is not the woman who in fact makes the decision to have sex or not: "... If she rationed ... her access to her body... [she would] make herself precious. She must be modest, not capricious, so that [her husband] could 'honor his wife's chastity without having to complain of her coldness'" (Pateman, 123). Moreover, it proves to be a useless tactic from the point of view of the woman because, as in Luli's case, only Pepe is able to decide whether or not to have sex with her. Under the guise of exercising his sex-right over her, which establishes Luli's sexual pleasure as

⁴¹ Pepe. Think twice before you speak. Luli. (To Pepe) This is mine [apartment], Got it?... I am not going to let them [Musetti and Sandro] set it on fire for you. All right... Who started this, Huh? Take responsibility for your actions! And do not fuck with me any longer! Luli. He (Pepe) killed... sent people to kill my husband. Pepe. She (Luli) is upset because I brought you here and you [Musetti and Sandro] destroy her house, and now she want to destroy me... I never ordered any killings! Luli. Now, you are trying to make me look like a liar. Pepe. Yes you are a liar! You guys see how she wanted me believe that Marcelo was for her (Marisa) but in fact... Do not make me think about it! Luli. What do you want from me?... With all the stress and anxiety of your business, nothing happens in bed. Pepe. (With ire, to Luli) Why don't you tell the

entirely dependent on Pepe's will (and as inherent in Pepe's act), the latter is able to hide his impotence or lack of sexual desire for Luli without any questioning of his performance as partner.⁴² Therefore, instead of framing women and men's relationships within the unproductive opposition of active/passive and so on, I argue that because women lack ownership of their bodies and because the sexual contract is about property in the person, the sexual contract legitimizes the subordination of women through their fundamental inability to fully contract.

truth? Tell the truth! Why you don't say that to be with you, you made the condition that I kill your husband ... and I did not accept... and that he disappeared all the same. You are the murderer!

⁴² It is interesting that the author, during the interview, described violence as something intimately related to impotence and fear: "When you are not able to do something or change it, then you destroy it, and the fear of impotence triggers violent actions," such as Pepe against Luli. However, contrary to my interpretation, she does not see Pepe's initial plans to threaten Luli as properly violence: "...Pepe thought it would be just a joke, that nothing would happen." Later, when I suggested that Pepe did, on a small scale, what the military regime did with the Argentine society ("generarle miedo" or "make them fear"), she remarked that it was in fact Luli who began by betraying him: "she made Pepe react that way, and because he reacted that way, he opened the door to Musetti and Sandro, who were waiting for the right moment..." In other words, while the author emphasizes Luli's unfaithfulness and downplays Pepe's menace, I underscore Pepe's violence and the inequality of the sexual contract.

2. 5. Recreating the Political Community: Gendered Military Discourses

Over the span of seven years, the Armed Forces' government or *Junta* (composed of all three military branches) developed and reinforced a discourse of *Argentine-ness* that on one hand, served to diagnose the disease that was infecting the social body and, on the other hand, to necessitate the Junta's mission of national regeneration, known as *el proceso de reorganización nacional*. However, as I mentioned before, the disease detected by the military so subtly manifested itself in the social body that the Junta was able to claim that there was no space that remained untouched by the cancer-like subversion. With a remarkable (but ultimately not surprising) Foucauldian understanding of the situation, Admiral Emilio E. Massera (Army Chief) defined the Junta's responsibility to protect life:

It is true, but not the whole truth, that this is a war between dialectical materialism and humanist idealism... it is true, but not the whole truth, that this is a war between liberty and tyranny. The truth, the absolute truth, is that here and throughout the world, at this moment, there is a war between those who side with Death [communists] and those of us who side with Life (Massera cited in Taylor, 16-17).

Through the idea of a social program necessitated by international interests, the military discourse effectively hid some specific political issues such as the increasing divisions between left-wing and right-wing *peronistas* (a populist party that divided political opinions for more than 30 years), and U.S. intervention in Argentine politics. This obfuscation by propagandist discourse operated primarily through over-simplifications,

such as constructing domestic and international politics (and then blurring the two) around oppositional categories: *peronistas* against *anti-peronistas*; communism against freedom. The divisions between left and right-wing Peronists were erased by the regime by treating Peronism as a unitary (subversive, communist) evil, much the same as the exercise of U.S. influence in Argentina (articulated by a term coined by the United States, the *Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional*) was erased by placing Argentina within the global context of the war against communism, thus investing the Junta with specific social responsibilities.

2. 5. 1. New Wine in Old Bottles: Masculine Re-Constructions

While set in the nineties, what happens in *Una noche cualquiera* is very related to the events described above. My task here is to show how some parts of this “process of social regeneration” consisted in fact of a gendered process of writing on the social body a new redistribution of power through constructions of sexual differences.

According to Taylor, the military government developed what she calls a “self-referential, monologic gender system” by which they constructed themselves around a masculine definition, and with which they reshaped the whole population (156). On one hand, by using specific methods in military training, the military reconfigured the military body itself around this masculine definition (to produce the right soldier for this special and unique mission) and, on the other hand, they reshaped the population through a hegemonic discourse about being a man. This twofold process let the military, as Taylor points out, “sort the men from the nonmen, the boys from the ‘sissies’” (73).

That masculine ideology was advanced by the military, which used any space or social channel to invade social life at all levels. The pervasiveness and resilience of that “training” in the population becomes apparent when, at one of the most violent moments of Sandro and Musetti’s torture project, the latter reappropriates two main symbolic spectacles of the ideology of military power: the (ironic) use of the national anthem to decide who should be tortured next and the reactualization of some of the mini-tortures and rituals of humiliation used by the military to “harden” its recruits into soldiers – into men. After singing the national anthem, Musetti announces that they are going to play “Vivan las mascotas” (Hooray for pets!), which is reminiscent of other “games” played in military basic training, such as *estaqueo* (“Stakes,” a soldier is staked naked to the ground) or *pozo zorro* (“Foxhole,” a soldier is placed and left in a pit in the ground) (Taylor, 74). Sandro forces Marcelo to walk on hands and knees like a dog, recreating the way in which the military regime treated the conscripts and the Argentine population in general, while Musetti calls out:

Vamos no seas tan llorón que no estás frente a las cámaras. ¿Sabés cómo nos decían en la colimba, cuando nos hacían bailar toda la noche y aplaudir cardos... ¡Mariquitas, dejen de gemir como putas! (*Se ríe*) ¡Que sabiduría popular, la de los muchachos! Esos días sí que no te los olvidás más. Nueve... ocho... siete... (Torres Molina, 85)⁴³

Sandro’s comment that “those days are unforgettable,” confirms the ever strong connections between the military construction of male-ness through torture and

⁴³ Come on... do not be such a baby, you are not in front of the camera. You know what they called us in basic training, when they made us dance all night and applaud cactus... You little faggots, stop bitching like a bunch of pussies! (Laughs) Such common sense the boys have got! Those days you never forget. Nine... eight... seven.

humiliation and, more importantly, through opposition to femininity. The torture of Marcelo ends when Sandro tires of playing with ‘Marcelo mascota’ and turns his attention to Marisa.

As part of the military’s program of masculinization, it was imperative that they extend their influence into all areas of social life; there was no space, public or private, that was not affected by the system of state surveillance, the universities and cultural centers were particular foci of the military’s concern because it was there that the particularly dangerous virus of subversion incubated. As Taylor points out, “with inquisitorial zeal, the junta oversaw book burning. Theatres were burned; actors, writers and technicians were threatened and blacklisted” (99). An uncomfortable combination of sexual transgressors, leftist people and other “undesirable” components, such as Jews and actresses, inhabited these spaces, which had deviated from some acceptable idea of morality and proper comportment. As an integral part of the military process of social reorganization, important sectors of the population were disempowered through a reshaping and reconstruction of sexual differences, which effected a realignment of acceptable ways of living or sexualities.

A second component of the gendered military discourse that is reactualized by Sandro’s and Musetti’s torture project, is the use of homosexuality as a method of emasculation and humiliation. It seems more than a coincidence that they choose to disempower Marcelo in terms of his sexual potency and sexuality; an actor, Marcelo is a heterosexual sex symbol, but Sandro and Musetti employ the stereotype of the homosexual actor to humiliate him and to call this status into question. As soon they get into the house, Musetti interrogates Marcelo as to how he makes his living. He introduces

himself as a theater actor and mentions that he plays the role of a homosexual character. As the interrogation advances to other people in the house, Sandro continues to insist on making Marcelo confess that his “role” is more than just on stage, and that his being an actor only offers a facade to disguise his true homosexuality. Indeed, pretending to believe that Marcelo is homosexual, Sandro persists in suggesting the idea that, killing Marcelo would be not a real murder, because on some level *they* are not properly human:

Sandro. (*A Marcelo*) Así qué sos (*Se ríe*) ‘gay’?

Marcelo. No, hago en el teatro un personaje que es... gay.

Sandro. Y si elegiste hacer ese personaje, es porque te gusta.

Marcelo. No, lo hice porque necesitaba la plata.

Sandro. (*Se ríe sobrándolo*). El cura ese... ¿cómo se llama? ...estaba siempre en la tele... bueno, no importa, ese cura dijo que a veces matar no es pecado, como por ejemplo, matar a un homosexual... La verdad que con curas así para qué estamos nosotros, ¿no? (*Se ríe a carcajadas*). (41)⁴⁴

What seems to be nothing more than a torture destined to humiliate Marcelo by attacking his masculinity and thus suggesting his sexual failure, results in fact in a rehearsal of the military heterosexual, homophobic discourse, although without inflicting actual sexual torture (as the military regime often did, believing that, along with other “therapies,” raping a homosexual would “straighten” him) in this case. Through this process of homosexualizing as a means of emasculation, Marcelo is rendered as an *invertido*, somebody with an abnormal sexuality (Taylor, 155). The fact that Sandro and Musetti

⁴⁴ Sandro. (To Marcelo) so then you are (laughs) ‘gay’? Marcelo. No, in the theater I play a character that is... gay. Sandro. If you chose to play that character, it is because you like it. Marcelo. No, I did it because I needed the money. Sandro. (Laughs demeaningly) This priest... What’s his name?... He was always on

reproduce this discourse, we learn near the end of the play, is because these were some of the same “reasons” for which the military tortured and made their brother and sister-in-law disappear:

Sandro. De rodillas... (*Los cuatro se arrodillan*). A Martín y a su mujer embarazada, les rompieron y robaron todo, después se los llevaron, los torturaron y se ensañaron especialmente con ellos, porque Laura era judía. Y a Martín como era actor lo trataban de puto. Y después de tenerlos mucho peor que animales, peor que basura, después de humillarlos, de aterrorizarlos, durante meses... los mataron. (103)⁴⁵

By re-enacting the military homophobia through a stereotypical characterization of artists and actors such as Marcelo, Sandro and Musetti attack his sexuality on two fronts. On one hand, they re-enact the simplified vision that equates actors to homosexuals, while on the other, they humiliate Marcelo on the basis of the superficial, Adonic vision he sells in the fantasy world of entertainment. Both dimensions are articulated in Sandro and Musetti’s broader perspective, which intimately connects a powerless Argentine society with a powerful, but banal and corrupted *clase poderosa del país*, which through their public presence, or, to use Taylor’s term, “public spectacles,” constructed an image of society that people like Sandro and Musetti reject.

Before suggesting some interpretations about the reasons of that rejection, it is important to say a few words about the torture that Sandro and Musetti perpetrate on

TV... well nevermind, this priest said that sometimes killing is not a sin, like for example killing a homosexual... Who needs a priest when we can take of it ourselves, right? (Laughs wickedly)

⁴⁵ Sandro. On your knees... (The four get down on their knees) With Martin and his pregnant wife, they [the military] destroyed and robbed everything, and then they took them away [Martin and Laura], tortured them, and they gave them a special treatment because Laura was Jewish. And Martín, because he was an actor they treated him like he was a gay. And after keeping them like animals, treating them like trash, after humiliating them, terrorizing them, for months... they killed them.

Pepe, whose character is modelled after one of the most powerful men during the military dictatorship and who remains, during the nineties, a still important “business man.”⁴⁶

Since the beginning, Sandro and Musetti knew who Pepe was and that he was responsible for the torture of many people, either by giving orders or by his own hands.

Consequently, they make Pepe play a “game” similar to the one that he or other military officers played while torturing people, forcing him to kill his friend Marcelo. In a recognition of some “paternity” for this particular torture technique, Musetti presents it in a reflexive way, exclaiming:

...(*Le entrega un revólver a Pepe*) Esto que viene lo aprendimos de vos [Pepe], en realidad es un homenaje. (*Sandro asiente*) Se llama ‘Hoy me toca a mí, y mañana también’. ¿Te acordás como es? ... (*Mirándolo a Marcelo*) ... Pepe por ser vos el amigo, te corresponde la tarea ...

Pepe. ¿La tarea?... ¿Qué tarea?

Musetti. La de eliminarlo, claro. (70-71)⁴⁷

The fact that Sandro and Musetti’s torture techniques with Pepe avoid some of the gendered strategies that they used with Marcelo and utilize other strategies, such as taking advantage of his fight with Luli, taking away his heart pills, stripping him naked, or chaining him in order to fuel Pepe’s insecurity, seems relevant for at least two motives. On the one hand, Pepe was part of the process of construction of the masculine military

⁴⁶ As Torres Molina points out in the interview, the project of social regeneration (in the sense of the elimination of subversion) was accompanied by a peculiar process of redistribution of wealth, from which Massera (after whom Pepe is modeled) profited. Taking the assets of those accused of being subversive and keeping it for themselves (as individuals) served a threefold process: it took away the economic power of the political resistance; it gave that power to the members and supporters of the military government; and it served as incentive (to individuals) to participate in the regeneration.

⁴⁷ Musetti. (Give to Pepe a gun) What is next we learned from you, in fact is homage to you (Sandro nodding). It calls “Today is for me, and tomorrow as well.” Do you remember it? ... (Looking at Marcelo) Pepe because you are his friend, you do the job... Pepe. What job? Musetti. Killing him, of course.

project. Interestingly, despite Pepe's apparent sexual impotence (which might seem a likely target for the two), the gendered military rhetoric seems discarded from the beginning in this case. On the other hand, and in connection with what I note above, it becomes apparent with the passage of time that the only technique that will prompt a confession by Pepe would be the direct threat to his own life. (Even the possibility of having to kill other people has no effect; Pepe demonstrates his ability to kill whomever, even Luli, in order to save his own life).

Thus, the main reason for Sandro and Musetti's action is a peculiar, mixed motivation that rests primarily on their impotence – their inability to get any satisfaction (due to the failure of the judicial system). By torturing Marcelo and Pepe, they take away their masculine power and keep it for themselves in order to gain some personal relief. Moreover, they believe to some degree that they are the result and consequence of the *impotence* or passivity (legitimizing their actions) in which the military government left Argentine society. In this sense, Musetti and Sandro's enterprise implies an overcoming of the fear and inaction, or "feminization" in Taylor's terms, that the military instilled in society through spectacles of terror. Individual and social impotence are presented as a situation that must be compensated for as part of a masculinist imperative, becoming the impetus for the men to seek a relative potency through the act of emasculating Marcelo and, to a lesser degree, Pepe. Stated by Sandro almost at the end of the play: "Don't think [to the four] that we are proud of or happy because of all this...[torturing them, destroying the house] but something had to be done so that the fury stops festering inside of us" (102). The end result is that Sandro and Musetti re-actualize some of the gendered discourses and instruments of the same reactionary system that tortured and murdered

their brother, in order to divest Marcelo and Pepe of their masculine power, in their quest for potency – for masculinity.

2. 5. 2. Feminine Re-Constructions

As Taylor points out, military discourses served to maintain visible differences between the sexes through appropriate uniforms, grooming, and comportment, gender acts that in turn maintained a conservative and very hierarchical organization of the society (106). It is not surprising that the social and cultural zones outside the main military targets of the family, schools, and universities were represented as spaces of deviance in which *invertidos*, homosexuals and independent or active (as opposed to ‘normal,’ passive) females proliferated. One of the main stereotypes regarding female deviance was the myth of the *guerrillera*, ‘the ‘unhappy, lonely adolescent’ who is initially led astray by a man, but then wants to ‘be’ like a man, and finally wants to overtake men altogether: A *guerrillera* [Taylor paraphrases from an Argentine article] is promiscuous (‘mujer de muchos hombres’) and she will use her sexuality as a weapon of war...” (80). In other words, the military did not only represent a woman’s use of her sexuality as a monstrosity that justified her being beaten and sometimes killed, but much worse, the idea of opposing her body against *Argentine-ness* removed all doubts about the justification for her annihilation.

Although the fear that women want to be like men, or more directly, that they don’t want to be like women, is not a discourse exclusive to military mindsets, the Argentine military regime performed numerous public spectacles, as Taylor states,

specifically focused on the reshaping of woman's bodies in the service of national goals. The fact that the military government understood that woman must be controllable expresses their discomfort with "useless" practices that did not serve or support the family system or social body (Foucault, 121). Women's engagement with the social body – in the social apparatus – gives them a utilitarian role that supercedes (and precludes) desires or activities that fall outside the domain of that role and might detract from the performance of that role.

To determine to what extent Luli and Marisa have deviated from their social role, Mussetti engages in a personal and intimate interrogation of each of the women. It is an interrogation that has its exigency in yet another discourse of the military regime, and whose form is also reminiscent of another power structure familiar in an Argentine context. Musetti uses a separate pair of chairs distant from the center of the stage, recreating the particular image of a Catholic confession. Focused on sexuality, the act of confession, as Foucault argues, "unfolds within a power relationship," in this case between Musetti and the women. Musetti is the one "who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile...[He] exonerates, redeems, and purifies" Luli and Marisa (Foucault, 61-62). Otherwise stated, in Musetti's words: "...¡y nosotros queremos que salven sus almas!... Una chispa de conciencia... una sola chispa y... (con un gesto de las manos imita una llamarada) ¡la redención! (105).⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the confession that Musetti extracts from Luli and Marisa is directed more toward judging their promiscuity than questioning their social

⁴⁸ "...And we want you to save your souls!...A spark of conscience...Just one little spark and... (with a hand gesture imitating a flame) Redemption!"

advancement at other people's expense (although this is less the case with Luli's 'confession'). That is, from the first verbal encounter, Musetti frames his critique of Luli's standard of living (apartment and possessions) more in terms of how she achieved that standard, through her *sexual services*. Rather than accuse her of using people to reach material ends, Musetti attacks her use of sex, first with her first husband, and later with Pepe, as the tool employed to acquire her status.

Musetti. (*Mirando alrededor*) Me gusta este lugar... ¿De quién es?

Luli. Mío.

Musetti. Ah, (*Pausa*) ¿Debes haber trabajado mucho?

Luli. Me lo dejó mi primer marido.

Musetti. Por eso... debes haber trabajado mucho (*Abre las piernas*). (38-

39)⁴⁹

After Pepe's arrival, Sandro and Musetti take advantage of Pepe and Luli's fight about who was the actual owner of the apartment. The two men force Luli to confess by threatening to set the apartment on fire. In order to increase the level of tension to an unbearable point and thereby to accelerate her confession, Musetti and Sandro have a conversation that, although we learn later that it is staged, encourages Luli, by ridiculing her situation with Pepe, to unburden herself of the situation by exposing her agreement with Pepe and laying the blame on him. Inspired by Luli and Pepe's dispute and Musetti's derisive comment, Sandro weaves the story about his parents that prompts Luli's confession:

⁴⁹ Musetti. (Looking around) I like this place... Whose is it? Luli. Mine. Musetti. Ah, did you have to work hard? Luli. My first husband left it to me. Musetti. Exactly... you must have had to work hard (spreads his legs).

Musetti. (*A Sandro*). Antes del feminismo, este diálogo no hubiera sido posible.

Sandro. Tenés razón... si mi vieja le contestaba así a mi viejo, la dejaba sin dientes.

Musetti. ¿Tu viejo le pegaba?

Sandro. No, sólo cuando estaba nervioso... digamos que... una vez por semana, promedio. (63)⁵⁰

The story goes that Sandro's mother "paid" for her house to be remodeled by accepting weekly beatings at her husband's hands and then making him pay for the renovations as penance for having beaten her. Finally, her plan (and status as a closet feminist) was revealed when she divorced him and kept the house. The inclusion here of this inverted story of domestic violence serves various purposes. On one hand, it is a distorted way for Sandro and Musetti to "reveal" the story between Luli and Pepe (a story they already know): Luli's ambitions of enjoying material wealth (from her husband and Pepe), and Pepe's desire to exact physical revenge on her. The second parallel to be drawn between the story of Sandro's mother and Pepe and Luli's dispute is the suggestion that Luli is only using the men in her life to achieve certain material goals, and will probably leave Pepe once he has served his purpose. The equation of beatings and sex divides, in an ironic manner, a continuous narrative of female materialism at a specific point in Argentine history, the inculcation of *la propiedad privada*. That is, women have always used manipulative tools to extract material wealth from men, and the only change in post-feminist Argentina is that women have a less (physically) unpleasant means to improve

their material status. It is interesting to note, as an aside, that the woman's tool is never more than her body in this depiction, an observation that reminds us of Foucault's assertion that woman, since the Enlightenment, has been regarded as little more than a (female) body.

The need to save her social position and material well-being is strong enough to provoke Luli's breach of silence. We learn later on that Pepe has reappropriated all of Luli's husband's property (claiming it for himself), leaving Luli with only the apartment. The fear of losing that as well apparently pushes her to break her agreement of silence with Pepe, disclosing his role in her husband's death. As Pepe puts it: "you [Musetti and Sandro] destroy her house, and now she wants to destroy me..." (66).

Whereas Luli's confession focused on her sexuality and her materialism as the intertwined elements of her sin, Marisa's confession, on the other hand, shows a more pronounced focus on sexuality as the sin, in and of itself. Although she is the least directly involved or responsible (of the four people) for advancing herself by causing the death of innocent people, the fact that she is portrayed as a "whore" makes her already guilty and a candidate in Sandro and Musetti's opinion, for inclusion in their ritual of redemption. She also is required to speak out, in particular about her sexuality, an act that transforms Musetti's interrogation into, in Foucault's terms, a *proper confession*. That is, it is centered on sex, "as the privileged theme of confession" (61).

This proper confession can be conceptualized in contrast to Marcelo's interrogation by Sandro and Musetti, whose games involve the idea of homosexuality or the size of his penis. The purpose of sexuality discourses in Marcelo's instance is to

⁵⁰ Musetti. (To Sandro). Before feminism this conversation would not have been possible. Sandro. Right... if my mom spoke to my dad like that, he would knock her teeth out. Musetti. Your dad hit her? Sandro. No,

disempower him in order to establish the conditions (breaking him down) that make possible his real confession – that of having served as an informant and having caused the death of innocent people.⁵¹ Sexuality, in Marcelo’s case, is a means to a confessional end. A very exhaustive and perspicacious interrogation about Marisa’s sexuality, on the contrary, constitutes her confession, means and end:

Musetti. (*La mira fijamente a Marisa*) Necesito hacerte unas preguntas.

Marisa. ¿Me vas a interrogar?

Musetti. Algo así... ¿venís? (*Toma dos sillas*).

Marisa. ¿Es una orden?

Musetti. No, para nada, es una invitación.

Marisa. (*Dudando, pero divertida*). Bueno, si es así.

...Musetti. (*A Marisa*). Contame tu primera vez... tu primer hombre.

¿Cómo fue? Pero contámelo bien, con detalles, muchos detalles. (40-42)⁵²

The fact that Marisa easily submits to Musetti’s demands suggests several explanations. On the one hand, she already recognizes that Musetti controls the situation and chooses to cooperate with him. Her performance, however, is not that of a passive women; rather, she attempts to seduce him in order negotiate a more favorable resolution to her confinement. Sandro and Musetti’s domination seems to reproduce conditions similar to those to which Marisa is used to being subjected. That is, she is used to being treated only

only when he was worked up...let’s say...once a week, on average.

⁵¹ Nevertheless, it is interestingly ambiguous that Sandro and Musetti picked Marcelo up to be “trained” as pet. That is, it is not clear if they did it because they were just seeking to break him down or in fact, they were pursuing some kind of “regeneration” in Marcelo.

⁵² Musetti. (Looks directly to Marisa) I need to ask you some questions. Marisa. Are you going to interrogate me? Musetti. Something like that... Are you coming? (Taking two chairs). Marisa. Is that an order? Musetti. Not at all, it is an invitation. Marisa. (Doubtful, but amused) Well, O.K., if that’s they way it is. Musetti. (To Marisa) Tell me about your first time... Your first man. How was it? But tell it well, with details, lots of details.

as a sexual object; her agency in such situations is to use her attractiveness in order to soften the conditions of the interrogation. At the end of the play, when it seems that Sandro and Musetti are going to kill them and set fire to the apartment, Marisa asks Musetti about the reason for her being punished. Musetti replies that the fact that she had slept with powerful people, “insects” such as Marcelo or Pepe, was enough to justify torturing her. Musetti’s moralist argument blurs with a misogynist one, making Marisa beg for forgiveness because “...you always come on to whoever’s giving the orders...and in your résumé there is more than one murder, and you know it...and it never mattered to you...” (103).

The idea of punishing women because they slept with “the enemy” is as old as the stories of conquest and domination. In other words, in times of crisis, women’s bodies, which exist in constant relationship with the social body, are called, as is the entire society, into the service of the nation. By rejecting that role, Marisa is punished as a *collaborator*, a treason that requires a social act of reunification to repair the wounds of (wartime) disunity, an act carried out by Sandro and Musetti. The ending in which Musetti and Sandro release the four people in the house, suggests that through the act of confession-absolution, the purpose (and possibly the result) of Luli and Marisa’s torture and release is to reinscribe them in their social roles – to re-feminize them and reconnect their bodies with the social body.

2. 6. Conclusion

In this second part of my study, I have privileged approaching women and men's relationships, as well as the relationship between the state and its citizens, employing a framework that focuses on gender conceptualizations as a means to legitimize a specific political and social organization. I have argued, following Taylor, that during the late 1970's and early 1980's the military government developed a self-referential gender system that through public spectacles and torture techniques reconfigured both individuals as well as the social body into a *regenerated (regenderated)* political and social organization. I have furthermore taken issue with Taylor in that I believe that this *proceso de reorganización nacional* is more complex than the simplistic framework of a masculinist discourse that operates by feminizing the nonassimilable members of the population. In other words, the process that, through a "necessary period of warfare," would ostensibly finish with the reintegration of all the dislocated parts of the social and political body was characterized by an active program of regendering the population, although the specific motivations of that warfare were diverse. Among the thousands of individuals who, under the accusation that they had deviated from some acceptable gender norm, disappeared (with the assumption that they would be re-educated in concentration camps and then reinserted into society), were a variety of political prisoners, members of the political opposition, and individuals who had simply found themselves outside the good graces of those in power.⁵³

⁵³ Approximately 1,500 of the 30,000 who disappeared, reappeared (Taylor, 158). Among them, several had passed through one of the most famous concentration camps, known as the Escuelita (Little School), which functioned under the authority of Admiral Emilio Eduardo Massera, from 1976 to 1978.

On the other hand, I considered it important to discard, for the purpose of my analysis of the military dictatorship's apparatus of power over its own citizens, the theoretical use of concepts such as terrorism, violence, legitimacy or *abuse of power*. On the contrary, I have interpreted the military state intervention and ever-increasing control over the population in terms of systems of social control. Within this framework, we are able to investigate the operation of state power as a array of techniques used to discipline bodies and to control the population. With this understanding, torture simply represents one of the most basic and visible means and methods of disciplining the human body.

I have also challenged scholars' dominant argument regarding the state-sanctioned murder of its own citizens. I believe that by using the term "pathology" of dictatorship, they are unwittingly trapped into the fallacy of the democratic myth. Those who study Argentina commonly hold the belief that state-organized murder occurs when people and government no longer believe in democratic and pluralist ideologies. What they are saying then, in effect, is that if people would believe in democracy, then the power of the state would not be at all problematic. People, instead of perceiving that power as a regulatory control, would not detect an operation of power at all because it is covered up by democratic legitimacy discourses. In other words, democratic ideologies and national myths serve the purpose of power, which is to mask its influence by a polished juridico-political discourse about freedom and democracy!

Thus, I have advocated moving forward in our analytical sophistication and treating this historical period and its recent legacy as what I would call a "normalization" of the military dictatorship, replacing it in the analytical field of "normal" techniques of power. This understanding also encourages me to push further my understanding of

pervasiveness of “violence” in interpersonal contexts (embodied by Pepe’s plan to terrorize Luli or the psychological torture perpetrated by Sandro and Musetti), as well as between the state and the population.⁵⁴ In search of different explanation, I have found an interesting connection between what initially seemed to be two absolutely unrelated topics: sexual contract (as a story that explains women’s lack of bodily proprietorship) and torture (as a method of *re*-placing and *re*-writing women’s body into the social and national discourse). In other words, while the sexual contract explains how sexual difference legitimizes political difference, I understand torture as a way to construct political difference by reconstructing sexual difference. Another way to express this relation between sexual contract and torture, via feminine gender norms, is the narrative that occurs before and after transgression. That is, the sexual contract establishes body norms for the woman. Torture is the reaction to a transgression of those sexual norms. (Following Foucault’s idea of sexual saturation of the woman’s body and that body’s communication with the social body, can any transgression by a woman be non-sexual?)

The clearest example of this narrative of contract/norm-transgression-torture can be found in Pepe and Luli’s relationship and in Musetti and Sandro’s torture of Luli and Marisa. To some extent, I showed that Musetti and Sandro punish them because they deviated from their social role, which is interpreted as an illegitimate use of their own bodies or sleeping with the enemy. (The latter seems to be more of a process of re-inscription of their bodies (through confession-redemption) into the social body.)

⁵⁴ To clarify, whereas allowing an understanding of authoritarianism as abnormal offers the simplistic logic that any “abnormality” in the micro-scale can be attributed to the “macro-abnormality,” thinking about techniques of power in a more universal way forces us to seek more insightful understandings of the origins of interpersonal violence.

With respect to the first of the two examples listed above, Luli's entry into a "contract" with Pepe established her body as property over which Pepe exercises his sex-right. That is, it seems that regardless of Luli's social class, she is no more than her body, which Pepe kept, along with her material property, her inheritance from her husband's death (never mind the cause of his death). The concept of sexual contract also illuminates the misogynist argument upon which rest many of the relationships between women and men illustrated by the play, that it is through sexual commodification that women are best able to improve their material status.

With regard to the gender constructions applied to the men in the play, it is important to note the process of divesting Marcelo's masculine power by homosexualizing him and later reproducing a sort of "training" or regeneration.⁵⁵ Musetti is able at the same time, without totally reconstituting Marcelo's body as homosexual – he never gets to inflict sexual torture – to reenact some kind of sexual differentiation by imposing himself as the trainer (active) and Marcelo as the trained (passive).

As for their decision to all but completely avoid using the established torture techniques on Pepe, two possibilities arise. First, an argument of logistics or practicality can be suggested. That is, Pepe has a history as one who has carried out the torture techniques familiar to Musetti and Sandro and thus knows their effectiveness and is somewhat immune to the techniques. This is even more likely if we understand the character of Pepe to be based on the real world personage of General Massera, an idea raised by Torres Molina in the interview. The second possible explanation for the two men's decision not to use torture techniques that would call into question Pepe's

sexuality is that, given his elevated social and political position, a certain aspect of paternity is at work. In this sense, Musetti and Sandro's attack on Pepe is a sort of revenge against the father. Therefore, the use of techniques that would call into question of Pepe's sexuality would be problematic for two reasons. First, being the father, Pepe's sexuality is already (in a grammatical sense) perfected – complete and proven. Second, putting the situation within a Freudian framework, to call into question the sexuality of the father, *el macho*, the one who presides over and imposes the boy's entry into the social order, would be to call into question their own sexuality, their own *machismo*, hence their own existence.

The final point I wish to raise in this conclusion is that Musetti and Sandro's reversal constitutes a partial reinforcement of the gender discourses of the military regime. I offer this explanation for two main reasons. One, they appropriate the military dictatorship's techniques of power, although they seem not believe in the cultural constructions of gender attached to these techniques. Of course, this is their dilemma: they cannot use the (highly-effective and proven) techniques without reifying the very constructions these techniques were intended to reinforce; while on the other hand psychological torture, entirely and necessarily culturally contingent, is reliant on these constructions for its effectiveness. The second diversion from the military's program is that Musetti and Sandro's program includes only a project of reinscription, whereas the military government's program included two parts. Sandro and Musetti intentionally do not attempt, as did the military, to eliminate opposition. In this sense, they distance themselves from the

⁵⁵ Marcelo's regeneration here is the same as the recruit's (boy's) rebirth as a soldier (man) through the employment of military training (humiliation) techniques. Those used on Marcelo reproduce this process

state's willingness to use ultimate force. They simply leave the place as if 'nothing had happened.'

within the scope of the play.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have structured my analysis of two plays by Susana Torres Molina around Joan Scott's definition of gender. Her two-part definition distinguishes between the two basic aspects of gender. First, as a system of differentiation between men and women, the play *..Y a otra cosa mariposa* demonstrates the way in which machismo, the construction of masculinity by *talking about women*, depicts the female as that which is different from the male. Gender in the model of *machismo*, is not a system that constructs men and women as different, but that constructs women *as different from men*. Moreover, as a system of and exigency for active and daily re-construction of masculinity, *machismo* would seem to construct the gender dichotomy as masculine-female, since women (as passive beings) are not understood as having to construct femininity, but rather as simply having a nature determined by biology. Whereas men choose their actions based on a need to *be* masculine, women act in accordance with their sex. The depiction of gender construction offered by the play also shares similarities with Foucault's thesis on the hysterization of women's bodies. His historical narrative of the Enlightenment process of "sexually saturating" women's bodies, and thus filling their being with their sex, is very apparent in the play's main characters' developing adolescent understanding of women, and also in the ways in which the characters understand women throughout the play.

In accordance with the play's depiction of women as differentiated from men, there are no female characters in the play; they only appear as figments of the masculine imagination and as figurative points in space, animated by the characters' attentions. This

dramatic representation has various theoretical implications. First, as Cixous points out, women inhabit a place of silence. They don't even have the ability to speak, and thus must be spoken for by the agents of language, men. An even more appropriate theoretical connection can be drawn with the work of Teresa de Lauretis. In her depiction of women's place in society, she describes them as inhabiting a sort of 'space-off' (26). Obviously, this depiction is particularly interesting in this specific discussion, as the female personages of the play actually do inhabit a space-off. This representation further places the masculine as central and neutral and the female as apart, a very appealing possibility, given the way in which the play portrays the gender differentiation system.

The second half of Scott's definition, exemplified in the play Una noche cualquiera, is that gender is a primary signifier of power relationships. The characters in the play are variously empowered and disempowered by their location in Argentine society's gender hierarchy and are also able to use gender, in terms of culturally available symbols, as a tool to empower themselves and disempower others. Specifically, the play begins with two characters, Luli and Pepe, in a relationship that began some time before the first scene. The play of gender in shaping their relationship is readily apparent, and relies on an already established Argentine construct of gender. The *sexual contract* that frames their relationship is based, in its constitution, on a culturally available standard contract for a sexual relationship, which is in turn interpreted and modified by both parties to the contract. That Luli and Pepe have differing understandings of the actual "terms" of their contract is not surprising. Whereas Luli understands the contract in terms of her desires and what she believed to be agreements implicit at the time that they made the contractual agreement, Pepe, whose *machismo* is constructed without necessary

reference to the feminine as a subject, draws much more from some idea of a standard sexual contract. That is, he takes for granted certain aspects of the Argentine gender system (which Luli might reject), such as his exclusive right to her body, at his discretion. In fact, the entire drama is based on the misunderstanding of Pepe's responsibility to provide Luli with sexual pleasure. While his impotence is not problematic for Pepe, Luli takes it as a sign of his inability to fulfill his contractual responsibilities, and thus as voiding the contract.

Gender, as a variety of culturally available symbols, on the other hand, is manipulated by the characters in the play, in order to reallocate power, a strategy used by the military government in Argentina during the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the clearest examples of this strategy is the employment of the *madre-puta* dichotomy. The military used the already culturally available symbols of the mother and the whore (with "good" and "bad" implicit) to relegate women to their "appropriate" place in society, while further constructing the military government as the holders of the word. As the ones who could manipulate cultural symbols, the government cemented its authority.

Sandro and Musetti reappropriate these tools to achieve their specific ends. The use of gender attribution as a tool of psychological torture has the effect of stripping away masculine power, for example, from the character of Marcelo, an actor and cultural sex-symbol, and provides Sandro and Musetti a relative empowerment over him. In the case of the women characters, Sandro and Musetti instill in Luli and Marisa a sense of guilt and a need for absolution, utilizing the culturally available norms of female propriety. By depicting the women, who have sought to advance themselves in society by using their body as a form of collateral, as whores, the torturers are able to instill in them

a sense of having “sinned,” both against propriety and against society. The recreation of the confessional image (also eminently culturally available) reconstructs the power relationship between sinner and absolver, giving Sandro and Musetti, yet again, a relative empowerment.

The only character on which the two do not use gendered symbols as a tactic of psychological torture is Pepe. Because Pepe occupies a position of maximum (and pluperfect) masculinity, Sandro and Musetti are unable to use gender as a means of disempowerment on him.⁵⁶ The interesting connection to be drawn here is a reflection back to the gender dichotomy of masculine-female established in my discussion of gender as sexual differentiation. Whereas the two female characters, regardless of their social position or specific sexuality, are disempowered through gender in the same manner, using the same gender technique, there is a tacit recognition that within maleness there are degrees of masculinity. Thus, while masculinity is constructed in degrees, female-ness is homogeneous and complete (in its incompleteness).

This understanding that masculinity is somehow constructed and variable, and the complementary understanding that female-ness is biological and fixed demonstrate the central focus of this thesis, that *machismo* is a system within which feminine subjectivity is rejected, and within which female objectivity is portrayed as a separate whole. Taylor, in her analysis of the gender constructions utilized by the military government of the 1970s and 1980s makes the assertion that the entire society was inscribed within a gender spectrum that extended from the masculine to the feminine. In her understanding, the gender framework was indeed self-referential; the military placed itself in a position of epitomal masculinity – a superlative position of best – with a range of character

extending from the masculine (better) to the feminine (worse). I disagree with this depiction, however, in the way that my understanding of *machismo* offers the much more (historically) appealing arrangement of separate scales of masculinity and “female-ness.” I concur with Taylor’s placing of the military masculine archetype at the head of the scale, in the position of best, and I certainly agree that the gender constructions were self-referential (established by the military). In terms of the scales of gender, however, I suggest that the military government of the 1970s and 80s constructed two scales: the scale of masculinity extended from more masculine to less masculine (homosexual), from better to worse; the scale of female-ness, on the other hand, was more of a binary, which provided a right (the good mother – using her body in the service of the social body) and a wrong (the whore – using her body for her own desires). As such, my thesis of *machismo* is apparent in Argentine society under the military government; it is self-referential, sets masculine and female as separate wholes, and denies female subjectivity.

It is interesting to note the centrality of this way to understand *machismo* in both of Torres Molina’s works, which were written almost twenty years apart. The possibility that *machismo*’s self-referential construction of masculinity and female-ness, is an enduring trend of Argentine culture and responsible for organizing social relationships is an intriguing question raised by this thesis, and one that bears further interrogation. Why is it that *machismo* remains such a self-sustaining force while telling only half of the story? What is it about Argentine culture that places gender at the center, making it such a politically useful theme? What do the multi-layered masculine gender differentiation and the female binary (mother/whore) evident in both plays, the various contests for masculine power and domination, reveal about the political implications of

machismo in contemporary Argentina? These are questions that invite further investigations.

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Natacha Osenda: En una entrevista que le hicieron en 1987 decía que una de las razones de la pieza ...Y a otra cosa mariposa era “atacar el machismo del argentino,” ¿Por qué en particular en 1981?. ¿Significa algo en particular esa fecha, tanto a nivel personal como a nivel país?

Susana Torres Molina: No me reconozco diciendo atacar el machismo. No, digo esto porque a veces uno dice algo y después sale en la prensa... atacar no, por hay, quería revelar algo tan enquistado en esta sociedad como es el machismo... ponerlo en el tapete, mostrarlo, exacerbarlo para que se vea mucho mas nítido. No me veo mucho con esta cosa de ataque, no, no, no con esa palabra...

Es una entrevista que le hizo la Dra. Eidelberg.

Ah...no era la prensa, pero bueno, yo... si ha pasado tiempo no me reconozco con esa actitud de atacar, me parece que un artista lo que hace es revelar, exponer y después cada uno sacará sus conclusiones, no es ése el lugar, me parece, más específico del artista, de hacer ataques o defensas arriba del escenario. Creo que si alguien se siente atacado tiene que ser una consecuencia de haber visto algo en lo que se identificó, se molestó tan profundamente que se sintió atacado. Pero no tendría que ser un objetivo para un artista “voy a hacer una obra para atacar,” por ejemplo. Seguramente se vuelve burdo. 1981 era la época de las Malvinas, yo me acuerdo cuando íbamos a retomar ...Y a otra cosa mariposa, después de haberlo hecho durante unos meses, se paró en el verano, y cuando íbamos a retomar, creo yo, cuando era en marzo o abril, fue lo de las Malvinas, con lo cual hicimos unas funciones y después dejamos de hacerlas con el clima general que

había acá... que no se prestaba de pronto para una obra de estas características, y además porque la gente estaba, bueno, un momento muy angustiado, era un momento muy difícil, retomamos nuevamente más adelante.

¿Pero la escribió en España a esta obra?

Sí, la escribí en España.

¿Y qué pensaba en ese entonces?

Bueno, me interesaba escribir sobre ciertos arquetipos masculinos que eran muy identificables en la sociedad argentina y que también estaban en la sociedad española, pero bueno, yo lo que quería, era escribir con mi lenguaje, de la sociedad que yo conozco mejor, no sé cómo se me ocurrió la idea, yo no soy muy de reflexionar, “voy a escribir de genero, la mujer.” No sé, yo en ese momento estaba escribiendo cuentos eróticos, porque en ese momento llegue a España, huyendo de acá, porque en ese momento mi marido era Eduardo Pavlovsky, lo habían venido a buscar y él se había tenido que escapar, bueno, nos reunimos en España saliendo de una situación digamos así... tremebunda de acá, realmente de vida o muerte, en mi casa acá entraron, la robaron, tiraron alquitrán, rompieron cosas y no me encontraron ni a mí ni a Tato de casualidad, si no, yo por ahí no estuviese hablando con vos en este momento. Entonces nos fuimos a Madrid a vivir, y justo llego en una época en que España estaba en pleno destape, se había muerto Franco, entonces, bueno, un auge con todo lo que tiene que ver con erotismo. Había muchas experiencias creativas, muy alternativas, un estallido de creatividad y libertad... y me conecto con Buckovsky, empiezo a leer a Buckovsky, todo esta editorial Anagrama que empieza a sacar muchos libros, y de pronto leo a Anaïs Nin, leo “La sonrisa vertical”, que era una edición de literatura erótica que sacaba Berlanga el director de cine, y me doy

cuenta que cuando las mujeres escriben sobre erotismo, al menos lo que yo había leído, parecían hombres, es decir, seguían siendo el objeto de deseo del hombre, en un lugar muy pasivo, y cuando el hombre escribía sobre sus experiencias íntimas, eróticas, lo hacía, como en el caso de Bukovsky con un desparpajo y con una... sin tener que estar pidiéndole permiso a nadie, las cosas eran como eran, y no las disfrazaba, y no hablaba de eufemismos y todo. Entonces de ahí surgieron los cuentos de Dueña y señora. Yo dije, “yo quiero escribir como escribe Buckovsky,” no como escribe Buckovsky literariamente, pero con la libertad... cómo nombra las cosas, cómo se ríe de sí mismo y cómo se permite... y donde la mujer es sujeto de su propio deseo y no es objeto de otro deseo, entonces, bueno, y estos cuentos que quedaron finalistas en este concurso de “La sonrisa vertical” pero ahí no se publicaron. Cuando vine acá, se publicaron acá. Vos no lo leíste a esos cuentos?

No.

Bueno, (los cuentos) fueron un escándalo acá, muy llamativo, se vendieron dos ediciones, porque claro, yo volví en el 81 todavía estaban los militares, la editora, no sé cómo llegó una editora, me dijo, “si Ud. se anima a editarlos, yo también me animo, y yo dije “bueno...” Así fue cómo aparecieron estos cuentos. Paralelo a esto, se ve que en ese momento a mí me interesaba el tema, relaciones hombre/mujer, machismo, porque de alguna forma Dueña y señora también tenía algo que ver con el machismo. Yo sentía que las mujeres cuando escribían sobre el erotismo también eran machistas, se ponían en un lugar donde ellas eran... absolutamente pasivas al deseo del hombre. Debe estar relacionado Dueña y señora, los cuentos, el machismo y la pasividad con esta idea, que yo, ya no te podría decir como surge, con esta idea de encarnar estos cuatro arquetipos

del porteñismo nuestro, y que además, la idea era que la hicieran mujeres, y representar estas escenas. Pero creo que éste era un momento donde particularmente a mí me interesaba mucho, mucho este tema de en qué lugar se pone la mujer, en qué lugar se pone el hombre, en qué lugar el hombre pone a la mujer, en qué lugar la mujer pone al hombre. Porque para mí el machismo está también alimentado por la mujer. La mujer... la madre que también sigue transmitiendo creencias que tienen que ver con el machismo a sus hijos y sigue reproduciendo esta forma de entender la vida y las relaciones. Es decir, cuando hablo de machismo, no hablo del hombre, hablo de una ideología, donde la mujer es también responsable.

¿Y por qué pensaba de entrada trabajar con actrices?

Para desapegarme del realismo, de lo naturalista. Si todo esto lo decían cuatro hombres, era simplemente reproducir lo que se ve en la calle, ¿no? Cuatro hombres hablando de mujeres, mas allá de que el texto fuera gracioso, fuera mordaz, pero era una reproducción. En cambio el hecho que lo hagan cuatro mujeres, ya le da una vuelta de tuerca, un salto que cada palabra, cada gesto adquiere otra significación.

Leyendo otros trabajos literarios, encontré varias interpretaciones al requerimiento de la obra de emplear actrices. Por caso, una crítica norteamericana afirma que, el hecho que en la obra se trata de mujeres que actúan de hombres pero que en definitiva buscan-desean mujeres, introduce una naturalización de la homosexualidad.

Sí, esa me parece una interpretación subjetiva. En ningún momento ésa fue la idea. Esa ya es una vuelta de tuerca de alguien que evidentemente quiere ver lesbianismo, y entonces lo va a ver en cualquier situación, porque no está para nada planteado eso. Cuando ellas encarnan estos hombres, hablan de las mujeres pero desde su masculinidad

ficcional, pero su masculinidad. En ningún momento dijimos “vamos a hacer todo esta parodia para hablar de mujeres.” Me parece absolutamente retorcido. Si quiero hablar de la homosexualidad, pongo a mujeres hablando con mujeres. No voy a hacer toda esta voltereta para expresar... si yo no se si fue Laurietz Seda, sí, yo le pedí que me diera el material porque cuando vi que decía “lesbianismo, no se qué” me pareció como muy... viste estas cosas desde la teorización y donde cada uno proyecta su propia perspectiva.

En su perspectiva, entonces, ¿Dónde comienza y termina el juego de transgresiones que implica mujeres actuando de hombres?

Yo intente trabajar desde un lugar muy teatral, intentar, con respecto a lo ficcional, no hacer una reproducción. Por eso no quería hombres, naturalista, y al mismo tiempo ser convincente. Lo que se expresara, el discurso, fuera potente, que fueran creíbles esas cuatro presencias en el escenario. Entonces, se trabajó mucho en los comportamientos físicos, en la forma de decir de los textos, y en la gestualidad masculina y al mismo tiempo, ellas estaban muy maquilladas como mujer, y la forma de la ropa era de hombre, de pronto pantalón o remeras o shortcitos cuando son chicos y remeras, o trajes cuando son más grandes, pero todos hechos en telas y en colores y texturas muy femeninas, que ningún hombre podría usar. Es decir, todo el tiempo había un acercarse, pero también una distancia para no llegar a una imitación o una reproducción. Y sin embargo, en la actuación, de ellas cuatro era tan convincentes, que por más que estaban maquilladas, estaban con ropas de satén, por ahí debo tener unas fotos, porque además las situaciones dramáticas eran muy potentes. *(Se levanta y comienza a buscar una carpeta con fotos.)* No era que se ponían a charlar, no, no, pasaban cosas muy fuertes. Ensayamos seis meses, todos estudiaban su comportamiento, un trabajo actoral impresionante para hacer

cinco estadios en la vida de una persona. Los cambios eran rapidísimos; hacían de chicos, de adolescentes. Los cambios eran rápidos, y los cuerpos iban engordando, se iban poniendo cada vez más pesados y más rígidos. Había mucho trabajo corporal, mucho trabajo con los gestos, con las gestualidades. El personaje se empezaba a esbozar cuando era de chico, después ya de viejo, cuando tenía ya ciertas cosas, pero ya era un viejo. Muy interesante, y la distancia estaba en que, boca pintada, ojos pintados, y la ropa era de texturas brillosas, satén, seda. *(Comienza a mostrarme algunas fotos.)* Esto es, por ejemplo, cuando eran chicos, que todas las remeras eran de satén, esto es de una función, ves, están maquilladas. Mira los trajes! Es imposible que un hombre ande con esos trajes, todos eran de seda, brillosos y con todo un trabajo... ésta es la despedida de soltero... todos con traje de seda.

La idea de usar esas telas, entonces, es para enfatizar que son mujeres las que hablan...

Para generar un distanciamiento, que no sea una imitación naturalista, porque el teatro no es la imitación de la vida, el teatro es la ensoñación de la vida. Yo quería hablar de esto y quería justamente que llegara de una forma mucho más... efectiva. Por supuesto que si el discurso de la tortura lo dice el torturado, adquiere otra significación que si lo dice el torturador. Es decir, son procedimientos para generar un mayor impacto. Entonces, si cuatro mujeres encarnan estos personajes, lo que dicen adquiere otro significado. Y al mismo tiempo para que no sea una imitación todo este distanciamiento en donde, aunque tienen el pelo corto y se lo peinaban con algo, pero tenían los ojos maquillados, tenían la boca maquillada, tenían estas telas, estos trajes, que eran imposibles que un hombre los usara. Para subrayar más lo teatral de la situación, la representación, lo ficcional, para que llegue de una manera más poética, de más vuelo, que si fueran cuatro tipos en un bar con

jeans y con remera, charlando de mujeres. A mí no me atraía hacer eso. Me parecía esto como un desafío mucho más interesante.

Ahora, si uno analiza el discurso de los hombres, las mujeres existen por boca de ellos, o en otras palabras, sus discursos niegan a la mujer como agente, tanto en la construcción de sus deseos como en cualquier aspecto de sus relaciones.

Bueno, yo creo que desde la psicología te podrían dar una explicación más integrada, yo como artista y qué percibo como mujer en una sociedad machista. Yo creo que sí, que la niega como sujeto, como protagonista. No se cuestiona además ciertas creencias o ideologías que se han venido como transmitiendo de generación en generación, por supuesto ahora mucho menos, porque la mujer... digamos, aunque sea porque necesitaba salir a la calle, porque necesitaba tener plata, empezó a liberarse de un montón de ataduras. El hombre también ha tenido que modificar muchísimo sus prejuicios y su forma de entender las relaciones entre hombre y mujer. Igual, el hombre está bastante confuso en este momento porque la mujer ha adquirido mucho protagonismo y es raro ver en una familia que la mujer no trabaje. Entonces el hombre tiene que tomar otros roles, hay todo un desajuste en lo familiar, en este momento, justamente por el crecimiento enorme que ha hecho la mujer en todos los niveles. Pero fundamentalmente, no darle el mismo lugar a la mujer, ponerla en un lugar de madre o de puta, también. Están las que hay que respetar mucho, que son las madres, que son una entelequia, y si no, están las otras. Y una madre que se entrega, a lo mejor pasa para el otro bando. Una visión de mucho miedo, me parece, a la mujer, una visión muy limitada, muy cómoda, de alguna manera porque no se cuestiona demasiado. Siente que si a lo mejor se pone del lado de la

mujer o la comprende más, o siente mas empatía su espacio puede quedar amenazado. Entonces, por eso prefiere mantener estos estereotipos, ¿no? del macho, de las minas, etc. *¿Es por eso que no incluyó, por ejemplo, ningún personaje femenino? Es decir, las mujeres en la obra no representan mas que un punto en el espacio escénico.*

Y sí, porque ya hubiera cambiado absolutamente todo si de pronto ya hay una mujer. Dramáticamente no es necesario, es mucho mas interesante ver cuatro hombres hablando permanentemente de mujeres, y sin que aparezca una mujer. Yo no la necesitaba dramáticamente a la mujer. Entonces ahí si, hubieran empezado a decir “hay una mujer y ellos se la quieren levantar, entonces es una forma de lesbianismo, disfrazado,” no sé ya qué se les hubiera ocurrido. A mí me parecía mucho más atractivo, y dramáticamente me cerraba totalmente, cuatro hombres hablando de mujeres todo el tiempo, y que no apareciera ninguna mujer, que uno se enterara de toda esta situación de la mujer, del que se va a casar... de la madre, todo por lo que ellos van contando.

Pensando en la cultura argentina, y en particular en la obra teatral, ¿qué es “una mina”?

“Mina” es una forma así, popular, de denominar a las mujeres.

Sí, pero ¿qué más?, no hay como una separación entre minas en general y “las madres”?

En general los hombres a la madre no le dicen “mina,” otros hombres le podrán decir a la madre del otro, “esa mina está loca.” Pero mina es como... esa mujer está loca, una forma porteña, no sé si en el resto del país lo usan tanto, pero acá el tema mina, “esa mina está bárbara, es una mina increíble,” se usa muchísimo...

En este universo de minas y madres, como Ud. entiende la expresión-confesión de Pajarito (en la escena ‘Despedida de Soltero’) ‘Yo soy marica pero no soy mina’?

Y... que él es homosexual pero que no es una mujer... porque en ese momento están el Flaco y Cerdín, lo están como presionando... en una situación muy violenta, y él estalla. Además le dicen “usas bombachitas” y cosas así. Entonces, la expresión significa “yo soy homosexual pero eso no significa que soy una mujer.”

Pero Ud. no cree que hay varios significados sobre ser homosexual... Me pregunto si los términos “marica” y “homosexual” significan lo mismo?

Yo no sé muy bien si “marica” significa algo más que “homosexual.” A lo mejor sí. En ese momento me salió así y me cerró. Como diciendo, “bueno yo soy homosexual, pero no por eso me traten de mujer” con esto de la bombachita y todo eso. Por otro lado, creo que los juegos de los hombres... digamos, esta cosa machista, de que ellos disfrutan mucho más estando entre ellos que con las mujeres. Las mujeres serían como “bueno... están ahí porque hay que casarse, o porque hay que tener una mina o porque hay que tener hijos,” pero en realidad ellos van al bar, o a un café, o se juntan y están ellos ahí.. disfrutando mucho más entre ellos. Creo que hay mucho de sexualidad encubierta, en el sentido que hay muchas relaciones entre mujeres y hombres... hay como una tendencia homosexual, pero no en el sentido que van a tener relaciones sexuales, pero sí de mucha intimidad, proximidad y quizás hasta deseo de estar juntos, más por ahí que con el otro género. Pero, bueno, se disfraza, por ejemplo con “la cosa” del fútbol, el box, con los amigos en el café... hay como una clave muy potente. Y se pasan abrazándose y tocándose, pero todo “bien de machos,” son muy machos, pero siempre hay muchísimo contacto físico. Y en estas despedidas de soltero... y además en cualquier chiste que vas a

ver con estos tipos... es como esta mujer que puso lo del lesbianismo... se ve que ella lo "tiene acá" (señalando su cabeza como si se trata de un tema constante que está fijo en la cabeza) los vas a ver que todo el tiempo "che, puto," "dale maricón," es el chiste. Yo no sé si en Estados Unidos pasa lo mismo pasa, pero acá por cualquier cosa "dale puto," "pero vos te la..." sale todo el tiempo. Se ve que todos la tienen "acá" (señalando su cabeza). Bueno, evidentemente hay solamente dos sexos... y es lógico que por ahí este rondando la cosa. Por eso no me parecía para nada extraño que en una despedida de soltero que generalmente son situaciones violentas, agresivas, y que siempre salen estos temas, de pronto se la agarraran con... cuando ya están medio tomados, medio borrachos y cuando ya Pajarito dice "voy a alquilar con otro tipo," es justo para que lo agarren de punto. Por ahí no pensando que esto después termina siendo confirmado. Lo agarran de punto... y lo empiezan a jorobar... sumado al alcohol, hasta que el otro explota y dice "sí, soy homosexual, pero no me traten como una mujer."

En ese caso, "ho me traten como una mujer" significa "soy todavía un hombre"?

Sí... puede ser un hombre que ama a otros hombres no necesariamente tiene que transformarse en un travesti o en una mariposa, o en una drag queen. No, puede ser un hombre que ama o desea, otros hombres.

Sin embargo, casi al final de la escena, parece que los amigos prefieren no darle crédito a la confesión de Pajarito. Prefieren entenderla como otra de sus antiguas bromas-engaños de la infancia...

Bueno, ahí entra la negación. Creo que ante una revelación que los hace a ellos... que los desestructura, entra la negación como si no hubiera pasado nada, y ocultarlo, "y no se habla más del asunto."

¿Pero ellos están molestos con Pajarito por lo que otros dicen o es que se sienten amenazados en tanto machos?

Yo creo que a ellos de pronto saber que un amigo de la infancia en un estado así les dice “soy homosexual...” de pronto es algo que les hace tambalear su estructura. Porque son cuatro “aparatos” éstos, son cuatro muy limitados y rígidos... hacen como que no lo escucharon. En la puesta de la obra, después de escuchar esto quedaban todos medio así (como paralizados)... como que no les entraba en la cabeza, no decían nada pero quedaban así (paralizados) y de pronto el Inglés... con Cerdín o el Flaco, no me acuerdo, se miraban, se miraban así, y uno decía, “che, te acordás cuando...” y empezaban como si nada hubiera pasado. Rápidamente llenaban, tapaban... “y éste (*Pajarito*) como siempre nos hace entrar, ¿viste?” y el otro (*Pajarito*) tiene la cara así, dramática, muy fuerte, y los otros, empezaban a brindar y terminaba la escena. Un momento dramático muy interesante, porque desde la joda, joda, se llegaba a un momento de violencia y agresión, a una revelación muy dramática, a un desconcierto de los otros, donde quedaban realmente paralizados, hasta que empezaban a reponerse y se empezaban a mirar y se retomaba la joda de nuevo. Como contraste, estaba la cara de Pajarito, que estaba brindando... pero muy rígido. Era un momento de los más lindos de la obra.

Sobre todo el momento en que lo sujetan a Pajarito contra una mesa, como en una posición de mujer abajo y Cerdín y el Flaco arriba...

No lo pienses demasiado, es una joda típica de hombres cuando se juntan, yo no sé cómo es en Estados Unidos, pero acá se juntan... yo creo que allá también por películas que yo veo, todo el tiempo el tema de “que te la comés, que sos un puto,” todo el tiempo. Es así. Entonces, ya en pedo, es casi natural que hagan una cosa así, o que lo pongan desnudo...

estas cosas que revelan ciertas connotaciones... yo no digo homosexuales porque vayan a tener sexo, pero que están rondando todo el tiempo una atracción muy fuerte por los otros. Y por algo el chiste permanente es ése.

En la escena siguiente ('El Bulín') hay al menos dos momentos dramáticos igualmente relacionados con la construcción de la sexualidad de los personajes. Uno es la sugerencia del Inglés a Pajarito sobre poner una fachada a su homosexualidad y, el otro, el incidente con la muñeca de goma que termina con Pajarito maquillado. ¿Por qué se maquilla? ¿Por qué 'parece que no lo notan'?

Porque yo creo que ya hay un punto en que lo incorporaron. Como no querer verlo ni hacer ninguna... yo creo que es parte de la negación. ¡Cuando uno no quiere ver algo, no lo ve! Cuando el Inglés le dice a Pajarito 'buscate una mina,' no es casual que lo diga el Inglés, porque él es quien viene de una clase social más... aquí se dice 'careta,' más 'high,' en donde la imagen hacia 'el afuera' tiene mucho más valor, donde las apariencias tienen mucho peso. Como este asesinato que hubo, yo no sé si te enteraste en este country, no creo que te hayas enterado...

Sí, si lo leí en el diario.

Bueno, es un country súper high... la mataron, borraron todo, la familia se tapa todo tanto que no se sabe quién la mató. No se sabe si fue el marido, porque además borraron todo... un encubrir apariencias, que 'no se entere..' es muy interesante lo que pasó, porque es un asesinato en un lugar súper exclusivo, y donde aparentemente hay un entramado donde todos se cubren y se tapan para que no se sepa, debe haber algún motivo muy vergonzante detrás para que toda la familia participe de esta manera. En este caso, yo busqué un personaje que las apariencias le importan muchísimo, porque es de una clase

alta, que es el que le dice a Pajarito... que en realidad le está diciendo ‘ho me quemes a mí, que yo soy amigo tuyo y yo estoy con vos todo el tiempo, a ver si todavía se creen que yo también...,’ ‘hace como si estás con una mujer.’ Eso a Pajarito en algún lugar lo agrade, por eso la reacción que tiene cuando empieza todo este tema con la muñeca de goma y ellos que joroban... y que también es una manera sin que aparezca una mujer en escena poder reproducir... desde un lugar no realista y teatral un comportamiento con una mujer. Cuando llegan las chicas, ya la escena ahí se termina. Esa muñeca de goma de alguna manera, en ese momento simboliza a la mujer. Entonces, cuando la muñeca de goma, están con todo este tema ‘uh... sueca’ y hacen juegos, el Gordo habla en sueco, ya los otros lo incentivan, ¿no? Yo lo siento muy típico de los hombres, esta cosa de ‘dale, dale que va...,’ ‘¿y mirá te miró con ganas,’ de agarrarse para jorobar, aunque sean amigos, y como al Gordo hace años que vive con la madre... y como él lo dice ‘si quiero algo, tengo que pagarlo,’ porque el Gordo está cada vez más gordo y es medio tonto... entonces, los otros dos lo incentivan, lo incentivan... Entonces, yo creo que ahí es la venganza de Pajarito. Cuando el Gordo ya está colorado... con la muñeca encima, viene Pajarito y le hace ‘tuc’ y la desinfla, y el Gordo le dice ‘¿pero qué hiciste?’ Ese también es un momento fuertísimo en la escena. La escena es terrible... ésa es la venganza de Pajarito al planteo de salir con unas minas... y después ya, dramáticamente también era muy interesante que Pajarito, no sólo ya ‘ho lo ven’ sino que además aparece maquillado. Y los otros, lo interesante es que siguen como no registrándolo, porque registrarlo es asumir una situación que ninguno quiere asumir, que tienen un amigo que es homosexual. Como esas familias, ‘mientras no me entere, mientras yo no lo sepa, mientras no me traiga nadie a casa.’.. ¿entendés?

¿Pero cómo encaja Pajarito en esa situación, es decir, esperando en el bulín del Flaco a que lleguen las mujeres?

Yo no creo que a él le interese estar con ninguna mujer. Él dijo que es homosexual; no le interesa estar con mujeres... él estará ahí, se quedará ahí, no sé qué hará, pero obviamente una mujer no le interesa. Creo que él dijo que iba a pasar las películas ... el proyector. De todos modos, no trates de ver como una secuencia realista, o lógica, porque el teatro es condensación. Yo en una escena pongo todo esto: pongo a estos tres esperando prostitutas que además tienen la misma edad que sus hijas, que además cuando hablan de sus hijas “que si las llegan a agarrar el novio lo matan...” y están esperando prostitutas de la misma edad. Pasa lo del Inglés y Pajarito: “dale, salí con una mina,” pasa lo de la muñeca de goma, y ya como una imagen final, Pajarito que se aparece, no solamente maquillado, ya estaba maquillado, aparece vestido de mujer. Como encima, más todavía, sería como “no me miran, no se habla de esto, bueno muy bien...,” y aparece vestido de mujer y con tacos, porque maquillada de mujer están todas, ojos y boca. Pero aparece con un vestido atigrado... no me acuerdo como era, con tacos y era muy interesante... porque trabajar el comportamiento, la actriz era y es excelente, y una mujer haciendo de hombre que a su vez hace de mujer... digamos que no hace de mujer, que se viste de mujer. Es decir, de como sería el comportamiento de un travesti. Que en ese tránsito que camina con los tacos, y aparece así, que no pareciera como mujer sino como travesti, una cosa más rígida, con unos zapatos... Entonces la vuelta de tuerca era muy fuerte, muy fuerte escénicamente, dramáticamente.

Insisto en esto del maquillaje porque, leyendo otros estudios críticos, tengo la impresión que existen como dos versiones distintas de la obra. En mi copia no hay ninguna

indicación de que Pajarito se maquille sino luego de desinflar la muñeca de Cerdín y dirigirse al baño. Además, no dice nada de que él aparece vestido como travesti...

Todos los personajes tienen los ojos y las bocas maquillados... claro, lo que pasa que esa obra es previa a la puesta en escena.

¿Quiere decir que cuando puso la obra en escena agregó más detalles...

Este es nada más que el texto, yo después hago la puesta en escena y hago mil cosas... Qué sabía yo que los trajes iban a ser así, que iban a estar maquilladas de entrada, todo eso es el trabajo de ensayo. Yo tengo el texto y después con ese texto veo cómo lo voy a poner. Entonces, ellas ya estaban maquilladas de entrada. Pero aquí tenemos una actriz representando un rol masculino que a su vez está travestido de mujer. Escénicamente eso es muy potente. Porque una cosa es hablar del machismo y otra cosa es estar viendo todo eso que está sucediendo ahí, con todas estas situaciones sumamente intensas, potentes, ellos están esperando a estas mujeres... y todo esto está pasando ahí, la muñeca de goma está ahí, todo está sucediendo ahí, no es que "se habla de." También la muñeca de goma como procedimiento para incluir la presencia femenina, sin incluirla directamente, mediante una actriz. Ya de esto hablé, que no me parecía para nada necesario y que había otras formas que me parecían mucho más efectivas que aparezca una mujer.

Al final de la obra, encontramos a estos personajes, parece que han cambiado algo. Sin embargo, es claro que no han podido resolver esa doble vida, esa división entre sus apetencias de tener una familia y sus deseos sexuales. ¿por qué Ud. cree que los personajes, simbolizando de alguna manera parte de la sociedad argentina, están divididos?

No creo que eso sea un problema para nada del hombre argentino. Ese es un problema de los seres humanos. Eso pasa lo mismo en Estados Unidos con más o menos hipocresía, o más o menos abierto. En México es común las dos casas, la casa grande y la casa chica, donde el hombre tiene en su casa grande una familia, y en la otra, otra familia... y la mujer lo acepta. Es decir, que yo le quitaría la connotación argentina, yo creo que es una forma... quizás los únicos que escapan a esto son los países nórdicos. No sé, a lo mejor la cosa está mucho más pareja... porque para mí son como los países más evolucionados, ¿no? en cuanto a calidad de vida y a relaciones humanas. Creo que éste es un problema que en ciertas sociedades, en ciertos sectores sociales está más exacerbado, más impune. Pero este tema de la fragmentación... me caso, me enamoro, tengo hijos, después me aburro, y en seguida tengo relaciones y amantes con otras mujeres. Eso lo vemos en las películas norteamericanas todo el tiempo, así que no es un tema del argentino.

Sí, pero ¿qué es particularmente argentino en esta división?

Yo no sé hasta qué punto es un problema...es casi de la naturaleza humana...

¿Humana? ¿Hasta qué punto es también un tema de la mujer?

La mujer también tiene lo mismo, por ahí lo tenían más oculto o inhibido hace unos años, pero ahora, la mujer también. Una mujer independiente, autónoma... no por supuesto el ama de casa que no ve a nadie en su vida y se la pasa en su casa, que no tiene la posibilidad de conocer o de experimentar más cosas que sus cuatro paredes. Pero como eso cada vez hay menos. La mujer estudia, trabaja, está en relación a otros... ¿Por qué te creés que los matrimonios se separan? Porque el hombre quiere siempre separarse, porque encontró otra mujer, o muchas veces es porque la mujer se enamoró de otro hombre. ¿Por qué casi todos los matrimonios no duran en este momento? No solamente

por una decisión del hombre, muchas veces es por la decisión de la mujer, no se lo banca más al hombre o se enamoró de otro.

Entonces Ud. está hablando como de un doble discurso, porque convengamos que no hay muchas personas en Argentina que se casan, más allá si realmente creen o no en una idea romántica del matrimonio, teniendo presente que van a “ponerle los cuernos” a su pareja después de los dos años de casados...

No, no la tienen, pero la mayoría de los casos... algo pasa que hay un porcentaje enorme de matrimonios que después de tener hijos, a los 10 años, o a los 7 años se separan. Cuántos son?, no sé de diez matrimonios debe haber 5 o 6 que antes de los diez años ya están separados. Puede ser por múltiples razones, obviamente que la mujer cuando se casa ... de todas maneras me parece... yo no sé cómo es allá, pero acá en muchísimas relaciones ni siquiera se casan! Se van a vivir con los novios, y viven y no se casan, muchas mujeres tienen hijos que les ponen a los hijos sus apellidos, en ese sentido, yo no puedo hablar por todo el país. Acordáte, además, que ahora las relaciones de concubinato inclusive son aceptadas y legalizadas, inclusive las relaciones homosexuales. Las obras sociales, en el trabajo, se acepta una relación homosexual como una relación de concubinato. Sin casarse, tienen derechos legales, primer país en Latinoamérica... En esta ciudad, en ese sentido, la mujer... clase media, media-alta y alta tiene... se maneja de una manera con bastante libertad en estos aspectos. Entre la gente joven, no creo que nadie vaya virgen al casamiento... cada vez se casan menos, se van a vivir juntos, claro, ven que los padres están separados, ¿Para qué van a repetir esta historia?

Acordáte que, además, esta obra estaba escrita en los ochentas, han pasado veintipico de años! Imagínate el cambio de la mujer que ha sucedido, y por lo tanto, el cambio del hombre. Porque obviamente, si cambia la mujer y cambia la relación de la mujer con el hombre, la familia, los hijos, el trabajo, la relación con el dinero y el sexo... el hombre también... el hombre está todavía como que no entiende qué lugar ocupa. A veces el hombre no tiene trabajo y la mujer sí, y es la que sostiene la casa.

Entonces ¿cómo se ha transformado el machismo desde entonces en la Argentina?

No bueno... hay menos, hay mucho menos, porque la mujer creció muchísimo y ocupó espacios a todo nivel, y se anima a muchísimo más, siempre hablando... no estoy hablando de las villas, que por ahí todavía se manejan con otros códigos, te estoy hablando de la clase media, media-alta, y también, los cambios obviamente que van bajando en las clases más bajas, debe haber habido cambios también porque la mujer debe haber salido a trabajar. Cuando la mujer sale a trabajar sale al mundo y se entera de otras cosas, participa de otras cosas, y éste es un país de movilizaciones sociales, ¿no? Cacerolazos, piqueteros, la gente se junta y participa. Y la mujer esta ahí. Vos en cualquier cacerolazo, en un grupo piquetero, las abuelas y madres de Plaza de Mayo, la mujer en primera línea. Pero, cual era tu pregunta?

¿Qué cambió con respecto al machismo?

Cambió, cambió... igual éste sigue siendo un país donde en los lugares más jerárquicos la mujer no aparece todavía... candidatos a presidente. Por primera vez hay una mujer candidata. Todo el resto son hombres. Bueno, como también es un país muy católico, un espacio muy patriarcal, y también los militares tienen aca su predicamento fuerte, que es otro espacio también absolutamente patriarcal! Es decir, la religion, los militares, el

mundo de las finanzas y los negocios, el de la política, en donde la mujer todavía no ocupa el mismo espacio que los hombres... tampoco en Estados Unidos...

Esta pregunta se conecta con esa idea muy interesante de la obra sobre cierto carácter cíclico o de reproducción de las creencias, expectativas y relaciones entre la mujer y el hombre, materializada cuando las actrices reaparecen en escena vestidas de niños como al comienzo.

Sí, porque no han tomado conciencia de nada, no hay posibilidad de cambio, y si no hay cambio se vuelve a reproducir todo eso. Es decir, si nos vamos a un barrio, seguramente todas estas situaciones que están ahí (*en la obra*) son actuales, ¿entendés?. Estoy segura que sería lo mismo... y los tipos con guita que van y contratan a dos prostitutas de 15 o 16 años, o como en Salta (*an argentine provincial state*), este Hoyos, un abogado, señor feudal de allá, que lo encontraron en un hotel alojamiento con una chiquita de ocho años, y ya se la había violado a la hermana... pero como son esos feudalismos, bueno ahora se destapó todo eso. Pero viste, es muy contrastante. No se puede decir "no hay machismo," Sí, hay el mismo machismo. En ciertos sectores, intelectuales, en los lugares donde yo me manejo, no hay machismo, obviamente. Ahora, salís un poco, y seguramente se reproducen estas situaciones en lugares donde se ha trabajado menos este tema de las relaciones humanas, ¿no?, y si no se toma conciencia, se sigue reproduciendo. Si la mujer no toma conciencia cuando cria a sus hijos, y ya los diferencia, "y vos porque sos hombre hacés esto, y ella porque es mujer hace lo otro," sigue reproduciendo ese mecanismo... pero no se puede generalizar. Lo que sé es que la mujer ha avanzado muchísimo. Al avanzar la mujer el hombre tiene que reordenar sus fichas, obviamente. Pero que el machismo, esa ideología, eso de que haya cuatro hombres en una esquina, y pasa una

mujer muy llamativa y la miran y le dicen cosas, eso está. ¿Por qué cuatro mujeres, si pasa un hombre, no van y le dicen? Entonces, no es igual, no es equitativo. Hay lugares donde una mujer no se animaría a ir sola, cosa que no le pasa al hombre. Todas estas cosas se siguen viviendo ¿no?, pero... el avance de la mujer es descomunal en estos veinte años desde que yo escribí la obra. Ahora bien, estos energúmenos siguen existiendo, también. Estas situaciones siguen siendo actuales.

Desde que se estrenó la pieza, ¿Cuántas veces se repuso?

No, no, la hice y nunca más la repuse. Se hizo en un montón de lados, cada dos por tres me piden autorización y la hacen. Esta obra (*...Ya otra cosa*) y *Extraño Jugete*, como se publicaron de entrada y siempre estuvieron, y además son lindos trabajos para actuar, para actrices que para actores, se hace en el Conservatorio, la tienen como material de estudio. Se ha hecho en casi todo el país por grupos diferentes, acá en Capital se ha hecho varias veces...

¿En qué años?

Tendría que fijarme... lo tengo por ahí anotado. Una de las actrices, la que hacía de Cerdín, la dirigió ella después con otras actrices. Estas fueron mis primeras obras, mi teatro se ha ido modificando, en otras búsquedas, en otra investigación. Me encantan que otros la hagan, pero yo estoy más en los temas y en las formas que me son actuales en este momento como necesidad de expresión. Excepto que me dijeran “te pagamos para que hagas la obra que nos interesa.” Pero si no, yo prefiero seguir adelante con mis proyectos, que están más relacionados con mi presente. Me gusta investigar y no repetirme, ni caer en fórmulas ya probadas. Mis textos tienen una amplia variedad desde algo muy, innovador en su forma, o como en “Una noche cualquiera” en el cual retomé

un estilo de mis primeras obras, en cuanto a los personajes, diálogos, acción dramática. Mientras que muchas obras mías no tienen nada de eso.

¿Ahora en que está trabajando? Cuáles son sus temas?

Tuve una época de investigar mundos más internos... y también desde formas que tenían que ver con la investigación como fueron Espiral de Fuego, Amantísima, Canto de Sirenas, Paraíso Perdido, fueron todas obras de mucha investigación con textos poéticos, que tenían una búsqueda muy personal, algunas relacionadas con la búsqueda espiritual en el teatro. Hay como mucha separación en el teatro. Lo espiritual pareciera que no tiene que ver con el arte, y el arte pareciera que no tiene que ver con lo espiritual, y por caso Amanitísima y Canto de Sirenas son obras que hablan de la búsqueda espiritual, de una toma de conciencia. Ahora, ultimamente retomé como el tema de las pasiones humanas. Los últimos textos... Ella, son dos hombres hablando de una mujer que nunca aparece, y que también tiene que ver con las pasiones. Cero también es un hombre y una mujer, una mujer que contrata a un hombre porque no quiere arriesgarse nunca más a sufrir. Aquí también hago una inversión porque generalmente es el hombre el que contrata a la mujer, pero aca es al revés, cosa que también sabemos que también se da. Que hay lugares donde hay hombres, como "taxiboy," que se contratan. Pero en este caso es alguien que no quiere sufrir, no quiere más desengaños amorosos. Después, Estática es una obra de cuatro personajes, donde también se habla de la vejez... en general se hablan de los sentimientos, de la vida, de lo que nos da miedo. He vuelto a un teatro más con estas temáticas. Esta obra ganó un concurso de dramaturgia innovadora en España, y va a ser editada allá, y Ella ganó el primer premio del Fondo Nacional de las Artes, que es el concurso más importante en la Argentina y ahora la van a hacer en España. Una noche

cualquiera ganó el premio de los Hermanos Machado en España, y después tengo varias obras cortas. En diciembre del año pasado armé un espectáculo que se llama Actos privados,” que retomaré en marzo. Nada entre los dientes, Modus Operandi y Turning Point son las tres obras con las que armo este espectáculo. Las dirijo yo. Tengo otras obras cortas. Lo que no se nombra, que ganó el premio Nacional de Teatro, son dos personajes donde uno está muerto, pero no lo sabe, estuvo ahogado... Creo que toco temas... me interesa mucho el tema de la intensidad, que lo que está sucediendo sea muy intenso. Me atraen mucho los personajes que están desesperados... que la vida no les pasa por encima, por caso el hombre de Ella que está desesperado y se golpea la cabeza contra la pared por esta mujer, que después finalmente uno se entera que la ha matado. Personajes que sufren porque ya no pueden tener el mismo placer que antes... o por la soledad, que sufren por enfermedades, pero no sólo que sufren. Sufren en el sentido que les afecta, no los deja igual, los altera. Por lo menos en esta etapa me resulta atractivo escribir sobre personajes que están muy en el borde, muy en los extremos.

Por caso ... la violencia, la idea de “matar a la mujer.”.. que también está en Una noche cualquiera cuando Pepe no puede cambiar su relación con su mujer y recurre al “apriete” para disciplinar a Luli, su mujer. La amenaza del uso de la violencia (verbal o física) ¿cómo se relaciona con el machismo? ¿Significa una pérdida del estatus del hombre?

Bueno, en el caso de Ella, la mujer lo deja y él la mata por desesperación, la empieza a golpear, a golpear hasta que la termina matando, pero porque ella está dejándolo...

Sí, pero si pensamos por ejemplo, que también es una especie de “estado de desesperación” el que lleva a Pepe a amenazar a Luli... porque el conflicto dramático se

desencadena precisamente a causa de él, que recurre a contratar estos hombres para que la asusten...

Sí, no sólo a ella... pero lo que se desencadena no lo había previsto Pepe, él lo único que quería era pegarle un susto, hacerlos pasar por policías a dos tipos, como un chiste, como una joda... asustarlos un poco y nada más. De pronto todo esto se desencadena, porque estos dos hombres no son lo que Pepe creía... estaban esperando la oportunidad para entrar, porque además, detrás de todo... estos cuatro exponentes sociales, el actor, la modelo, la mujer de clase alta, y el empresario, hay todo un transfondo como de tanta gente acá muy conectado con lo siniestro durante los años setenta. Es decir, no me interesaba tanto el machismo porque de pronto la modelo o la otra mujer (*Luli*) son tan responsables como los otros hombres. No hay en esta obra nada parecido a la idea de "los hombres son malos y las mujeres son víctimas." Cada uno tiene su cuota de responsabilidad. La modelo se acostaba con todos los que tenían cierto poder, y la otra mujer dejó que su marido lo mataran... y eso además es un caso real, porque Massera, ¿sabés quién es Massera?

Sí.

Bueno, tenía como amante una mina que era de clase alta, Marta Mac Cormack. El marido desapareció, oh, casualidad!... y se quedaron con todo. Él (*el marido de Marta*) era un empresario. Es decir, en "la bolsa" de la represión hubo mucho delito económico y de todo tipo. Massera con el poder que tenía, tenía una mujer que le gustaba, eran amantes, el marido les estorbaría... ¿viste?, mandan a un comando, y simplemente desaparece. Ahora ése es un caso real. Yo me inspiré en Massera y esta mujer para el caso de Pepe y Luli. Después, lo que más me interesaba hablar era de la represión.

Primero, porque con todas las leyes de obediencia de vida, todos los asesinos andan sueltos. Eso lo seguimos viendo aún ahora luego de veintipico de años. Es decir, que no es un tema cicatrizado, cerrado, ni mucho menos. También me interesaba tocarlo desde un lugar no tan trillado y más convencional que es ‘los militares asesinos y la sociedad civil victima’; sino ver que para que estos militares hayan tenido el éxito que tuvieron en la sociedad, era porque también gran parte de la sociedad era cómplice. Y los que no eran cómplices, muchos miraban para otro lado. Muchos de éstos que ahora son como ‘referentes de la democracia’ tuvieron una actividad muy notoria en esa época. Entonces, me pareció interesante... ésto lo escribí en la época de Menem, 1998-99. Todavía estaba Ménem, y esto era una especie de ‘mercado persa.’ Todos estos modelos y actorcitos y empresarios de pronto poderosos que aparecían, y que de pronto son los referentes del éxito y la envidia... porque todos son como espléndidos... juntarlos e ir ‘destapando.’ Es decir, que cada uno de éstos hubiera tenido como un pasado de mucha responsabilidad por lo que pasó. Me interesaba que no apareciera ningún militar sino estos ‘exponentes exitosos’ de esta sociedad.

Le pregunto esto porque yo veo como un cierto paralelismo entre algunos aspectos de lo que sucede en la relación entre los personajes y lo que sucede a nivel macro o de país. La amenaza del uso de la violencia y su uso efectivo sucede a nivel de pareja cuando Pepe busca disciplinar a Luli, y ocurre igualmente con los militares, recurren al uso del aparato estatal para disciplinar a los ciudadanos.

Yo creo que la violencia tiene que ver con la impotencia y con el miedo. No podés, o no podés hacerlo de otra manera y entonces destruí... tiene mucho que ver con la impotencia, la violencia y también, sí, con el miedo a la impotencia recurrís a hechos

violentos. En el caso de Ella, él (*el marido*) ve que ella se esta yendo, y no la puede parar y le empieza a pegar y la mata. En el caso de ... de los militares, bueno, obviamente una forma de paralizar a una sociedad, de generarle miedo, y además ellos están entrenados para matar, toda su cabeza está entrenada para éso, armas, represión, están esperando una oportunidad para poner en práctica todo lo que aprendieron, en Estados Unidos, por ejemplo. Claro... sale como directo! El tema de la autoridad, el orden, el control, ‘mano dura para que aprendan.’..

Que es exactamente lo que Pepe quiere hacer, porque Luli desea estar con otro hombre. Sí, igual Luli... su actitud también es despreciable. Lo que pasa que esto desencadena otras cosas que no tienen que ver con esa especie de *menage a trois* que se arma ahí, ese jolgorio. Porque además lo que me parece interesante que algo muy liviano, una noche cualquiera, que aparece como una ‘jodita’ y de ‘levanté,’ y de vos me gustás y yo te gusto, después termina siendo algo terrible. Porque yo creo en esta cosa de que el ‘que siembra vientos cosecha tempestades.’ Es decir, si vos hiciste tantas atrocidades en algún momento algo te tiene que volver. Y acá en una especie de juego decadente, de matrimonios aburridos o de parejas aburridas, de pronto introducen a dos personajes que estaban esperando la situación, haciéndose amigo de Pepe para entrar, y Pepe pensó que iba a ser una jodita, que no pasaría nada... pero se desencadena todo lo que estaba tapado. Pero Luli, también lo desencadena, cuando le dice a Pepe que quiere que se vaya, que le duele la cabeza, y Pepe le dice, ‘pero ¿qué?, ¿te vas a quedar con ellos dos?,’ y de pronto el otro (*Pepe*) se da cuenta que ella se quiere quedar con Marcelo. Es decir, que de inocente, buena persona (*Luli*) tampoco. Una actitud bastante jorobada la de Luli, que hace que Pepe reaccione de esta manera, y porque Pepe reacciona de esta manera es que

se introducen estos dos personajes que tienen otros motivos mucho mas fuertes, detonantes. Y allí quedan todos involucrados en esta noche de pesadilla.

Acerca de esta noche de pesadilla, a causa de la intromisión de Muzetti y Sandro, cómo se entiende esta búsqueda de una ‘justicia personal,’ por cierto muy limitada y paradójica pues recurren a un tipo de violencia que se asemeja, aunque distinta, a la violencia de los militares.

Sí, pero es bastante distinta.

Sí, sí, pero hay un dilema planteado, por un lado todo el mundo en Argentina sabe que la justicia fue muy lenta, y cuando pasó algo, pasó tan poco que parece que nunca llegó (la justicia), y sin embargo, la búsqueda personal de justicia de Muzetti y Sandro está viciada por la violencia.

Es justamente eso, cuando no hay justicia, suceden estas cosas. Cuando no hay una justicia, un poder ejecutivo, un poder legal, que los asesinos, causantes de crímenes monstruosos, están libres porque leyes, como estas leyes que promulgaron como la ‘de Obediencia Debida,’ etc... pueden pasar estas cosas, que no son las que deberían pasar, pero pueden pasar, porque no hay justicia. Ni siquiera es justicia, es como una reparación. Es como la necesidad de que la gente se arrepienta de algo, y encima vos los ves a éstos como referentes exitosos, no es que no están presos pero se fueron del país o se mudaron y hacen perfil bajo, no nada de eso. Son referentes exitosos, sin ningún tipo de arrepentimiento. Al contrario, se muestran como que además siguen teniendo el poder. Entonces, para alguien que ve todo eso, que ha estado involucrado directamente, que han matado al hermano y de pronto los ves aparecer en la televisión, los ves aparecer en las revistas... la justicia no actúa... yo no digo que eso está bien, actuar con justicia propia.

Pero puedo entenderlo, como para mí el arte no tiene que hablar de lo que está bien y de lo que está mal, sino que tiene que abrir posibilidades y planteos y hacer cuestionar a la gente que ve lo que está viendo.

Pensando en nuestra conversación sobre “el destape” durante la España Pos-Franquista, y con algunas diferencias, el “destape” después de la caída de los militares en Argentina, me pregunto ¿cómo fué posible que los militares argentinos pudieran “tapar” aspectos tan fundamentales y privados como la sexualidad, el deseo, el placer de los individuos?

Cuando hay una situación de tanta muerte alrededor es muy difícil conectarse con el erotismo. Por algo se habla de Eros y Tanatos, aca se vivía realmente una situación demucho temor, de mucha negación, si estabas en los círculos más peligrosos para ellos, que eran los intelectuales, los artistas, la gente comprometida políticamente, la gente de izquierda... tenías mideo concretamente de tu propia vida. No son momentos para que uno pueda estar conectado con el erotismo, tiene que ver con la vitalidad, con la plenitud, con cierta relajación. Entonces, todas esas posibiliades se van cerrando... ante una energía que está más puesta en defenderse, en preservarse. Temor concretamente. Tratando de dilucidar señales que eran imposible de decodificar, porque caía tanto gente que estaba comprometida políticamente como otra gente porque simplemente estaban en agendas de esta misma gente. Es como un texto de Pavlovsky “por cada gente torturada hay 500 muertos de miedo.” Además el temor actúa de una manera... irradia. Con que uno cercano desaparezca ya eso genera en muchas personas muchismo temor. Todo esto es incompatible con el erotismo, cuando uno está con temor de su propia vida no está para conectarse con situaciones de placer, de disfrute.

Con la llegada de la democracia, el destape que se decía que se vivía en la Argentina, ¿cuánto de realidad hubo en ese “destape” en términos de sexualidad, relaciones entre la mujer y el hombre?

Se retomaba de nuevo un espacio de placer o de disfrute porque uno ya no estaba pendiente de la sobrevivencia. Más allá que no todo el mundo estuvo pendiente de la sobrevivencia, la negación también no es gratuita... el hacer que uno no se entera, de mirar para otro lado, aunque algo sabe, tiene sus consecuencias. Quiero decir, que no todo el mundo estaba con miedo a que le pudiera pasar algo, muchos no, pero igual había un clima que abarcaba, creo, a toda la sociedad. No era imposible mantenerse absolutamente al margen de esto. Cuando la energía que uno estaba poniendo para resguardarse... se libera, uno se empieza a conectar con otras áreas de la vida que habían quedado relegadas como el arte, la creatividad, la sexualidad, el placer, volver a tener cierta alegría, cierta sensación de una vida mejor. La gente que salió al exilio o que había decidido quedarse definitivamente en otro país, o volvía y se reencontraba, mi caso, se retomaba lo que tenía que ver con lo vital.

De todos modos, hay algo que te quiero mencionar de antes. Yo creo que es peligroso generalizar, esto de hablar “del hombre,” “la mujer,” “la democracia,” etc. Yo no puedo hablar de la totalidad del país. Te hablo desde mi perspectiva, y además es importante tener presente que las cosas cambian según clase social, nivel educativo, etc. En mis obras... como por ejemplo en Una noche cualquiera, yo meto ahí a personajes que de alguna manera son referentes de una ideología existista, eso no quiere decir que éstos son los hombres y las mujeres que representan a la sociedad argentina. Es una modelo, un

empresario, pero no estoy representando a “las modelos,” a “los empresarios,” a “las mujeres de clase alta” y a “los actores.” En esta situación con esta gente, son personas con bajos... inexistentes, diría, valores éticos y en donde lo que aparece, al principio, como una traición puramente sexual después se despliega y entramos en un terreno social. A mí me interesaba poner eso como inicio para después, que se abra, lo micro se transforme en macro y se termine hablando en la obra de una situación social, desde un punto de vista que generalmente no se habla, que es la complicidad civil, en la represión. Este punto lo tengo bien presente. No pretendo hacer de las obras una generalización al resto de la sociedad argentina. Sé que estamos trabajando alrededor de fragmentos de una realidad cada vez más diseccionada, pero a la vez, entiendo que hablan de la sociedad.

Sí, claro.

Precisamente porque son aspectos absolutamente focalizados. Por caso, este empresario, para mí, habla de una parte muy pequeña de la realidad de la Argentina, pero tan importante quizás como otras. Ahora bien, también entiendo que es bastante delicado pasar desde la obra de teatro y luego hacer las conexiones con la realidad macro del país.

Claro, yo puedo hablar desde ese lugar, desde esa parcialidad, desde los personajes que escribo, pero no puedo hablar desde un lugar con mayor amplitud. Obviamente que existe... gente como Pepe, como todos éstos que hemos hablado, como Cerdín, el Flaco y Pajarito. Yo no los saco de la nada, son personajes que de alguna manera, en algún momento, yo los he visto, los he escuchado, los tengo muy definidos, los encuentro en la calle, así como encuentro todo tipo de gente. Me parece que es importante que quede claro... que no generalizemos en ningún momento, como son las relaciones hombre-mujer

en mis obras, todo así muy parcial, muy acotadamente... si quisiera ponerme a escribir sobre algo nacional no podría, porque sería una literatura o dramaturgia poco interesante, de bajada de línea. Yo lo que hago es agarrar la lupa y digo “voy a hablar de esto, que me va a permitir desde algo muy acotado abrir o tal vez rozar algo más macro.”

No, creo tener esto en claro desde el comienzo. Es más, la descripción que hace del escenario en Una noche cualquiera ejemplifica como yo entiendo sus obras. La idea de poner en escena un texto en un escenario, el uso de los pasillos, y de la luz, la posición de los espectadores respecto a la escena, todo eso sugiere una conexión entre la realidad de lo que sucede en el escenario, la realidad del público que observa, y la realidad del país. Y al igual que las luces, las conexiones son borrosas, y a veces, parecen simplemente desconexas.

Eso es una elección, así como yo elijo hablar de estos personajes y de esta temática, yo quería que no hubiera distancia, “ah, mirá lo que pasa allá arriba en el escenario y nosotros acá sentadas en nuestras butaquitas mirando.” Como esto es algo que nos ha tocado a todos muchísimo, directa o indirectamente, oblicuamente, pero hay muy pocas personas que puedan decir que todos estos años de la represión no pasó algo con ellos. Entonces, me interesaba que la situación que era muy intensa, potente, violenta, estuviera muy cerca. Mi idea de puesta era que pasara entre la gente. Esa especie de lugar que no era realista. Por eso busqué una sala donde no hubiera un escenario en altura, donde no estaban delimitadas las áreas de representación. Eso era una decisión consciente que la situación *pasara entre la gente*, como decir esto nos pasó a todos, y además así evitar esa distancia.

También está el el uso de los televisores, que muestran “la realidad del país.” Esa realidad deformada que Sandro y Musetti todo el tiempo critican porque transforma “bichos” como Pedro y Marcelo en seres humanos. La mentira de la realidad de la televisión...

Sí, ellos representan a un sector de la sociedad... que no son casuales, son hermanos de un desaparecido, son de clase media, son intelectuales, además se nota por como hablan. Entonces, son críticos. Por cierto que no sería lo mismo si fueran dos muchachos de barrio, por ahí sería otro el texto. Estos se notan que son típicos de izquierda, con más información, y que tienen un gran rechazo por esto que pasa. Que en la televisión aparece cualquiera simplemente porque tiene una linda cara, ajenos al talento y a la capacidad, con que aparezca una semana seguida, ya se transforma, no va a poder salir a la calle que le van a pedir autógrafos. Porque la televisión es así, te mete a la gente en tu casa, y cualquiera que aparezca ya se transforma en algo exitoso. Vos podés hacer teatro durante cuarenta años que no salís en la televisión, la gente no se va a acordar de vos ni te va a... En cambio con que aparezcas en la televisión con cierta frecuencia, ya te transformás en un ser exitoso por aparecer en la pantalla. Entonces, es lo que ellos critican es el poder de la televisión a ese nivel, porque simplemente tiene buena estética, o es el amante del productor, se transforma en alguien exitoso, a su vez eso le da poder, le da plata, la plata le da poder, se transforma en una cadena de poderes. Bueno, uno de los cuatro es actor y la otra es modelo. Por eso dicen que la televisión transforma a las personas.

Ud. dice que Sandro y Musetti serían como de clase media, de izquierda.

Yo supongo que son personas comprometidas con la política, tirando más a la izquierda, aunque no está dicho, el hermano desapareció, posiblemente combatiente, yo supongo que vienen de una familia con ideas más de izquierda, más socialista.

Sin embargo, durante el comienzo del proceso de tortura psicológica Sandro y Musetti juegan a contar la historia de violencia contra su madre como una historia feminista y de

manipulación. ¿Cuáles son los significados de invertir historias de violencia recontadas como historias donde en realidad “el débil” es el fuerte, en un contexto de violencia?

Porque me parecía interesante dramáticamente. Hay cosas que simplemente tienen que ver con una elección dramática. La idea es tratar de mostrar esta situación con originalidad. Me parecía interesante que en medio de una situación muy violenta ellos se pusieran en una especie de filosofía barata, de hablar de diferentes aspectos, del amor, de la madre, en medio de una situación muy cargada, que eso aflojaba, por contraste, que estar con un revólver a una navaja y ponerse a charlar de cualquier cosa. Me inspiré en esto, en una película de Tarantino, en donde ... no me acuerdo del nombre, estaban los dos con un revólver y se ponían a hablar de hamburguesas... me pareció atractivo porque se podía trabajar como diferentes melodías para sostener la violencia y al mismo tiempo aflojar con comentarios, o una charla que no fuera tan densa.

Pero además de ser un recurso dramático, la idea de hablar de esta versión ridiculizada y cínica del feminismo en una situación así, tan violenta...

Bueno, obviamente que lo que yo cuento no es inocente, podría hablar de cualquier otra cosa, pero acá ellos hablan mucho irónicamente por las dos mujeres que tienen ahí. Las mujeres son bien rápidas, la modelo siempre se acostado con tipos muy poderosos, y esta Luli que, se quedó con todo del marido. Hay dos exponentes de mujeres que no son precisamente lentas, ni tontas. Nunca me interesó mucho meterme mucho en averiguar. Además cuando yo escribo hay ciertas cosas que las reflexiono y hay otras que me surgen así y no necesito ahondar mucho más. Seguramente que esto no era real, porque además la madre, aca no se dice que son hermanos, luego se sabe, es decir, no es un cuento de la madre, son como anécdotas que de alguna manera tocan de refilón las relaciones hombres-mujeres. Que no es casual que hablan ellos ahí, y de lo rápidas que son las mujeres, y de como siempre de alguna manera se las ingenian para quedarse

con las cosas, porque bueno hay dos mujeres acá con estas características. Cuando le preguntan “¿y esto ¿de quién es?” (*el departamento*), Luli responde “es mío,” y luego dicen “debés haber trabajado mucho,” y hacen la señal de abrir las piernas. Los comentarios no son gratuitos porque Luli no debe haber trabajado nunca en su vida y Marisa por tener una cara linda, puede haber trabajado de “prostituta fina.” Pero me gustaba esto de que se ponen a reflexionar sobre temas mientras están en una situación muy tensa.

Toda la obra está permeada por el tema del poder, aunque sea circunstancial, en particular el uso de la atracción física o sexual (por caso Marisa, quien seduce a Musetti para liberarse de la situación de dominio a los que Sandro y Musetti los someten), el uso de influencias, de dinero...

Sí además es lo que ella hace en la vida. Utiliza su belleza o atracción para conseguir cosas, la belleza o la juventud como poder. Cada uno ahí ocupa un lugar donde tiene poder. Poder económico, Pepe; poder de la belleza, del sexo que tiene, Marisa; Marcelo tiene el poder de estar en la televisión; y Luli, por ahí es la que menos claro tiene el poder, porque de alguna manera... esta en relación con Pepe que tiene el poder económico y tiene también esta cosa de clase alta que le da poder... y además en algún momento debe haber sido una persona muy linda e interesante. Todos tienen poder... en algún sentido, y los otros (Sandro y Musetti) tienen el poder de la fuerza, de la conquista, porque entran y conquistan desde un lugar muy violento. El poder de la violencia psicológica, sólo así podrían hacer que éstos personajes terminen de rodillas pidiendo perdón.

¿Me dijo antes que no pensaba estrenar esta obra sino adptarla para el cine?

La idea es transformarla en guión para el cine.

¿Cómo piensa sería la recepción del público, pensando en eso que dijo antes que no es un tema cicatrizado y la polémica que siempre genera el hablar de esa época (los años setenta) en la Argentina?

Yo pienso que les interesaría por la temática, y lo que hablamos anteriormente... es difícil no identificarse con lo que está sucediendo, además porque es una mirada diferente. Es también una crítica a toda esta última etapa Menemista conocida como *la pizza y el champán*: el exitismo, los nuevos ricos las 4x4 (*SUV's*), viajes a Miami, traer un montón de cosas. Había algo de ese clima en esa obra... y después más allá del contenido, tiene mucho ritmo, mucha intensidad. Entre las cosas que me ocupan más en el teatro es tratar de que no sea aburrido, porque yo me aburro mucho en el teatro. Me parece que es muy difícil sostener la tensión en el teatro. Esta obra, podrá interesar el tema o no, pero mantiene un nivel de clima, de intensidad a lo largo de la obra.

¿Cómo es esa época de la pizza y el champán?

Sobre todo el primer gobierno de Menem, estuvo como diez años, ¿no?, como el dolar y el peso estaban uno a uno, se importaba todo, chino, coreano, de la India, todo era importado, la gente le era barato viajar, es decir, un sector grande de la clase media y alta, vivía viajando y compándose todo. Por otro lado, como se privatizaron los servicios, había plata, porque el gobierno vendió todo lo que era estado. Bueno, entraba plata, se importaba, se viajaba. Había un especie de "florecimiento" llamado de *la pizza y el champán*, una especie de cambalache, en donde aparecieron un montón de personajes que no se sabía de dónde aparecían, y que por tener contactos se transformaban de un día para otro en multimillonarios. Apreciaban todos con oro. Con casos de corrupción tremendos. Cuando se terminó todo de vender, las empresas cerraban porque era mucho más barato importar. Entonces, había cada vez más desocupación. Cuando llegó De La Rúa ya no había más nada para vender, se termina esta época de festejos de champán de esta clase política, de nuevos ricos, de delincuentes devenidos en millonarios. Después con De La Rúa no había de dónde sacar plata, empezaron las dificultades sociales, millones de

desocupados, millones de personas que viven en condiciones infrahumanas. Nunca se vió tanta gente en la calle, comiendo basura, los cartoneros, etc. En el año que yo lo escribí pasaba esto, ahora con la situación social, como es realmente grave, y la gente está realmente cansada de los políticos, ningún político puede salir a caminar porque le tiran de todo, le dicen de todo. Ahora todos estos dirigentes tienen perfiles muy bajos, sabiendo que hay un alto porcentaje del país que vive en la miseria. Pero la época de Menem era de absoluta ostentación, los políticos mostraban sus casas en Gente o Caras, con escaleras de marmol. Es en esta época de ostentación, dónde éstos dicen (*Sandro y Musetti*), “el problema no era encontrarlos, *el problema era no verlos* porque salían en todos lados.” La gente ahora, está muy cansada de tanta injusticia social, después de lo que pasó con los bancos, etc. Ahora está todo muy escondido, siguen robando pero no lo muestran. Esa es la época de la pizza con champán.

Curriculum Vitae

Natacha Veronica Osenda, born in 1971 in Argentina, received her Bachelor's degree in Political Science at the *Universidad Católica de Córdoba*, Argentina, in 1994. At Virginia Tech, she completed the program in Latin American Area Studies, to receive a Master's of Arts in History. During her time as a Master's student, Natacha served as a graduate teaching assistant, as a Spanish instructor for the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, teaching Elementary and Accelerated Elementary Spanish courses. She plans to continue her studies in Mexico, where she will seek a Doctorate in Latin American studies.