Abstract

This dissertation fixes a critical eye on the multiple uses of sex and sexuality in the works of four contemporary Spanish playwrights: Paloma Pedrero, Yolanda Pallín, Yolanda Dorado, and Margarita Reiz. All four authors examine issues of sexuality in their plays with regard to the characters, and demonstrate how these issues are inflected by the body and power. This project specifically seeks to analyze crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold of the difference between the sexes, as well as the notion of (em)powered bodies as they become manifest through the characters in two plays by each of the four authors. While the approach of each is different, the four playwrights in this study all present sex and the sexual in ways that undo typical, normative, or binarized views of such topics and instead proffer means of consideration that concentrate more on the interstices and slippages between traditional categories or manifestations, and, as such, merit inclusion in this project.

The theoretical framework implements postmodern theories of gender and sexuality throughout the entire study, drawing chiefly from Judith Butler, whose theorizations seek to move hegemonic views of sexuality and gender away from the binarized notion of ‘male’/‘female’ and toward the margins, where much deeper meaning may be derived. In addition, specific chapters concentrate on Foucauldian theories of power, Freudian theories of (homo)eroticism and gendered sexuality, as well as additional theories from Wittig, Bornstein, Wilchins, and others.
This study specifically seeks to demonstrate how the works of Spanish playwrights Pedrero, Pallín, Dorado, and Reiz offer a new understanding of sex and sexuality, characterized by a distancing from traditional or clearly-defined roles in favor of mixed or blurred understandings that transcend limitations. These theatrical works by the playwrights emphasize ‘liminal’ or ‘marginal’ sexes and sexualities so that typical notions of ‘man’ or ‘woman’, ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine,’ in addition to other traditional binaries are subrogated by that which succeeds in challenging the (hetero)normative or (hetero)patriarchal, thus demonstrating how these contemporary playwrights ‘eroticize the margins.’
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Field of Study

Major Field: Spanish and Portuguese
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Chapter 1

Introduction

1 A) Brief overview

A number of researchers and critics would argue that some of the most interesting and provocative literature in the contemporary world is that written by women, for its focus on women-related issues, its feminine sensibility, or the different perspective it offers. However, despite the individual successes of some Spanish women writers, much female-authored literature has been fraught with setbacks and obstacles, especially when it involves controversial topics.

Although the role of women as authors and literary figures has changed greatly in Spain over the years, many would argue that much female-authored literature still remains unexplored and unstudied, and that other authors and society as a whole are reticent to accept female writers and their literature. As in earlier periods, contemporary female-authored literature in Spain has also encountered difficulties taking root and becoming absorbed into mainstream culture. Although to a certain degree this problem has been overcome in female-authored novels, such as in texts by Rosa Montero, Soledad Puértolas, Ana María Matute, and Almudena Grandes, and also in poetry in the works of contemporary female poets such as Ana Rossetti, María Victoria Atencia, and Clara Janés, there is another genre with an almost complete dearth of recognition of female writers as
well as an absence of critical appreciation for their works. This literary and critical lacuna is most obvious in the area of contemporary women’s drama.

It should come as no surprise that female playwrights in the last thirty years have continued to struggle for visibility and critical appreciation even after the fall of the Franco regime, yet some of the most well known playwrights even today came from the years immediately after (or even during) the life of Franco. Female playwrights of the 1970s coincided with (and hence were bolstered by) the global feminist movements of the time\(^1\), and many of the themes of that period reflect this. Ana Diosdado, perhaps the most well known playwright of the 1970s and 1980s, penned works that involved the middle class, emphasized a society in transition, questioned the components of a ‘progressive’ society, and examined themes such as the role of women, generational conflicts, dynamics of couples, violence, racism, and criminality. Another playwright of the same period, Lidia Falcón, wrote plays with an overtly feminist agenda and intended tendentiously to portray women as victims of violence, patriarchy, history, and society.

In the following decades women’s theater reached its apogee in terms of publications, critical studies, and attendance at plays. With the 1980s and 1990s female-authored drama fell under the influence of neo-realism\(^2\) and neo-vanguardism\(^3\) and, hence, gravitated towards styles and themes characteristic of these trends. Thematically

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1 For example, consider the ‘Sisterhood is Global’ movement (refer to Robin Morgan, ed.: *Sisterhood is Global: The International Women’s Movement Anthology*, 1984).
2 This is defined as an examination of social consciousness yet without necessarily providing a solution, a representation of typical, daily problems affecting all generations, a verisimilar presentation of character, setting, and theme, and an effort to connect with a viewing public (Floeck, *Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español del siglo XX*, 33).
3 This term is known for its pursuit of experimental techniques, often involving oneiric, symbolic, and reflexive elements.
these currents are characterized by a ‘collapsism’ viewpoint of the world (indicating an emphasis on the realization that there is not a viable solution to the world’s problems), a renunciation of the social-political emphasis of earlier transition writers (as Fermín Cabal said, “ya no escribo para decir algo”), and a representation of typical daily problems common to all generations such as drugs, alcohol, relationships, and sexuality.

Stylistically, neo-realist currents include an easily-followed plot, verisimilar characters of ‘flesh and bone’ who usually speak in a colloquial, common language, and a predilection for current modes of communication and technology that reflect a televisual or cinematic/digital influence (Floeck, *Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español del siglo XX* 33 – 40).

In this period female playwrights such as Paloma Pedrero, Carmen Resino, Pilar Pombo, and Concha Romero attempted to raise the visibility and exposure of women-authored theatre of the time and, to a certain degree, succeeded in this. As with earlier decades, common themes for these playwrights include generational difficulties, modern problems such as drugs and alcohol, relationships, the role of women in society, and love. Although their works are well known in specific literary and dramatic circles, in terms of general acceptance, their work continues to occupy a bifurcated space—one that is simultaneously within the framework of current popular literature, but also outside the canon. Female-authored drama since the millennium continues to be assigned a peripheral role despite limited appreciation and acceptance. Due to the relative unknown status of many playwrights such as Itziar Pascual, Yolanda Pallín, Margarita Reiz, Ana Casas, Yolanda Dorado, and Victoria Paniagua (to name a few) as well as the already-mentioned struggles for exposure, contemporary women’s drama largely remains an
undiscovered realm rich with possibilities of study. One of these possibilities lies with an increasingly common theme in contemporary female-authored drama, that of sex and sexuality.

1 B) Objectives and potential significance of the project

The contemporary Spanish playwright Carmen Resino once said that “art has no sex”, in speaking about the type of drama that these women write today. Nonetheless, even though it is possible that art has no sex, what is undeniable is that ‘sex’ appears in art in one form or another. The playwrights of the ‘nuevos nuevos,’ a grouping of authors whose production predominantly began in the 1980s and continues today, are pioneers in being the first writers of the post-Franco era to present feminine and masculine characters\(^4\) in a distinct manner that radically breaks with traditional Spanish stereotypes\(^5\) and, in fact, presents new types of characters for consideration as they are inflected by the sexual. Not all of the works of contemporary female Spanish authors treat the theme of sex and sexuality, but a highly important series of plays does explore its difficulties, trials, and struggles in order to present new understandings and considerations of the sexual.

This project, then, proposes to analyze and consider contemporary female-authored Spanish drama for how it questions, undoes, and perhaps re-inscribes in a different way traditional conceptualizations and stereotypes of sex and the sexual through examination of the characters. The study specifically seeks to demonstrate how the works

\(^4\) As well as any permutation that lies in-between, explained later
\(^5\) For example, one may consider the prevalence of female archetypes during the Golden Age, driven by the need to maintain their ‘honra’ to extreme womanliness and femininity.
of four playwrights⁶ offer a new understanding of sex and sexuality, characterized by a distancing from traditional or clearly-defined roles in favor of mixed or blurred understandings that transcend limitations. These theatrical works make salient ‘liminal’ or ‘marginal’ sexes and sexualities⁷ so that typical notions of ‘man’ or ‘woman’ are subrogated by that which succeeds in challenging the (hetero)normative or (hetero)patriarchal. The title of this investigation, ‘Eroticizing the margins: Sex and sexuality in contemporary female-authored Spanish drama’ signifies a specific type of consideration of this genre in Spanish literature, one that interests itself not with mainstream representations of sex(uality), but that questions the center and looks more at the interstices, where I argue that much deeper meaning is derived and developed. Hence, for this project, I submit that the theme of sex and sexuality, while not new in itself, has never been uniquely the subject of an in-depth study of contemporary female-authored Spanish drama. While themes and the presentation of sex and sexuality differ among the various playwrights in this study, one common thread unites them: that modes of consideration for the sexual, namely through examination of the body and power, are expressed in ways that break down and re-establish the traditional or typical means of depiction, offering new social-sexual realities that are made known through the relations and identities examined in the plays in this study. It is crucial to clarify that this project is not a study on theatre or performance-related issues, but rather an in-depth look on the multiple significations of sex and sexuality as they play out in a myriad of contemporary Spanish plays.

⁶ Namely Paloma Pedrero, Yolanda Pallín, Yolanda Dorado, and Margarita Reiz
⁷ Or expressions thereof
For the purposes of this project, many terms require an adapted use, indicating that, while major ideas, theories, and sources are used, I have expanded these and amplified them to accommodate the needs of this study\(^8\). The concepts of ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ must transcend the typical connotations associated with them. First, many theorists have separated the question of ‘sex’ from that of ‘gender’\(^9\), arguing, along with biologists as well as psychologists that ‘sex’ denotes an organic, physical-biological means to determine that which is ‘male’ or that which is ‘female’, while ‘gender’ usually denotes something psychological, socially constructed, or perhaps ‘acquired.’ For the purposes of this project, and as many theorists such as Butler argue, sex and gender will be seen as bound up in each other, and the term ‘sex’ is intended here to be inclusive of elements such as gender. In this study, it is paramount that the complexity of the term receives recognition in order for the topic to be explored and realized fully. Second, while the theme of sex and sexuality as represented in theatrical works or other genres is often interpreted in a highly negative, destructive vein, I hope with this project to illuminate meanings of the theme that will view this topic positively and constructively, allowing examination of what previously was unexamined or simply ignored. Just as theorists like Kate Bornstein view gender as a dynamic, changing process constantly in evolution, the term ‘sex’ should likewise be viewed in a similar vein, for even when considering the term in regard to its physical capacities, the ‘sex’ of individuals often changes and evolves. I hope with this study to examine the degree to which this evolution or re-

\(^8\) Specifically, terms such as ‘drag,’ ‘threshold,’ the ‘margin’ and the ‘in-between’ will offer expanded uses of what is traditionally understood as each term.

\(^9\) For example, Bornstein, Halberstam, Wittig, etc.
inscription is occurring in the characters created by the playwrights highlighted in this study. ‘Sex’ in this project will not only look at physical manifestations (that is to say, how one ‘appears’ or ‘looks’ masculine, feminine, etc.), but also sexual acts between people or with themselves, and the term ‘sex’, for this project, will also subsume what is commonly referred to as gender, understanding the term in the multiple way theorist Kate Bornstein explains it, including gender assignment (how others view someone with regard to gender or sex), gender role (the expectations of a certain culture towards a particular gender), gender identity (how each individual psychologically conceives of him/herself), and gender attribution (how society judges others when they are seen or viewed). Whereas the primary focus in this project remains the plays themselves, it is possible and necessary to make connections between the stage and reality given the mimetic quality of many of the dramas written by these authors, and the fact that society, especially during today’s day and age, is a sexualized era with a plethora of stimuli in film, media, as well as the stage. Hence, it is appropriate to discuss the judgments posed by society both within the drama, in which ‘society’ as a term refers to whatever dominant culture is articulated in the play itself, as well as the representation of Spanish society that is either referred to or overtly described in the plays.

Complementing the usage of ‘sex’, the project will also include studies of ‘sexuality,’ for which another expanded definition is necessary. It should first be noted that the terms sex and sexuality are not mutually exclusive but instead often blend into one another, and as such they will be treated in this project as relating to one another;

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10 Described in Bornstein’s *My Gender Workbook*, 28
however, when referring to the terms I shall make attempts to distinguish them for the purpose of clarity. Based on definitions from Freud to Butler, sexuality will be used here to refer in general to the enactments or practices of the body as well as the psychological, mental, or emotional states that accompany bodily acts or states of being. In this investigation it will include sexual verbal exchanges between characters, including terms to refer to their own or others’ sex and gender, as well as the general language used to describe sexual relations. The term will also involve the psychological state that deals with one’s sex, articulated in the plays as projected but unrealized sexual desires (for example, characters who exhibit a longing or frustration over some lost or frustrated sexual aspect of themselves alone or in relationship with others), as well as sexual memories and attitudes, or even emotions expressed by the characters either through physicality or in language. Additionally, it will refer to the enactment of one’s own sex in practice, such as homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, or any other type of sexuality between the usually accepted categories both connected to the body, as well as the forces or structures of power that act upon these sexualized representations. As with the term ‘sex,’ as stated earlier, this project hopes to examine both traditional and non-traditional definitions of ‘sexuality’ as well.

This project hopes, additionally, to demonstrate the utility, to the study of Spanish theatre, of the belief of such theorists as Judith Butler and Monique Wittig—that, to be able to be successfully conversant about such topics, what is important is not only the development of sex and sexuality in themselves, but also, the slippages between
categories within sex(uality)\textsuperscript{11} since it, along with gender, for theorists like Butler, represents not an end it itself but rather a constantly evolving performance of possibilities (\textit{Gender Trouble} 32 – 33). The purpose of examining these interstices is to reveal how many sexes or sexualities are not binarized but rather exist between traditionally accepted categories. Such ‘interstitial’ sexualities are, in fact, characteristic of many of the plays to be explored. As stated earlier, the study in general will detail not only the types of sexual beings or sexualities that emerge in these plays but also will address the possible translation of these dramatic forms to social reality and the ramifications or conflicts of such translations, revealing how the sex(ualities) sometimes succeed(s) in breaking with stereotypes and traditional conceptualizations, and sometimes do not.

Although the theme of sex and sexuality is not unknown to critical studies, having emerged in recent theory from second wave feminism (evident with theorists such as Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray) to post-modernism and post-structuralism (seen in the writings of Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler), the intersection of sex(uality) and dramatic studies of Spanish plays is much less visible. Many studies, especially those on Pedrero, Resino, and the female playwrights of the 1970s, appear in articles and anthologies, however, no in-depth study on the junction of Spanish drama and sex(uality) has ever been undertaken.

This discussion will follow the trajectory from more to less well known Spanish playwrights, moving from the works of Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallin, to Yolanda Dorado and Margarita Reiz. Although each play or playwright approaches the topic at

\textsuperscript{11} For example, this indicates not only the meanings attached to ‘heterosexual’ or ‘lesbian,’ but what lies between the two terms, and the ramifications of such blurred meanings.
hand in a different way I hope to demonstrate that the theme of sex and sexuality in all these plays functions in the same way through its various illuminations of the marginal related to bodies and power. Using postmodern theories (primarily, yet not exclusively, from Judith Butler) that examine how meaning is derived at the interstices between traditional categories, thus emphasizing the liminal forms and meanings bodies produce or occupy, as well as Foucauldian theories of power that examine empowerment and disempowerment, I shall approach a discussion of characters in the dramatic works of Paloma Pedrero, Yolanda Pallín, Yolanda Dorado, and Margarita Reiz, where their characters’ bodies and forms of power are changed, transformed, or inflected by, through, or within the margins. As mentioned before, although these playwrights are not the first to treat the theme of sex and sexuality, I submit that their conceptualizations of the topics at hand, and how they play out in their works do offer new and different ways of consideration of the sexual. I hope to reveal that this literature offers new tools and dynamics with which to engage society and social relations, with the ultimate goal being how an eroticization of the margins in the plays through an examination of their characters offers a distinct angle for viewing contemporary societal relations.

My hope with this project is to present an in-depth and thought-provoking study that examines certain aspects of sex and sexuality across four authors’ various works in order to illuminate the social and critical repercussions of this very important theme in current Spanish drama. I also opine that the inclusion of generally unknown works will not only expose their talents as writers but will also collectively elevate them, along with the more studied playwrights, into the status of “good literature” and perhaps, someday,
into the canon.\footnote{It is not my intention to defend a particular position in this study with regard to the mainstreaming of these texts and authors. Neither is it my purpose to pose ideological statements about the type of literature that is included in the canon. Nonetheless, literature that is included in the ‘canon’ often tends to be more well-received, and/or studied/ disseminated, and that is my hope for the literature analyzed in this project as well.} Although many more female playwrights can and do approach the theme of sex and sexuality, a complete analysis of their works is beyond the scope of this project. The main thrust will focus on a small group of selected plays and playwrights that perhaps best exemplify the larger issues of sex and sexuality in contemporary Spanish theatre. It is my hope that this work will serve as a starting point for future critical studies on these playwrights, and that other potential future writers will feel more empowered by this study to continue examination of other themes by the same and other playwrights in order to enrich the base of knowledge and critical response to this theme, as well as many others that may arise from studying it.

1C) Review of existing literature

The state of contemporary female-authored drama is encapsulated and summarized well in the title to the introduction of Pat O’Connor’s *Dramaturgas españolas de hoy: “La difícil dramaturgia española.”* Although there is a plethora of critical studies and anthologies in general on contemporary Spanish theatre in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century (for example, César Oliva’s *Teatro español del siglo XX*, 2002, Wilfried Floeck’s *Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español del siglo XX*, 2003, Leonard and Gabriele’s *Teatro de la España demócrata: Los noventa*, 1996, and Floeck and de Toro’s *Teatro español contemporáneo: autores y tendencias*, 1995), studies on female-authored drama since the 1970s and 80s do not exist. Most of the general works on female-authored theatre in the last twenty to thirty years attempt to define the locus of women’s drama (or
treat the possibility that it does not truly exist) since the Franco regime and amidst other more canonical writers (usually male writers such as Sanchis Sinisterra, Alonso de Santos, and Alfonso Sastre), as well as situate the works as a whole within the larger scheme of the postmodern or neo-realistic/neo-vanguardist currents. Additionally, these studies specifically analyze certain thematic elements to be discussed in each chapter.

Yet, despite a handful of critical articles, anthologies, and a few dissertations, current women playwrights in Spain remain largely unacknowledged or unstudied, and certainly do not figure into serious research on a large scale.

In the anthologies that do exist, the trend appears to include the more well-known female authors such as Paloma Pedrero, Carmen Resino, Ana Diosdado, Concha Romero, Pilar Pombo, and Lidia Falcón, evidenced in part in the 1995 anthology by Floeck and de Toro, *Teatro español contemporáneo: autores y tendencias*. More specific and, consequently, less disseminated works dedicated exclusively to feminine dramaturgy in Spain include anthologies such as Leonard and Gabriele’s *Panorámica del teatro español actual* (1996), which features interviews and short plays of some male playwrights (Mayorga and Onetti) and a few female playwrights (Lluïsa Cunillé, Margarita Sánchez Roldán and Itziar Pascual). Another impressive and crucial anthology is that of Patricia O’Connor, a pioneer-scholar in the field of female-authored Spanish drama, whose *Mujeres sobre mujeres: teatro breve español* (1998), analyzes and highlights one-act plays by women such as Paloma Pedrero, Concha Romero, Lidia Falcón, Carmen Resino, and María Ragué. O’Connor also edited an important anthology, *Dramaturgas españolas de hoy* (1988), that enumerates all of the past and present female playwrights and
includes some of their works. Finally, a more current anthology featuring one-act plays is Virtudes Serrano’s *Teatro breve entre dos siglos* (2004), which includes analysis and presentation of one-act plays of both male and female playwrights between the last and current millennia.

Among these authors, critical reviews exist on their plays chiefly in the journals *Estreno, Primer Acto*, and *Anales de la literatura contemporánea española*. Not surprisingly, many of the reviewers of plays are themselves authors, as in playwright Antonia Bueno’s review of “Tras las tocas”, a joint production written and directed by Margarita Reiz, Itziar Pascual, Antonia Bueno, Esperanza de la Encarnación, and Ana Casas, as well as Yolanda Pallín’s of Juan Ramón Fernández’s “Niña,” to name a few.

In terms of articles and theses on the general group of playwrights, a relatively moderate number of critical studies deals with the works of Pedrero and Pallín, with fewer studies on Reiz and Dorado. Among more common themes analyzed in these plays, we find myth, as in Lamartina Lens’ dissertation “Literary, Historical, and Social myths in Contemporary Spanish Theater: A Feminist Interpretation;” character study, most notably feminine characters, as analyzed by Zachman in “Playing Gender on the Contemporary Spanish Stage: Feminism in the Works of Paloma Pedrero, Concha Romero, Charo Solanas and Yolanda Pallín;” marginalized characters, as studied by Taylor in his dissertation “The Pathology of Alienation: A Psycho-sociological Approach to the Theater of Paloma Pedrero;” metadrama or metatheatre, as in Leonard’s dissertation “Theoretical Models for Reading Twentieth-century Spanish Metadrama;” semiological aspects of the works, as in Sánchez Martínez’s “Aspectos semiológicos en...
la dramaturgia de Paloma Pedrero;” and Berardini’s dissertation “El metatearo en las obras de Paloma Pedrero.” The majority of articles on these playwrights appear in theatrical journals such as Gestos, Estreno, Anales de la literatura española contemporánea, and Primer Acto.

As stated before, Paloma Pedrero is the most studied playwright of the group to be analyzed in this project. Pedrero has written many plays including Besos de lobo, La isla amarilla, Una estrella, El color de agosto, and Cachorros de negro mirar (to name a few), as well as contributed critically to articles about contemporary female-authored plays. She is the most anthologized of all the playwrights considered in this study, and also is the object of several critical editions of her plays, such as Virtudes Serrano’s monographic study, Juego de noches: nueve obras en un acto (1999) and Iride Lamartina Lens’s critical edition of two of her works, titled Cachorros de negro mirar/ El pasamanos (2001). In addition to many writings by Pedrero herself (such as the important article “Sobre mi teatro” appearing in Entre actos, 1999) over one-hundred books and articles have been written on her theatre from the 1980s until today, mostly in the 1990s. Her plays have been the most frequently selected in dissertations in the last fifteen to twenty years, such as those by Vilma Navarro-Daniels, Aaron Taylor, Susan Berardini, and Jennifer Zachman, among others. The majority of the critical material on her works analyzes feminine characters and their relationship with male characters, gendered discourses, metatheater and intertextuality, myth, generational conflicts, and Pedrero’s contribution in general to female-authored Spanish dramaturgy. Despite her popularity, very few of these studies deal with the topic of sex and sexuality.
Yolanda Pallín has written a series of plays, the most notable of which includes her acclaimed *Trilogía de la Juventud*, co-authored with José Ramón Fernández and Javier García Yagüe. She is anthologized in *Antología de teatro para gente con prisas* (2001) along with other contemporary playwrights. Several articles have been written about her works, and, as with Pedrero and other playwrights in this study, she also is a critic and has written reviews and essays about other plays and playwrights. Topics commonly studied in her theatre include the feminine imaginary, character, and the role of myth and history. No specific study of her works with regard to the topic of sex and sexuality has been undertaken.

To the remaining playwrights in this study, Yolanda Dorado and Margarita Reiz, very little critical attention has been paid. As members of the María Guerreras¹³, all have contributed to articles, essays, and collections, and, likewise, some of their plays appear in collections, such as *Deseo, construcción y personaje* (2002), *Piezas breves y bocetos* (1996), *La droga en el teatro español* (1995), as well as the series of collections by year titled *Maratón de monólogos* (2002, 2003, 2005). These playwrights, to my knowledge, claim no dissertation topics, nor are there critical studies on the topics of sex and sexuality for any of their works.

1 D) Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In many ways, the twentieth century may be referred to as ‘the century of sexuality.’ This term proves accurate when one considers the enormous quantity of literature written about this theme, beginning with Freud and Lacan and their work on

¹³ According to their own website, the Marias Guerreras is, to cite them, “una asociación de mujeres profesionales de las artes escénicas” (www.mariasguerreras.com).
psychoanalysis and the sexualized body in the early 20th century. Glimpsing the literary productions on this theme in the last thirty years, we see that some of the most common topics on sex and sexuality include issues of embodiment, power, visuality, and the formation of differenced sexual subjectivities that challenge and disrupt the (hetero)normative and (hetero)patriarchal. One general work on sex and sexuality in the 1970s includes Foucault’s *History of Sexuality Volume I* in which he examines the relationship between sex(uality) and power, and how sexuality (which he describes as “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology,” 127) historically has been socially repressed by power-laden structures.

Other theoretical work on sex and sexuality has been undertaken by French feminist second wave feminist theory, specifically by Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva, all of whom address sex and sexuality, usually with regard to how they intersect with the broader category of gender. Hélène Cixous’s work, although most known for its theory of *écriture féminine*, does touch upon the idea of masculinity and femininity in *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975) and *Castration or decapitation?* (1976). Masculinity and femininity are terms she chooses to discard in favor of what she feels to be the inherently bisexual nature of men and women, what she calls an ‘other bisexuality’ that is fluid, varied, and multiple (Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 108 – 109). Luce Irigaray’s text *This sex which is not one* (1977) examines how the structure of patriarchy represses women’s sexuality and denies women access to their own *jouissance*, which all women need to recognize as

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14 Specific discussion on chapter material will occur later.
15 That is to say, the repression is part of what produces the effects.
multiple, continual, and not fixed, able to enjoy both vaginal and clitoral forms of sexuality (Ibid143 – 144). Finally, Julia Kristeva addresses the theme of sex and sexuality in many of her works, such as *Women’s Time* (1977), where she examines sexual difference in the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal phases described by Freud, and concludes that femininity derives from options presented to the male child and not to the female child, and can only be defined through referring to its marginalization by the patriarchal symbolic order (Ibid165 – 66).

While the series of writings of the French feminists in the 1970s placed sex and sexuality at the head of the theoretical table of feminist and gender studies at that time, many other theorists since then have continued the study of sex and sexuality and have presented a myriad of viewpoints, from cultural to political to social. One of these theorists is Thomas Laqueur, whose text *Making Sex* (1990) traces the historical trajectory of the one sex model since classical times up until Freud’s sexual theorizations. Another example is Monique Wittig, who, in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1992) examines how society is founded on a discourse of heterosexuality that problematically posits homosexuality as a redefinition of heterosexuality (28). One of the most influential theorists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is Judith Butler, whose important works (to name a few) *Gender Trouble* (1989), *Bodies That Matter* (1993), and *Undoing Gender* (2004) examine the performative aspects of gender and sexuality, arguing, as many do, against an essentialist position. Many other texts abound in the contemporary period that approach the themes of sex and sexuality, many times problematizing or highlighting the main issue in their titles, such as *Writing on the Body: Female*

There is also a rich quantity of theoretical literature that examines sex and sexuality via Queer Theory, a discourse emerging in part from lesbian and gay academic and activist movements in the 1970s. Queer Theory itself lends easily to studies on sex(uality) since it brings awareness to the limitations of typically binarized categories in order for one to articulate what occurs outside of those binaries. Some texts that approach sex and sexuality using Queer Theory as a lens include those such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s text *Epistemology of the Closet* (1998), Ian Barnard’s *Queer Race: Cultural Interventions in the Racial Politics of Queer Theory* (2004), Fabio Cleto’s *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject* (1999), Riki Wilchins’s *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (2004), Judith Halberstam’s *Female Masculinity* (1998) and *In a Queer Time and Place* (2005), among many others.


\(^\text{16}\) For specific information on these works, refer to the Bibliography.
Theatre (1989), Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing (1993), in addition to several others.

In regard to the intersection of studies of contemporary Spanish literature and sex(uality), I have found that relatively few critical works exist. Some texts examine the blended concepts of sex(uality) and Spanish literature, often using the lens of Queer Theory, such as Blackmore and Hutcheson’s Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance (1999), focusing on the Middle Ages and Renaissance, or Chávez-Silverman and Hernández’s Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture (2000). The latter looks at queer manifestation trans-culturally, yet does not at all focus on contemporary Spanish theatre. Other types of studies include those about Spanish women and society, such as Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain, 1999, which examines the political categories of women, or studies on differenced sexual identities and constructs such as Ellis’s The Hispanic Homograph: Gay Self-Representation in Contemporary Spanish Autobiography (1997), concentrating exclusively on the gay male experience, Turner’s Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images (1993), again focusing on the early period, and Smith’s Vision Machines: Cinema, Literature and Sexuality in Spain and Cuba 1983-93 (1996), Laws of Desire: Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film 1960-1990 (1992) which almost entirely focuses on film, and The Body Hispanic: Gender and Sexuality in Spanish and Spanish-American Literature (1989). Finally, there is a body of work that specifically looks at the crossroads of current Hispanic literature and sexuality.
studies, such as *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater* (2002), and *Hispanisms and homosexualities* (1998). Once again, however, although these works mentioned consider the crossroads of Spanish literature and sexuality, as we have seen, none examine the specifics of this intersection with regard to contemporary female-authored drama.

To conclude, although there are some combinatory isolated studies that examine specific playwrights’ works using the lens of sex(uality), such as those studies previously mentioned, or the more general studies on sexuality and Spain mentioned above, in general, no synthetic study exists that analyzes extensively the areas of contemporary female-authored Spanish drama, and sex(uality).

1 E) Sex and sexuality in literature—from past to present

Since the beginning of time issues of sex and sexuality have been of paramount interest to every culture across the world. For centuries writers and scholars have tried to de-mystify the complexities of sex and sexuality, inquiring what these terms mean, how they are or should be used, and how they play out in human bodies. Society has witnessed the multiple manifestations or representations of sex and sexuality in religious texts such as the Biblical stories of debauchery and licentiousness in Sodom and Gomorroh to humorous secular writings such as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, to the more serious instructional Sanskrit text the *Kamasutra*. Such topics have furrowed the brow of thinkers since antiquity, and many have grappled with and attempted to elucidate these themes in their writings.
In classical Greek society itself, sex(uality) was both common and visible. Examples abounded in artwork and religion, as well as in daily life.\textsuperscript{17} Not surprisingly, many scholars and philosophers of the period made claims about this topic in their writings. From ancient times even up until the modern period views of sex were more or less limited to the one-sex model.\textsuperscript{18} The Greek philosopher Galen, for example, conceived of female genitalia as the turning inward of the male anatomy, viewing women, then, as inverted forms of men (Laqueur, \textit{Making Sex} 25 – 26). Following this view, body parts such as the vagina were seen as an inverted scrotum, and vice versa, and an organ such as the uterus was seen only as a locus of ‘retentive faculties,’ similar to the belly and, hence, common in both sexes (Ibid 27).

As time progressed additional views (not all of which completely undermine the one-sex model) of sex and sexuality were brought forth, and these terms were often infused with new religious signification. In the Middle Ages, for example, St. Augustine viewed intercourse (when performed under the right moral circumstances) as a gentle falling asleep in the arms of the other, and part of the normal functioning of the body. Impotence, for him, signified the soul’s alienation from God (Ibid 60). Offenses against any kind of non-heteronormative sexuality, such as homosexuality, were scripted into law by the end of the 12\textsuperscript{th} century, and there were clear punishments for infractions such as joint male masturbation or anal intercourse, as they were for ‘unnatural’ or ‘perverse’ sex in marriage, seen as even worse than adultery or fornication.

\textsuperscript{17} For example, Greek urns depicting hetero and homosexual encounters, in religious life the cult of Dionysus that privileged phallic iconization, and in everyday life practices such as those involving the ‘hetaera,’ the ‘groomed prostitute’
\textsuperscript{18} Explained in detail in Laqueur’s text \textit{Making Sex}
Literature, however, has not always been so sullen when discussing sex and sexuality. Many Medieval Spanish texts, for example, presented or even parodied sexual practices in a jocose manner. One cannot ignore the sexual undertones of a text like the *Libro de Buen Amor*, in which the many episodes of the narrator the Archpriest of Hita serve to entertain yet simultaneously warn the reader of the dangers of ‘el loco amor.’ Likewise, in the 15th century text *La Celestina*, overt examples of sex and sexuality are both visible and sometimes shocking, such as the references to the practice of non-normative or even perverse sexualities.19

The representation of alternative or liminal practices of sex and sexuality itself is nothing new, having been present for many years in Spanish literature such as the common practice in much of Golden Age drama of cross-dressing. In plays such as *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* by Tirso de Molina, *La discreta enamorada* by Lope de Vega, and *Valor, agravio, y mujer* by Ana Caro, not only do women dress as men but men also dress as women, and sometimes both sexes succeed in sexually attracting the other.20 Topics like transvestism, masculinized femininity, and homo-erotica in 16th and 17th century drama have been studied by scholars such as Laurence Senelick (*The Changing Room*), Hanna Scolnicov (*Women’s Theatrical Space*), Marjorie Garber (*Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*), Lesley Ferris (*Crossing the Stage:*

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19 Take, for example, the occasion when Celestina observes Melibea and Calisto engaging in intercourse
20 For example, in *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* where Juana, dressed as Gil, succeeds in attracting her rival Inés and Inés’s cousin Clara. Other examples of ‘el travestismo’ include *La discreta enamorada*, where Lucindo convinces his servant Hernando dress as a woman as part of a revenge scheme, ‘Estefanía’, or *Valor, agravio, y mujer*, where Leonor dresses as ‘Leonardo’ in order to recuperate her lost honor.
Since the Enlightenment, a more open presentation offered the alternative of viewing sexuality as human nature, instead of merely as a sin. With 19th century literary currents in Europe such as realism and naturalism, even more overt examples of the sordid, yet common, aspects of human sexual existence were brought to the foreground, seen in Spanish literature in Pérez Galdós, Pardo Bazán, and Clarín. The Victorian era believed that sex and sexuality stemmed from one’s identity and societal position, and in this period forms like the hysterical, the pervert, the masturbator, the prostitute, and the nymphomaniac surfaced and sometimes threatened the so-called balance of heterosexual, normative order. Literary topics explored during this time, then, included homosexuality, perversity, cross-dressing, and the ‘mujer varonil’.

Since the 20th century, the treatment of sex and sexuality has become even more complex and varied. Theories of the unconscious involving the psychic connection to the body added a new dimension to the interpretations of sex or sexuality, as with Freud, Jung, and Lacan. Medical advances since the mid 20th century have made it possible to genetically or biologically determine, create, or even modify sex. Biological and social-sexual forms of intersex, hermaphroditism, and transgender, as well as multiple types of sexuality, along with discourses such as postmodernism, have encouraged an undoing of

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21 In this text she elaborates her thesis on the ‘mujer varonil’ and the different literary characters that this figure embodies.
22 Such as in La de Bringas and La desheredada
23 As in Los pazos de Ulloa, for example
24 Specifically in La regenta
25 This particular topic had been popular much earlier than the 19th century, but it also appeared in popular literature such as that period’s ballads.
the typical ‘A/ not A’ binary, and a promotion of everything that lies in between and outside of this binary as well. Gender-related studies, although present in earlier centuries, have become even more popular in contemporary literature and theory since they lend themselves easily to these types of realities that blur distinctions between what is ‘male’ versus ‘female’ or even ‘masculine’ versus ‘feminine’, since gender studies, to a large degree, examine and problematize the social constructedness of not only gender but also sex and sex-related topics, and intersect it with ontological\textsuperscript{26} and epistemological\textsuperscript{27} studies.

In conclusion, sex and sexuality as seen in literature and history have been treated as functions both of biology and culture/society. As time and history, as well as literature and research have shown, one immutable truth about this topic is that it is highly complex and often times unstable. The female playwrights chosen for this investigation explore, and often times, celebrate this complexity and instability on a deep and provocative level. The articulations and illuminations they project certainly affect the reader or spectator, and are likely also to impact those around them in society, especially themselves. In expressing their own considerations of sex(uality) as they relate to the body and issues of power, the playwrights in this project transcend the typical means of dealing with the topic, and do so in ways that allow the characters in their plays, and perhaps people in society, to be recognized differently and potentially to be re-defined.

1 F) Approximating contemporary Spanish theatre from the 1980s until today: A socio-historical, literary approach

\textsuperscript{26} Such as Butler’s \textit{Gender Trouble} or \textit{Bodies That Matter}
\textsuperscript{27} Take, for example, Sedgwick’s \textit{Epistemology of the Closet}
Socially and culturally, signs of progress marked the period of the 1980s in Spain, both in theatre and beyond. According to Candace Leonard and John P. Gabriele, “lo que define la situación del teatro español de los 80 y 90 es un movimiento hacia una nueva apreciación de la expresión dramática como institución social y artística y un interés renovado en el teatro español a nivel nacional e internacional” (*Panorámica del teatro español actual* 9); such signs abound in political and social changes in Spain. When the Socialist Party began to govern in 1982, they effectuated a desire to elevate theatre to the status of high culture, evidenced in the creation of multiple institutions that promoted the arts, such as the Centro Dramático Nacional (CDN) stemming from the Instituto Nacional de Arte Escénicas de Madrid (INAEM), the Centro Nacional de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas (CNNTE) in 1984, the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico in 1986, the Centro de Documentación Teatral in 1983, the formation of the Asociación de Autores de Teatro (AAT) in 1990, in addition to the formation of regional theatrical companies\(^{28}\) as well as alternative stages such as the Sala Cuarta Pared in Madrid. Other signs of progress and an increased interest in fomenting theatre include a surge in theatrical workshops and seminars, the convocation of the theatrical award Marqués de Bradomín,\(^{29}\) an increase in the theatrical street demonstrations, encounters, and (inter)national festivals, such as the Festival del Otoño, el Festival de Granada, el Festival de Valladolid, el Festival de Teatro Clásico (in Mérida), as well as the Festival de Almagro.

\(^{28}\) Such as Els Comediants and Teatro Lliure in Catalonia

\(^{29}\) A theatrical award given to a playwright of under 30 years of age, and involving the publication of the work and an amount of money awarded to the playwright
In addition to social and cultural changes in Spain in the 80s and 90s, certain literary tendencies color the theatrical landscape in the 20th century. Citing Leonard and Gabriele again, the main theatrical tendencies in Spanish theatre may be categorized into four general groupings: first, the social realist group, that also includes the marginalized authors,30 second, the authors marginalized from the stage but who continued their artistic production,31 third, the symbolist generation, more commonly referred to as the ‘Generación del ‘82’,32 and, last, the first group of democratic Spain (also known as the ‘neorrealists’33, the ‘alternativos’ since many stem from alternative theatres), who have written from the 80s up until today (Panorámica del teatro español actual 9 – 14). Unlike the other groups, one of the predominant characteristics of this last grouping is the increased number of female playwrights. Members of this category of theatrical tendencies include: Ignacio del Moral, Ernesto Caballero, María Manuela Reina, Jorge Márquez, Serbi Belbel, Antonio Álamo, Alfonso Plou, Ignacio García May, Lluïsa Cunillé, Margarita Sánchez Roldán, Antonio Onetti, Juan Mayorga, Itziar Pascual, Carmen Resino, Concha Romero, Rodolfo Sirera, Yolanda Pallín, and Paloma Pedrero, among others.

Characteristics of the members of this group, according to César Oliva, include the following: many stem from the theatrical world, as directors, professors, dancers, producers, etc; these figures tend to arise from the educational arena, forming their  

30 ‘Marginalized’ in the sense that they are known as the ‘underground’; authors in this group include Buero Vallejo, Recuerda, Olmo, Sastre, Méndez, Ricardo Rodríguez Bured, Antonio Gala
31 Including Riaza, Sainz, Castro
32 Also referred to as the ‘Generación Bradomín’ (see note 29). Some of the authors in this group include Nieva, Miras, Miralles, Benet i Jornet, Sanchis Sinisterra, Alonso de Santos, Amestoy, Cabal, to name a few.
33 Neorrealism will be explained in more detail later.
knowledge in theatrical seminars, forums, courses, usually taught by instructors from the previous categorization of playwrights; the majority of them are not affiliated with commercial theatre, but rather expose their talents in alternative sites, and, while some publish their works, many premiere as dramatic readings or as representations in small theatres\textsuperscript{34}. To quote Wilfried Floeck, who summarizes the typical alternative playwright\textsuperscript{35} “El nuevo prototipo del dramaturgo proviene por lo general del propio ambiente teatral, aporta experiencias personales como actor, escenógrafo o director, ha adquirido también experiencia en la producción cinematográfica y televisiva y no le teme en absoluto al contacto con la administración, la producción y la distribución” (Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español del siglo XX 120). General characteristics of this theatrical grouping include the following: the majority of their plays, while often incorporating other elements, almost always are based in realism; the scenery is more times than not minimalist; an interest abounds in the scenic languages of dance, music, cinema, video; problems and conflicts within the plays are germane to the time in which they were written; a preponderance exists toward urban themes such as drugs, unemployment, violence, prostitution, AIDS, social injustices, and themes related to popular culture, such as the often alienating effects of technology; the use of a daily, colloquial language pervades and situates scenes in contemporary life; and, themes of sexuality and gender are present, especially as they are presented through issues of identity and role, often times treating the non-normative or taboo.

\textsuperscript{34} See César Oliva’s text \textit{Teatro español del siglo XX} 320 – 323.
\textsuperscript{35} Using Miralles’s term to refer to this grouping of authors, ‘alternativos’
In addition to the above-mentioned general qualities associated with the fourth grouping, Wilfried Floeck elaborates more specific qualities of neorrealism, the literary current associated with and espoused by the authors listed above (*Estudios críticos sobre el teatro español del siglo XX* 110–116). These characteristics include: a generation of marked disenchantment, having lost faith in the optimistic visions of the future as well as in the possibility of a radical transformation of the world; the theatre for these authors is likened to a lifejacket, used to facilitate but not resolve the catastrophic problems present in the world; with works lacking a didactic impetus, they strive for a reclamation of social criticism, but, instead of a universally valid objectivity, they achieve it by means of a highly personal subjectivity; in addition, plays in the neorrealist vein thematically represent typical daily problems of their protagonists such as drugs, racism, violence, interpersonal relations (usually) in a large city, with problems explored often times in a marginalized environment. These playwrights stylistically seek out a theatre replete with short dialogues, a rapid succession of scenes\(^{36}\) and a colloquial language, and assimilate the experiences of new modes of communication such as the televvisual, the cinematographic, the auditory, the musical. Although the vast majority of the plays are rooted in realistic, mimetic scenarios, many times the type of reality presented extends farther than typical, daily life, and seeks to incorporate spaces of memory, dream, fantasy, hallucination, with a predilection for the oneiric, the unconscious, the irrational, the metatheatrical, the experimental, and the innovative, some of which are common themes in the plays to be analyzed in this study, as we shall see.

\(^{36}\) Many times they are not ‘scenes’ but rather ‘sequences’.
1 G) Female-authored Spanish theatre today

While Spain possesses a rich history of female writers from the Middle Ages until the present time, the greatest surge of female playwrights began its inception in the 1970s, many of which were in line with or resulting from the global feminist movements of the period. In the 20th century post-Francoist Spain, crucial women writers have figured into the canon of great literature, such as Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, Carmen Conde, Elena Quiroga, Carmen Martín Gaite, Elena Soriano, Dolores Medio, etc., but few contemporary female playwrights are known and, to a lesser degree, studied. Pat O’Connor groups female playwrights in the 20th century, beginning with the playwrights of the postwar, namely Dora Sedano (1902 – 1987), Julia Maura (1910 – 1970), and, the most well-known of the group, Ana Diosdado (1938 —), who adopts a critical position in reaction to contemporary values, examining themes such as the frustrations of the older generation (as seen in her 1972 work El Okapi), and the evils of a society of consumption (such as her 1973 play Ud. también podrá disfrutar de ella). The next grouping of playwrights includes writers penning works mainly in the 1940s and 1950s, but who are virtually unknown. This grouping includes Mercedes Ballesteros (1913 — 1995), who wrote poetry and novel as well as theatre, María Isabel Suárez de Deza (1920 — ?), who wrote imaginative and poetic works and police comedies, Carmen

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37 The two main movements were feminism of equality, which argued for a natural social equality among men and women by means of social measures, and the feminism of inequality, also known as feminism of difference, which maintained an intellectual and biological difference between men and women.
38 All this and more information on individual playwrights and their works may be found in O’Connor’s Dramaturgas españolas de hoy (1988), pages 29 – 55.
39 Sedano wrote bourgeoisie-like comedies and political melodramas from the 40s until the 70s, praising the values of the new Francoist government.
40 Maura wrote in the 40s and 50s in the vein of the sentimental costumbrist comedy on traditional themes like honor.
Troitiño (1918—?), whose interest stemmed from experimental theatre to Benaventine-like works, and Luisa María Linares (1915—?), chiefly a novelist who incorporated figures of aggressive women in exotic environments.

O’Connor’s next category, the writers of the post-Franco era (1975 – 1989) incorporate a much larger collection of authors who are more published and well-known than any other groups. Authors of this period include: Lidia Falcón (1936—), a self-proclaimed feminist whose works such as *No moleste, calle y pague señora* (1984) and *Las mujeres caminaron con el fuego de siglos* (1983) overwhelmingly treat the injustices women suffer at the hands of men; Pilar Pombo (1953 – 1999), whose monologues *Amalia* (1986), *Remedios* (1987), and *Purificación* (1988) examine the strength and spirit of Spanish women; Concha Romero’s (1945—) plays usually focus on historical and mythological themes, such as *Un olor a ámbar* (1983), about the cadaver of Santa Teresa de Ávila, and *Las bodas de una princesa* (1988), on Isabel la Católica; Carmen Resino (1941—), whose plays span themes as general as history (such as *Ulises no vuelve*, 1974) or the personal difficulties of writing plays (seen in *La recepción*, 1992); María Ragüé José Arias (1941—), journalist and professor, whose works often incorporate mythological themes, such as *Clitemnestra* (1987) and *Ritual per a Medea* (1988); Maribel Lázaro (1948—), whose plays often focus on self-definition of women, sometimes connected to the inhuman and the demonic (as with *Humo de beleño*, 1986) or the animalization of the human being (*La fosa*, 1986); María Manuela Reina (1958—), who often chooses historical works and plays centered on fantasy, such as *El llanto del dragón* (1984); Marisa Ares (1960—), who writes dark plays with themes
present as torture, rape, and sadomasochism (as in *Negro seco*, 1987); Yolanda García Serrano (1958—), whose works sometimes take the form of pornographic parodies (as with *No hay función por defunción*, 1984); Lucía Sánchez (1969—), who writes plays that treat couples and relationships, and the difficulties present therein (such as *Lugar común*, 1994); Lluïsa Cunillé (1961—), who incorporates ambiguous or magical spaces that construct a microcosmic world with its own laws (*Rodeo*, 1991), or works that include elements of fragmentation and indeterminacy in interrelationships (*Barcelona, mapa de sombras*, 2004); lastly, Itziar Pascual (1967—), professor, director, actress, as well as writer, whose plays vary in theme from interpersonal relationships and their difficulties (*Ciudad lineal*, 2000, and *Miauless*, 1997), to quasi-poetic works (*Las voces de Penélope*, 1997), to circus-themed works (*El domador de sombras*, 1995), among many others.

Playwrights Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín\(^41\) often lie on the threshold between the previous grouping and the final collection of authors, those of the most recent period, writers from the 1990s until today, which includes many female authors as well whose talents are slowly gaining more popularity. Some of these playwrights include: Inmaculada Alvear, Ángelica Liddell Zoo, Laila Ripoll, Ana Casas, Victoria Paniagua, Elena Cánovas, Encarna de las Heras, Charo Solanas, Beth Escudé i Gallés, Eva Hibernia, Antonia Bueno, Margarita Reiz, and Yolanda Dorado, among many others. The topics in the works by these playwrights span a wide range of themes, from the dehumanizing effects of war to the idea of waiting for a lost love, to domestic violence.

\(^{41}\) More in-depth discussion on these two playwrights, in addition to their plays, will be presented at the beginning of each subsequent chapter.
Likewise, the styles by these authors vary from Zoo’s absurdist and avant-garde style (for example, her plays *Leda*, 1993, and *El matrimonio Palavrakis*, 2000) to the fragmented sequences of Paniagua (such as *Más madera*, 2005) to the intimate, personal style of Casas (*Y desaparecer*). As mentioned before, similar topics and styles present in these authors will also appear in the themes and fashions in the authors presented and analyzed in this study, as we shall see later on.

1 H) Chapter Overview and Theoretical Background

1 H I) Chapters two and three: Crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold:

*The theatre of Paloma Pedrero (Chapter 2) and Yolanda Pallín (Chapter 3)*

Philosophers have forever been divided over the nature of sex and sexuality. Historically views on sex(uality) have been divided between the groups of the metaphysical optimists on one hand, whose philosophies are evidenced in some of the works of Plato, Singer, and sometimes Freud. This group in general views sexuality as natural and part of our corporeal structure, at times conceiving of it as that which can elevate people into a higher happiness. Conversely, there is the group of the metaphysical pessimists, such as Kant and St. Augustine. Their viewpoint maintains that sexual impulses strip the dignity from human beings and furthermore endanger interrelations of 

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42 In *The Symposium* Plato distinguishes a ‘vulgar’ from a ‘heavenly’ eros.
43 In Irving Singer’s text *The Nature of Love* he states “For though sexual interest resembles an appetite in some respects, it differs from hunger or thirst in being an interpersonal sensitivity, one that enables us to delight in the mind and character of other persons as well as in their flesh” (382).
44 To be explained in more detail later.
45 In *Lectures on Ethics* Kant states that sex “makes of the loved person an Object of appetite. . . . Taken by itself it is a degradation of human nature” (163).
46 In *On Marriage and Concupiscence* St. Augustine states that “A man turns to good use the evil of concupiscence, and is not overcome by it, when he bridles and restrains its rage. . . . and never relaxes his hold upon it except when intent on offspring, and then controls and applies it to the carnal generation of children. . . . not to the subjection of the spirit to the flesh in a sordid servitude” (Book 1 Chapter 9).
civilized life. Nonetheless, one topic that has continued to be of frustration or confusion for philosophers or scholars on both sides (that is, those who embrace sexuality or inveigh against it) from both past and present is the topic of non-normative, perverse, or liminal sexualities.

Some of the most fundamental research on this specific topic includes the early 20th century writings of Sigmund Freud. In his 1905 text *Three Essays*, Freud discusses in Chapter 1 ("Sexual Aberrations") the idea of inversion, which he defines as men desirous of men and women desirous of women (2). One important aspect of his text is that inversion (which ultimately involves decisions about gender with regard to sexual object choice) is not necessarily related to innateness or degeneracy (Ibid 6 – 8), but, in fact, is a natural phenomenon present in all. Freud is able to use neurological aspects to explain perversions47 which, although viewed as cathexes that choose an alternate route, are part of sexual development (Ibid 16). Freud himself warns against considering perversion negatively since it is, after all, common in otherwise ‘normalized’ sexual behavior (Ibid 26 – 27). Freud, in essence, problematizes the fact that a person is born a ‘man’ or ‘woman’ in his discussion of hermaphrodites, and opines that every ‘normal’ male or female has traces of the opposite sex. Although Freud is clear in referencing ‘normal’ sexual behavior (as that which cathects in a certain direction), he acknowledges perversions, fetishisms, and other forms of non-normative sexuality as having some connection to the natural and the normal since, for him, everyone has the potential to be

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47 Freud defines perversions (clearly different than the naturally occurring ‘inversions’) as “sexual activities which either a) extend, in an anatomical sense, beyond the origins of the body that they are designed for sexual union, or b) linger over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim” (*Three Essays* 16).
‘not normal’ and most people in one way or another are, in fact, abnormal. For Freud, sexuality is something that is unconscious, basic, and animalistic, present in everyone, even children.48 Freud’s acknowledgement that perverse, liminal or non-normative sexes (such as hermaphroditism) or sexualities (such as perversions and fetishes) exist in relatively normal capacities goes against much of the historical vilification of these behaviors or preferences.49 His biologistic acceptance of two sexes with distinct functions and physiologies separates him from the earlier tradition of the one-sex model. Freud does not pathologize these sexualities since everyone possesses these dispositions, and this reading of sex and sexuality as not only corporeal but also psychological and social is extremely important for later scholarship.

One of the current scholars who has built upon Freud’s legacy (among many other disciplines as well) is post-modern theorist50 Judith Butler, who dismantles the traditional or typical belief that gender is what bodies or individuals ‘are’ or ‘have’,51 in order to theorize that gender is, in fact, a performance, “a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (“Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 313). Butler elaborates on and, ultimately, problematizes Freud’s concern and, to borrow her term, “confusion” over masculine and feminine dispositions that lead to an internalization of ‘masculinity’ or ‘femininity’, arguing that these gendered dispositions that Freud maintained result from laws that, when internalized, regulate gender identity (“. . . then gender identity appears

48 See Chapter 2 of *Three Essays*, “Infantile Sexuality”
49 Freud even delves into the complexities of the female orgasm, as in “Female Sexuality” from 1931.
50 Postmodernism loosely refers to the academic, literary, and cultural movements that began in the 1980s and that celebrate qualities such as fragmentation, incoherence, performance, and provisionality.
51 “Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine takes place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes” (*Undoing Gender* 42).
primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity” *Gender Trouble* 81). Butler’s undoing of the notion of the body as the accumulation of norms that build up over time and her argument that gender is not an internalized ‘essence’ but rather a ‘performance’52 (“Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 315) rattles the foundations of previously-accepted notions of gender and sexuality as unified and coherent, with the result that “the entire framework of copy and origin proves radically unstable as each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal or logical priority of either term” (Ibid 316).

In addition to Butler’s theorizations about gender and sexuality as a performance and not an essence, she also devotes much scholarship to the meaning that is derived from the interstitial zones that often lie between or among accepted or traditional sexual categorizations. To quote Butler, “Even within the field of intelligible sexuality, one finds that the binaries that anchor its operations permit for middle zones and hybrid formations. . . Indeed, there are middle regions, hybrid regions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no clear names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis produced by the variable. . .” (*Undoing Gender* 108). These zones of “difficult nomination” (Ibid 108) Butler marks as the very sites where meaning related to sex and sexuality is produced and created.

The topics discussed in this study’s second and third chapter draw from theory dating from Freud up until Butler, and revolve around the embodiment of these non-normative sexes and sexualities, specifically the concept of crisscrossed sexes and

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52 “That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality” (*Gender Trouble* 173).
sexualities at the threshold\textsuperscript{53}. The idea of the crisscrossed or threshold nature of sex and sexuality is nothing new, and has been found in every culture across the world, from India (the male turned female known as the ‘hijra’) to the Balkans (the ‘females in breeches’).\textsuperscript{54} The larger title of ‘transgenderism,’ a term popularized in the 1970s, and signifying those who experience and/or express their gender differently from societal or cultural expectations, subsumes these non-normative sexes and sexualities and provides us with certain vocabulary in order to be conversant about such figures. The mélange of transgendered figures includes the transsexuals, who change their sex and/or gender physically or surgically, the transvestites or cross-dressers, who choose to wear clothing or adopt gender practices of the opposite biological sex, those who are non-conforming or genderqueer, such as those who identify with both sexes at the same time and do not follow social norms, and the intersexed, who biologically possess both sexual organs.\textsuperscript{55}

Common figures in these categories, such as the ‘masculinized woman’ and the ‘feminized man’ have always generated anxiety or even fear in society, resulting often times in the socio-historical isolation and marginalization of such figures. These sexual terms were first coined by Krafft-Ebing in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century as he described “metamorphosis sexualis paranoia”,\textsuperscript{56} a term that specifically referred to the sexual discomfort of homosexual men, and their preference for the same gender. The struggle for the acceptance and proliferation of such figures has been taken up by many theorists,
including Kessler (*Lessons from the Intersexed*), Wilchins (*Queer Theory, Gender Theory*), and Roughgarden (*Evolution’s Rainbow*), all of whom bring to light the struggle for visibility and acceptance for the intersexed, third sexes/ genders, and queerness or genderqueer.

Chapters two and three will thus examine and address issues of how sex and sexuality are intricately connected to the body. Sex and sexuality and the body have always and forever will be interlinked, as they have been described and defined in a variety of ways over time by a myriad of investigators. Again and again, the body has proven itself to be a battleground of ideology and theory, a locus for traditional genders and sexes yet simultaneously a potential ground for alternative genders and sexualities to exist. For postmodern theorists such as Judith Butler, the body is the sedimentation of norms that accrue over time, and that compel those very bodies they affect to perform according to such norms. These norms, articulated as both heterosexual and (hetero)normative, however, can be and often are undone and resignified performatively (meaning that one can knowingly or even unknowingly enact atypical\(^\text{57}\) genders or sexes as part of a resistance to this compulsory system that Butler terms the ‘matrix of intelligibility’ [described in her text *Gender Trouble*]). One of Butler’s many arguments is that the very structures that are excluded from the Symbolic (that is to say, those that are outside of this Law of the Father) can be used to contest that very same domain: “If there is a sexual domain that is ‘excluded’ from the Symbolic and can potentially expose the Symbolic as hegemonic rather than totalizing in its reach, it must then be possible to

\(^{57}\) ‘Atypical’, that is, in comparison to those norms
locate this excluded domain either within or outside that economy and to strategize its intervention in terms of that placement” (Gender Trouble 53). In other words, non-traditional sexual or gendered bodily forms can use the very structures that configure them in order to inveigh against those same structures and thus re-articulate something else.

This sense of ‘re-configuring’ or ‘rupturing’ is also seen with Lacan, for whom the Law can be prohibitive and generative, since, in designating what will be repressed, an exclusion occurs that generates something different (Gender Trouble 71). Butler also locates this same generative quality in Freud. For Butler, Freud’s analysis of love, loss, and desire reveals how “gender identity appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition that proves to be formative of identity” (Gender Trouble 81). That is to say, one’s epistemological relation to his/her sexual/ gender identity (how one conceives of his or her own gender or sexual identity) often internalizes the very prohibitive compulsion that dictates that one must be only either heterosexual or (hetero)normative, and consequently spawns the means with which to belie (or affirm) such rigid strictures that structure gender and/or sexual identity.

As stated before, this very system of gender and sexuality can be undone and rearticulated, to quote Butler, meaning that considerations regarding embodiment signal that the body should be understood as “an aging process⁵⁸, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities

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⁵⁸ Butler’s reference here relates to the means by which bodies progress through performances in which those bodies enact normative forms but also ‘age’ in that those same bodies learn to use those norms in order to invert them.
to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone” (Undoing Gender 29).

What interests us here for this project is the type of embodiment that occurs when this undoing or rupturing and re-articulating occurs, how this occurs and appears, as well as to what end it serves. Chapters 2 and 3 on the plays of contemporary Spanish playwrights Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín will address questions such as: ‘What do these new or different sexes and sexualities look like? How do the different or atypical gender/sexual embodiments contrast with traditional or ‘normative’ forms? What makes them ‘non-normative’? What are the costs or consequences, as well as the benefits of such alternative or non-traditional bodily occupations? And, most importantly, what is accomplished through such ‘rupturing and re-articulation’?’

To summarize, the essays reviewed in this section all seek to analyze many different sexual bodily forms that are either ‘crisscrossed’ in comparison to the normative or traditional, and/or ‘at the threshold’ of what is deemed sexually typical for all genders and sexes. The term ‘crisscrossed,’ for the purposes of this study, will denote that which may be opposite to the ‘traditional norm’, but not just a ‘negative’ of the norm, for the term also signifies a different type of sexualized body that uses the norms to re-work and un-do them in order to present something other than what is ‘normal’ or ‘usual’, but which is not always clearly categorized. The term ‘at the threshold’ will denote those bodily forms that often lie between clearly delineated categories or terms, yet which often resist or thwart categorization for, while they may possess characteristics of both ‘sides’ of the traditional terminological bifurcation (that is to say, the categorizations that lie on either side of the ‘threshold’), they do not always include clear elements of one or the
other, but instead synthesize different elements in order to present forms that are unusual or ‘interstitial’ Not only will ‘traditional’ or ‘(hetero)normative’ bodily forms or constitutions be examined, but also attention will be given to the process or even struggle that occurs as the characters undo these normative bodily forms and thus re-create their own sexual constitutions, hence analyzing the marginal/liminal or crisscrossed forms their bodies occupy in the process. Additionally considered will be the situational factors that affect their sexual-corporeal challenges or transformations, and how the characters respond to these factors. The analyses in these chapters thus aim to prove the possibility (and sometimes, necessity) of moving beyond the typical sexual binary and examining how the characters in the plays by these two authors successfully “eroticize the margins”.

The second chapter, hence, will specifically deal with issues of embodiment, and will examine the aspects of sexes/ sexualities whose manifestation in appearance or behavior contradicts the normal and/or traditional sex or gender identities, roles, or norms, such as masculine bodies donning feminine attributes or manifesting feminine behaviors, phallic women, or expanded considerations of certain roles such as ‘wife’ or ‘mother,’ whose identification is intimately tied to the sexual. In addition, these analyses will attempt to highlight the struggle(s) present for the characters as they seek to negotiate and/or embrace their liminal sexes/ sexualities, and are thwarted by (hetero)normative society. The author whose plays are analyzed in Chapter two is Paloma Pedrero.

In the first analysis of Chapter Two, titled “Violent Penetrations”, we shall consider the examples of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities on the threshold in Pedrero’s
work *Cachorros de negro mirar*, about two young, anti-establishment boys who desire the company of a transsexual prostitute in order to prove their masculinity to each other, and who end up being forced to come to terms with the real truth about their own sexualities. I intend to show that, through displays and practices of violence, the characters in *Cachorros de negro mirar* highlight and define their sex(uality) as that which lies on or within the margin, in which sex(ality) is not clearly demarcated, but achieved and defined as that which is peripheral, interstitial, ‘crisscrossed,’ or ‘on the threshold.’

Likewise, Pedrero’s second play analyzed in Chapter Two is considered with a section titled, “*En la otra habitación: Age as a function of liminal eroticization,*” for Pedrero’s depiction of encounters between characters of differing ages (specifically between an older woman and a much younger man and woman) un-do the importance placed on traditional roles (such as ‘wife’ and ‘mother’) and re-do the considerations for such roles, specifically demonstrating how much of their significance lies in the sexual. I aim to examine the degree to which the sexuality of the characters in the play both holds a mirror up to the flaws in traditional expectations for wives and mothers, in order to argue for a more expanded acceptance of such roles that may also be successful.

As with Pedrero’s plays, the theme of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold is also prevalent in the dramas of Yolanda Pallín, examined in Chapter Three. Among Pallin’s plays that involve this theme is *Los restos de la noche*, a drama about an unhappily married woman, Laura, whose existence requires her inventing a fantasy world.

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59 More specific information about the playwright and the work examined in each chapter is provided in the author introduction and chapter overview.
where she projects a fictional form of herself that is split into ‘Man’ and ‘Woman.’ In the analysis for her play in Chapter Three, titled “Interspatial Reflections: Liminal Spaces = (equals) Marginal Selves,” I analyze an area that I call the interspace, the marginal realm that lies beyond Laura’s reality yet that she is able to occupy physically, and the degree to which it may serve as an arena from which Laura escapes the socio-sexual expectations that society (chiefly her husband) have thrust upon her.

Another of Pallín’s plays that treats the theme at hand is her drama *Memoria*, that revolves around an unnamed Woman, whose happy or traumatic past memories along with current illicit desires (in addition to her own digital self) are projected onto a movie screen, and with whom she, at times, interacts through the gaze. In this consideration of Pallín’s play, I shall examine the degree to which sexualities are able to be ‘contained’ or not, and how the multiple ‘gazes’ in the work function with regard to the characters’ sexualities.

Pedrero’s and Pallín’s plays mentioned are a few of those that encapsulate the theme of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold. Through analyzing these plays in chapters two and three, I hope to demonstrate the complexity involved with such sexes and sexualities, illuminating both the positive and negative repercussions derived from such crisscrossed, alternative, dissident, or non-normative sexes and sexualities, as well as the social constraints that attempt to thwart such sexes and sexualities, and the degree to which they succeed or fail in society today.

60 Explored and defined more fully in the analysis
Chapters four and five: Sexing Themselves: (Em)powered bodies: The theatre
of Yolanda Dorado (Chapter four) and Margarita Reiz (Chapter five)

In Spanish literature we have seen how many sexualized bodies are subject to or exist within power relations. On one hand, some would argue that such a figure like the transvestite or cross-dresser (in Golden Age drama, for example) boldly asserts power over the other characters in the play in embodying a non-normative or liminal position, able to trick the other figures in the play (and at times being tricked through forced subscription to socially foisted sex and gender roles). An alternative reading of such plays could reveal that, although it may appear as such, there is no external institution standing ‘outside’ of those affected by power relations, that would exercise power on them from the ‘top down,’ and that there are no individual subjects guiding that power relationship, since power flows freely between and among all individuals in a system. Hence, with such a figure, on one hand it may appear that this cross-dressing individual resists the ‘repressive’ structure of society, rebels through cross-dressing, and then returns to a subjugated positioning at the end of the play. However, another viewpoint could argue perhaps that as this figure exercises power over others, he/she also has power exercised over him/her, and this plays out in complex, deep ways, resulting in effects not to be construed only as destructive and negative, but constructive and positive as well.

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61 Take, for example, Don Gil de las calzas verdes where it appears as if, cross-dressing as Don Gil, Juana achieves power and control over the other characters in the play, ultimately achieving what she desires by exercising power over the others; nonetheless, one may consider what factors of empowerment or disempowerment directly affect her, questioning if she truly achieves power or remains disempowered the entire time by deeper, more complex structures.

62 While one may argue that cross-dressing achieves effects that are positive and constructive, permitting empowerment of the individual who cross-dresses, it may also be said that cross-dressing involves elements
We shall see how both viewpoints can be helpful in discussing the complex relationship between sexualized bodies and power in female-authored Spanish drama.\(^{63}\)

A crucial element when discussing sex and sexuality is the degree to which such expressions are regulated and constrained, or permitted and encouraged by power and power structures. Sometimes non-normative sexualities succeed in possessing and maintaining power in society, such as India’s ‘hijras’, who, as intersexed, alternately gendered caste, are able to use their liminal status to their own benefit as they have rights to own property from the government, earn their own incomes to support their community, and are valued in the society as ritual performers (Nanda, “Hijras: An Alternative Sex and Gender Role in India”\(^{64}\)). Sometimes, power structures constrain and prevent the expression of multiple or aheteronormative sexes and sexualities, such as in the U.S., where there is current legislation that refuses legally to recognize gay or plural marriages, or rights for gay couples. There is also the difficult situation worldwide for figures such as hermaphrodites, whom medical science wants (and usually succeeds in the desire) to ‘fix’ and ‘gender’ in order to make them conform to a particular sex.\(^{65}\)

As Riki Wilchins states, to function in society, one must have a ‘self’, which she defines as “a specific organization of flesh, soul, and meaning, a mental sign which stands for ‘this person’ having certain properties and characteristics” (Read My Lips 133).

The problem with the existence of this ‘self’ in society is that ‘selves’ that do not fit into that are damaging and negative, involving revenge and cruelty—the point to make is that such practices as cross-dressing are highly complex and variable, to be examined closely and carefully.

\(^{63}\) By no means does this suggest that these are the only two possible readings of power relationships in plays; these are two examples which will serve as basis for other possible theories to be used in the investigation itself.

\(^{64}\) From Third Sex, Third Gender (Herdt, ed.)

\(^{65}\) See Kessler’s Lessons from the Intersexed.
the proper, socially accepted categories of sex and gender, are thwarted, marginalized, and often refused. All of these actions toward the sexed or gendered self, and those very selves, are subject to power relations, what Wilchins refers to as the “fascism of meaning,” “which robs us of our bodies at an early age and bids us recognize, and be perpetually recognized, in very specific ways” (Read My Lips 132). Wilchins additionally comments on the problems associated with the reality that society often forces bodies to be sexed accordingly, or risk non-existence, criticizing that, for her, “Maybe sex isn’t a noun at all but a verb, as in ‘sex yourself’” (Read My Lips 57). The notion of ‘sexing oneself’ in certain ways will become a key element to the analyses of plays in the upcoming chapters.

Many theories describe how sexualized bodies in history have always been subject to power and power relations. Power and its effect on bodies have forever existed, and this relationship between the two has often been conflictive. Many critics have taken up this topic, and have written extensively on it. Several show the relationship between sexualized bodies and power as an oppressive one. For example, Marilyn French examines this theme in her text Beyond Power: On Men, Women, and Morals. In this work she examines many definitions of power, and how others have conceived of power and power relations, such as Bertrand Russell, for whom power is the ability to demand or require obedience (French 505), or Talcott Parsons, for whom power involves property maintained that allows the property owner to affect the actions of those in this

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66 In her work she specifically looks at the power privileges afforded men and denied women.
67 See Russell’s work Power: A New Social Analysis.
68 Refer to The Structure of Social Action.
structure so that they conform to what is desired (French 505). French herself discusses “power to,” which she defines as the ability and capacity ‘to’ do something, which connotes a kind of liberty; there is also “power over,” which refers to the domination or control over others (French 505). This topic is very important with regard to sexual(ized) forms that either fit into or transcend a society or culture’s expectations of sex roles and behaviors. Since many of the characters in literature (as discussed earlier) often transgress social-sexual expectations or roles, society can and does impose power regulations on them. As French states, “When what we see clearly violates our categories, we blot it out of our minds, transform it into the expected, or view [it with]. . . at least repugnance” (97). Most social institutions “create an appearance of power [and simultaneously] deprive individuals of power. They transform separate people into ranked members of an association dedicated to controlling them” (French 307). Other studies of power on/in bodies approach the topic from a different angle, as we shall see. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that power functions are both complex and crucial when discussing sex and sexuality. The power relation to bodies will be of paramount importance for this study of sex(uality).

One of the most influential writers to discuss the nature of the relationship between bodies and power is Michel Foucault. In his landmark text The History of Sexuality: Volume I (Volume I of three volumes), he argues that 20th century society is still dominated by the sexual ideals and practices of the 17th century, which imposed a strictly coded discourse of sexual forms and practices, resulting in the repression of sex, as well as the relationship between sex and power, which is also repressed (8), yet, this
relationship is more complex than just the mere notion of ‘repression.’ Sex, for Foucault, is socially constructed and defined, seen as “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology” (127), and how it is ‘deployed’ operates differently for different classes and groups of people. Foucault wants to undo the notion that sexuality as a topic has always been repressed in Western society by arguing that a long-standing obsession with sexuality since the 17th century has created a discourse around sexuality that shows what channels of power it takes and how this affects people’s behavior (11).

Foucault’s notion of the ‘repressive hypothesis’ is important since it shows how society is invested with reticence and guilt in discussing sex, and hence policed itself linguistically and socially in an attempt not to discuss sex (8 – 9). In the 17th and 18th centuries, with regard to discourses incorporating sex, according to Foucault, exactly the opposite effect occurred, and the “tightening up of the rules of decorum likely did produce, as a countereffect, a valorization and intensification of indecent speech” (18). In other words, instead of ‘repressing’ sex, the attempts at repression actually succeeded in making sex more discussed. Foucault follows the historical trajectory of sexual discourses in the subsequent centuries, which “did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as means for its exercise” (32). Analyzing the many forms of these ‘polymorphous techniques of power,’ Foucault demonstrates how every generation has created for itself power-imbued structures. These structures regulate and
expose many kinds of sexes and sexualities, seen, for example, in areas such as confession and the medicalization of sexuality. This results in the formation of a ‘science of sexuality,’ what he refers to as the ‘scientia sexualis.’

Since Foucault’s idea of power is not hierarchical but rather free-flowing through social systems, resistance to power can and does occur in bodies, but is never exterior to the system of power relations. In other words, power has always acted on bodies, is exercised from many points, is present in many types of relationships, and no one is ‘outside’ these power relationships (94). Power is exercised in specific ways on bodies, sometimes in order to control, regulate, prescribe, or proscribe certain sexual practices, and the regulated bodies themselves are often unaware of the power exercised on them.

In order to maintain certain preferred sexes/sexualities over others, society itself has become even more sexualized, but this sexualization of society, according to Foucault, needs to occur in a certain way in order for it to be functional. Consequently, in the past, there were prohibitions of incests, persecution and pathologization of peripheral sexualities and a medicalization of sexual disorders (41 – 44). Yet, despite the fact that the attempts to regulate sexuality have actually succeeded in creating and openly discussing more and different types of sexual identities, these are still subject to power relations which often restrict them. The consequence of the “will to knowledge”

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69 Foucault states that “it is through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities that the relations of power to sex and pleasure branched out and multiplied, measured the body, and penetrated modes of conduct” (History of Sexuality Vol. 1 48).

70 See Part III of his text

71 “In short, it is a question of orienting ourselves to a conception of power which replaces the privilege of the law with the viewpoint of the objective” (102).

72 Foucault writes that the controls in medicine, pedagogy, and morality are in place “to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative” (37).
regarding sex\textsuperscript{73} is that what used to be discussed in an open and passionate manner is now often discussed with restraint and control, reticence and discipline\textsuperscript{74}. Thus, the importance of Foucault’s work is that it allows for an examination as to how or why discourses on sex and sexuality come into being through power structures, and what this ultimately means for the bodies involved in these systems.

As with the intersectionality of the notion of sex(uality) and the body (examined in Chapters two and three), there exists a multi-layeredness and complexity of the considerations of sex(uality) and power (to be examined in the remaining chapters), resulting in the generation of such questions as ‘What effect does power have on subjects?’, ‘How does this exercise of power appear or work?’, and ‘How do subjects interact with or against power structures and relations?’ Evident in these types of queries, and of particular interest in chapters four and five, are the varied and intricate means by which power relates to one salient topic, the subject, and its logical ontological incarnation, the body. Several theorists argue that bodies are never completely free from power and power relations\textsuperscript{75}, and that many times bodies are, in fact, constituted and created, or even de-constituted/destroyed, by some relation or structuring of power.

Much critical interest to date has attempted to negotiate how power is enacted toward or on the subject, by whom, and if this power exists prior to the subject or if it emerges through the subject itself (Butler, \textit{The Psychic Life of Power}, 15). According to theorist Judith Butler, power can be “both external to the subject and the very venue of the

\textsuperscript{73} That is, the continuing desire to know more about it (Foucault 12).
\textsuperscript{74} This will be examined later involving the notion of confession.
\textsuperscript{75} For example, refer to all of the texts of Judith Butler, Marilyn French, Michel Foucault as listed in the Bibliography.
subject” (15), creating a complex web of relations whose minutiae envelop the subject as well as others around him/her. Critical inquiry has also generated discussion about the means by which power has worked not just to dominate or oppress subjects (hence, in a negative vein), but also to form subjects as well (thus seen as potentially more positive) [Ibid 18], evidenced in many plays in this study.

However power may be expressed or articulated, it is most certainly linked to bodies. In examining sex and sexuality, Chapters Two and Three of this study focuses on issues related to the body, specifically the notion of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold. One of the factors to be studied in those chapters is the preponderance of non-normative or marginal sexes and sexualities in the theatre of Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín as evidenced through crisscrossed or peripheral bodily forms or conceptualizations. These remaining two chapters additionally aim to consider the theatre of two more playwrights and, as before, propose to examine that which is or may be considered non-normative or marginal with regard to the characters (their bodies, identities, or selves) as they are affected by or affect issues of power76. As with the second and third chapters, a crucial component of these two chapters, and the entire project, is the examination of how sex and sexuality in these plays does not always follow traditional or stereotypical representations, but instead often seeks alternative and non-traditional expressions that lie in, on, or along the ‘margin.’ Specifically in these chapters, one must keep in mind that power is most commonly conceived in a top-down

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76 As we shall see, all of the playwrights in this study proffer non-traditional or non-normative sexes and sexualities in their theatres; as Chapters two and three discussed how these sexes & sexualities were considered ‘crisscrossed’ or ‘on the threshold,’ these two chapters will concentrate more on sexes and sexualities as they relate to issues of power.
(borrowing Foucault’s terminology) sense, with those who possess it being the ‘empowered’ subjects and those who are dispossessed or stripped of it being the ‘disempowered’ subjects (or perhaps even objects). This analysis, hence, will reflect upon how the characters in each play complicate or disrupt this simplistic and straightforward notion of power and bodies, thereby achieving an alternative or abnormal expression of power as it is co-articulated with or through various conduits of sexuality.

In other words, these chapters intend to look at how the characters in the plays by two more authors ‘sex themselves,’ meaning how they use power to constitute or represent themselves (or others sexually), and examine how their bodies are impacted by power considerations or relations (thus the notion of ‘(em)powered bodies), again recalling that the means by which power is expressed or treated in each chapter may often be considered ‘marginal’ or ‘peripheral.’ With regard to the parenthesis in the word (em)powered, this phrase designates that sometimes characters will, in fact, be ‘empowered’ and thus will wield power either towards others or possess it for themselves. Nonetheless, this does not mean that they will always maintain power, for often power will be exerted on them while they lack it entirely (thus, just ‘powered’ or even ‘disempowered’). The chapters will also question the degree to which these characters are successful or unsuccessful in their attempts at empowerment, and to what degree they are bound up in complex power structures, sometimes from which they cannot ever escape. Hence, these chapters aim to continue the conversation about sex and

77 Bear in mind that the term ‘sexing oneself’ does not always imply an active, power-possessing act; for Wilchins, sex is sometimes a verb, as in the mandate to ‘sex oneself’ when really there is no choice for how one can do so (Read My Lips 57).
sexuality while expanding the discussion in order to concentrate on power issues, and ultimately hope to illuminate the complexities and atypicalities of power relations and structures with regard to the characters in the plays.

With the first two plays by author Yolanda Dorado (Confesiones and Lo que callan las madres), analysis will turn initially (in Confesiones) to an examination of the ‘constitutive confessions’, to determine how characters enter into power relations (and thus affect power relations) through confession and who or what ultimately becomes ‘constituted’\(^{78}\) through those very same confessions. Second, in Dorado’s play Lo que callan las madres, power will be examined in its relationship to characters who have been forced to play certain roles, or ‘act’ within societal limitations of roles designated for them, and ultimately choose to act ‘out’ side of those roles, rejecting them and embracing other ones in order to fulfill their happiness, yet who may still be denied any real power either way\(^{79}\).

As with Yolanda Dorado, the plays of Margarita Reiz additionally present characters who are embroiled in many power issues, and who, like in the plays of Yolanda Dorado, also attempt to define themselves amidst these power intricacies that always revolve around some aspect of sex and sexuality. The discussion of her first play, “Hungering for power and powerful hunger: consuming/ consummating the liminal in Hambre ciega,” will examine how Reiz’s characters possess both a powerful hunger and a hunger for power that they negotiate in the liminal space of a post-war city ruins, where

\(^{78}\) This will later be explained in the chapter to be a very specific definition of the meaning of ‘constitution’.

\(^{79}\) Even though ‘choosing’ to act a certain way may be considered power, we shall see how Dorado will complicate this issue and turn it on its head.
they may ‘consummate’ their relationship as they sex themselves in a particular way, as well as how they hunger for power in their desire to ‘consume’ and become part of it. Nonetheless, the analysis will also turn toward how this hunger, quoting the title, is ‘blinded,’ and what the ramifications are of such desirous hungers. The second analysis in this portion of the chapter, entitled “The performance of power: Revealing the true through deception in Nada es lo que parece” will examine how certain types of performances that appear endowed with power prove just the opposite, and how modes of deception ultimately reveal the truth, for ‘nothing is what it seems.’

As with the plays of Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín, I hope to demonstrate with the analyses of the works of Yolanda Dorado and Margarita Reiz that issues of sexuality as they intersect with power are complexly constituted, and inflected by many other factors such as societal norms, expectations, roles, and identities. I aim to reveal that questions of power do not just involve empowerment or disempowerment, but that they encompass many other issues of consideration and that, often, as we shall see, appearances prove deceiving. I shall undergo an evaluation of the ramifications of power in these chapters, in order to prove that power, while sometimes destructive, is often constructive, but, always proves complex and interwoven with a myriad of other issues at hand.

1 1) Conclusions

Sex and sexuality have pervaded political, social, religious, cultural, and literary thought since the beginning of time. Although the topic has been treated in literature and critical early studies, from one end of the historical spectrum with Aristotle and Galen, to
the other end with Freud and Lacan, to the most recent considerations of the topic as viewed through Wittig and Butler, this theme has not sufficiently been embraced in every discipline. Consequently, sex and sexuality studies have been fraught with difficulties and obstacles, chiefly the stigma that attempts to negativize the associations related to such topics and the fear involved with their expression, something that all the playwrights examined in this study treat in their plays. To paraphrase the words of postmodern theorist Monique Wittig, categorizations of certain identities through tying them to already established, normative and, usually patriarchal labels\(^{80}\) result in a naturalization of those normative sexualities and, many times, constitutes an exclusionary process that ignores and refuses to represent multiple, differenced, or non-normative sexes and sexualities. For Wittig, such normalizing discourses “oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms” (*The Straight Mind and Other Essays* 25).

Thus, one of the goals of this investigation is to expose the attempts at normalization of such differenced sexual expressions, and ultimately to reduce the stigma of ‘otherness’. Although all of the individual playwrights in this study sporadically address this theme in their works, it is only through the viewing of their corpus with a common and specific lens that the true value of this literature is shown. Though their methods of expression may differ, all of these playwrights ultimately, I submit, desire and succeed in challenging the sexual binary, as well as offering new conceptualizations of

\(^{80}\) Such as defining ‘woman’ only as a female being who procreates and is linked in marriage to a man (*From The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 6)
sex and sexuality, embodiment, and power by holding up a mirror to current sexual trends in society today.81

Through analyzing the themes of sex and sexuality in contemporary female-authored theatre as they are presented by the four playwrights examined in this study, I hope for a greater understanding that the gestalt of 21st century Spain has changed and continues to change through its incorporation and visualization of marginal and complexly constituted sexes and sexualities. My intent is to reveal that these sexual expressions are not a phantasmal imaginary but rather a verisimilar reference of the potential multiple complexities of contemporary society today, whether or not the hegemony wishes to admit or accept them. These playwrights boldly tread uncharted territory and, through their work, announce a shift in the paradigm of not only Spanish theatre but also humanity in general.

81 What drives this thesis is not necessarily a social critique—it is merely intended to demonstrate the complex and multiple ways that sex and sexuality exist and are treated as they are co-articulated through issues of embodiment and power. However one perceives or interprets the society that these sexes and sexualities reveal or demonstrate is, ultimately, up to each individual.
Chapter 2 and Chapter 3:

Crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold in the theatre of Paloma Pedrero

(Chapter 2) and Yolanda Pallín (Chapter 3):

“Even within the field of intelligible sexuality, one finds that the binaries that anchor its operations permit for middle zones and hybrid formations. . . . Indeed, there are middle regions, hybrid regions of legitimacy and illegitimacy that have no clear names, and where nomination itself falls into a crisis produced by the variable, sometimes violent boundaries of legitimating practices that come into uneasy and sometimes conflictual contact with one another”

(Judith Butler, Undoing Gender 108)

“[Any sexual practices] that open surfaces and orifices to erotic signification or close down others effectively reinscribe the boundaries of the body along new cultural lines” (Butler, Gender Trouble 169)

“It may be that the very categories of sex, of sexual identity, of gender are produced or maintained in the effects of this compulsory performance, effects which are disingenuously renamed as causes, origins, disingenuously lined up within a causal or expressive sequence that the heterosexual norm produces to legitimate itself as the origin of all sex” (Butler, “Imitation and Gender Subordination” 29)

“. . . gender identity appears primarily to be the internalization of a prohibition
that proves to be formative of identity” (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 81)

“The task is to refigure [the] necessary ‘outside’ as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome” (Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 53)

“As bodies, we are always for something more than, and other than, ourselves” (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 25)

“…what troubles the distinction between legitimacy and illegitimacy are social practices, specifically sexual practices, that do not appear immediately as coherent in the available lexicon of legitimation. These are sites of uncertain ontology, difficult nomination” (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 108)

“…by subscribing to the categories of gender based solely on the male/female binary, we cheat ourselves of a searching examination of our real gender identity” (Kate Bornstein, *Gender Outlaw* 38)
Chapter 2

Crisscrossed Sexes and Sexualities at the Threshold:

Paloma Pedrero

According to theatre historian César Oliva, Spanish theatre in the 1980s was marked by many tendencies, one of which was the spirit of experimentation with form, style, theme, and scenery\(^{82}\) (*Teatro español del siglo XX* 261). For the first time, the main theatrical innovations were occurring in the professional theatres and not only in the marginal sectors (Ibid 262). Assisted by the creation of the CNNTE (Centro Nacional de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas), a wave of unique and provocative theatre flooded across the country bringing many new authors with contemporary concerns and different styles. To cite Oliva, this new theatre of the final decades of the twentieth century, “liberado de condicionantes estéticos, políticos y económicos del pasado, dispone de una completa libertad artística para producir su escritura. Por eso inventa espacios, comprime relatos, alarga tiempos, alterna acciones, y en general, permite soñar desde sus escenarios” (Ibid 319). Some of the characteristics of the authors of this theatre include a realistic and modernized aesthetic, a minimalism of scenery often requiring the spectator’s

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\(^{82}\) For more detailed information on theatre trends of the time, see César Oliva’s text *Teatro español del siglo XX*. Also refer to the thesis introduction. The introductions to each of the playwright’s sections will serve more as a brief summary rather than an exhaustive analysis.
imagination, a keen interest in the scenic languages of music and dance, televisual or cinematic effects, concerns of the time period, and urban themes such as drugs, unemployment, violence, and personal/relationship difficulties (Ibid 323). Of the newest groups of authors during this period, many women emerged onto the dramatic scene, such as María Manuela Reina, Yolanda García Serrano, Carmen Resino, Lluïsa Cunillè, Pilar Pombo, and Concha Romero, thus offering to theatre a potential woman’s perspective on issues of the time and also popularizing the talents of these female playwrights\textsuperscript{83}. Nonetheless, the most prolific and well-known female author of the time was and continues to be Paloma Pedrero.

With her style described as that which “cultiva la comedia realista con apariencia de drama poético” (Ibid 326), her works are often said to oscillate “entre el compromiso que proporciona una buena dosis de crítica social y la pieza convencional” (Ibid). Born in Madrid in 1957, Paloma Pedrero has not only limited her writing to the theatre but also has extended her talents to other areas such as a cinema scriptwriting (collaborating on \textit{La reina del mate}, 1985, with Fermín Cabal and \textit{El jardín japonés}, 1986, with Carlos Puerto), novel (composing several children’s novels as well as narratives\textsuperscript{84} in journals such as \textit{La Razón} and \textit{Revista Interviú}), poetry (such as \textit{Paloma en la tormenta}\textsuperscript{85}, 1992, and \textit{Aliento de equilibrista}\textsuperscript{86}, 1993), essay (her work “Una vida plena, ¿una cama vacía?”

\textsuperscript{83} ‘Potential’ in the sense that there is no one universal woman’s experience; nonetheless, many of these playwrights would likely claim that they do write in a woman-conscious vein, as Reiz states, “con la conciencia de una mujer de hoy” (Interview with Reiz)
\textsuperscript{85} This work was eventually incorporated into her work \textit{Aliento de equilibrista}.
\textsuperscript{86} This was published under the title ‘La última palabra’.
[2006]), as well as into the areas of acting and directing. In addition, she has participated in many conferences and workshops dedicated to theatre both in Spain and abroad, and has published a myriad of articles on all aspects of theatre in specialized journals such as Estreno, Primer Acto, and ABC Cultural.

Gaining immediate fame for her controversial first play in 1984, La llamada de Lauren, Pedrero has written almost thirty plays in a little more than twenty years, and that have been represented in at least sixteen countries worldwide. Her plays have been translated to English, French, Italian, Czech, Portuguese, German, as well as the other national languages of Spain. She has also won numerous awards for her plays, such as the Segundo Premio de Teatro Breve de Valladolid in 1984 for La llamada de Lauren, the second-place (acciérit) award of the Premio Nacional de Teatro Breve de San Javier in 1987 for El color de agosto, the Premio Tirso de Molina in 1987 for Invierno de luna alegre, the Premio de la Crítica (in Cuba) in 2003 for En el túnel un pájaro, and the second-place SGAE (Sociedad General de Autores y Editores) Award in 2004 for Magia Café, to name a few.

Paloma Pedrero’s theatrical corpus touches upon a wide range of topics, from transvestism and multisexuality (for example, La llamada de Lauren, El color de agosto), to interpersonal interactions (that are often destructive, yet, conversely, many times constructive), such as the plays Resguardo Personal, Besos de lobo, En el túnel un pájaro, and Noches de amor efímero (Esta noche en el parque, La noche dividida, Solos
esta noche\textsuperscript{87}, to intergenerational encounters or conflicts (seen in La estrella, Invierno de luna alegre, En la otra habitación, Locas de amar), as well as social commentary and/or criticism (for instance El pasamanos, La isla amarilla, Magia Café, and Ana el once de marzo).

Besides the varied topics of her theatre, the theatrical form of her works also has differed. She has composed many monologues that often times have premiered as dramatic readings, such as La actriz rebelde, forming part of the spectacle “La Confesión” in 2001, Balada de la mujer fea, written in 2001 and appearing in a 2002 edition of the journal Art Teatral, Yo no quiero ir al cielo, premiering in 2002 at the Universidad Menéndez Pelayo de Santander and appearing in Virtudes Serrano’s 2004 anthology Teatro breve entre dos siglos, as well as ¿Vosotros qué pensáis?, a monologue read within the “marathon of monologues” (‘maratón de monólogos’) of the AAT (Asociación de Autores de Teatro) in the Círculo de Bellas Artes in 2004, and emerging later as part of her larger play Beso a beso, that premiered in Alicante in 2005. In addition to dramatic monologues, Pedrero has penned many children’s plays, including Las aventuras de Viela Calamares (1998), Viela, Enriquito y su secreto (1999), and El Drago dragón (unpublished and written between 2001 – 2003).

According to César Oliva\textsuperscript{88}, another of the characteristics of the neo-realist group of playwrights since the 1980s\textsuperscript{89} (of which Pedrero forms part) is their immersion in

\textsuperscript{87} Her works La llamada de Lauren, Resguardo personal, El color de agosto, Noches de amor efímero (Esta noche en el parquet, La noche dividida, Solos esta noche, De la noche al alba, La noche que ilumina), Una estrella are included in Virtudes Serrano’s Juego de noches. Nueve obras en un acto (1999).

\textsuperscript{88} Again, refer to his 2002 text Teatro español del siglo XX.

\textsuperscript{89} For more information on neo-realism and the playwrights that are deemed ‘neo-realist,’ see the thesis Introduction.
several additional areas of theatre (including acting, directing, teaching, research, etc.).
This proves true for all of the playwrights in this study, especially for Paloma Pedrero, whose publications relating to theatre number in the dozens. Pedrero’s articles often serve as introductions to her own works, such as “Palabras con el lector” (before La llamada de Lauren), “Palabras para ti” (preceding El color de agosto), or “Nota de la autora” (before Invierno de luna alegre and also La isla amarilla). She has also contributed to general scholarship on the field of contemporary Spanish drama (especially that which is authored by women), demonstrated, for example, by her articles “Algunas autoras de hoy y sus obras” (Primer Acto 248, 1993), “El saludo del autor” (on author Buero Vallejo) [El Cultural 28.XI.99], “Lo que mueve a la palabra” (Primer Acto 287, 2001), and “Yeses, con Elena Cánovas” (Primer Acto 265, 1996). Additionally, she has published several interviews conducted with various authors, actors, or researchers, such as her articles “Con José María Rodríguez Méndez” (Primer Acto 256, 1994), “Lope de Vega: José Luis Miranda” (Primer Acto 267, 1997), “Paloma Pedrero conversa con José Luis Gómez (ABC Cultural 7.XI.97), and “El Brujo, un actor distinto” (Primer Acto 252, 1994).
Pedrero has also written several articles describing her own theatre, such as “Sobre mi teatro” (in Entre Actos: Diálogos sobre teatro español, eds. Martha Halsey and Phyllis Zatlin, 1999), “Lo que mueve a la palabra” (Primer Acto 287, 2001), and “Sobre mi poética” (Editorial teatro de papel 3, 2006). In addition, Pedrero regularly collaborates on the journals El Mundo, ABC, and La Razón.
Although the themes in Pedrero’s theatre extend from personal relationship difficulties to psychological crises to aging to the underworld of drugs and violence, one
universal truth in her works is that “Paloma Pedrero parte constantemente del individuo” (Flecken & De Toro, Teatro español contemporáneo. Autores y tendencias, 63). While many have argued that she presents a uniquely feminine perspective, she herself claims that “Cuando hablaba de un lenguaje específicamente femenino, no quería hacer referencia a ningún tipo de obra donde se traten exclusivamente problemas de la mujer. . . . Hablaba de algo mucho más profundo, del alma de la obra, de la visión del mundo que una mujer inevitablemente proyecta, porque lo siente así” (Ibid 50). Although Pedrero’s comments relate to what one may call the ‘essential woman,’ my analyses treat the notion of ‘woman’ or ‘women’ as a far more constructed notion, as I later argue that what is perceived as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ does not necessarily lie exclusively within a ‘female’ body alone.

Returning to Pedrero’s universal appeal through her ability to make all of her works relatable to every individual, according to her, one of the main points that interweaves through all of her works in one way or another, and thus with which all can identify, is that of love. To quote Pedrero: “Al final, como todo, es una cuestión de amor. Porque ningún objetivo grande y hermoso está al alcance de todos. Hay que atravesar caminos áridos y quemarse las manos muchas veces para encontrarlo. Hay que hacerlo, además, sin olvidar que el gozo está en el propio recorrido, que el objetivo es la mirada, y que lo más parecido a una meta es la muerte” (“Autorretrato”, in Testimonios del teatro español: 1950 – 2000 Tomo I, eds. Candyce Leonard & Iride Lamartina Lens, 2002 page 174). Nonetheless, while love serves as a common thread throughout her theatre, perhaps even more salient in many of her works, and of particular interest to this study, is the
theme of sex and sexuality and the ambiguity that sex and sexuality present in her works and, more importantly, in life. To quote Pedrero herself\textsuperscript{90}: “…a la vez que vas madurando, según vas madurando, te vas dando cuenta cada vez más de que la identidad sexual es ambigua, siempre. . . El amor y el sexo están mucho más mezclados. . . . Hay una ambigüedad en tu identidad. . . .” and, with regard to this ambiguity of both sex and love, Pedrero also has commented on how her themes and/or works may be categorized, claiming\textsuperscript{91}, “No me importan tampoco las clasificaciones…yo escribo y después, vosotros, me clasificáis”. While this last comment lends itself easily to the difficulty in the general classification of her works and/or how her theatre is taken as a whole, such commentary may be extrapolated to consider the sexualized body forms that emerge in her theatre, and that, as with the way in which her entire brand of theatre is viewed, so too are classifications of the sexual bodies in her theatre also difficult and sometimes arbitrary\textsuperscript{92}. Therefore, a different consideration and examination of the sexualized corporeal forms in her theatre is warranted in order to understand and appreciate more deeply its accomplishments, its unsettlings, and most certainly its provocations.

The introduction to this project discussed the generative or transformative\textsuperscript{93} property of non-traditional genders and sexes/sexualities, and this topic easily takes root when analyzing the theatre of Paloma Pedrero, who uses bodily markers (evidenced by

\textsuperscript{90} In a 2004 interview that I conducted with her in Madrid (refer to Bibliography for specific information)

\textsuperscript{91} Quote also from the 2004 interview

\textsuperscript{92} To claim that some classifications of the sexualized corporeal forms in her theatre are ‘arbitrary’ does not indicate that they are not valid; my comment instead aims to pinpoint a common practice with such elements of her works (for example, claiming that the women in her works are just men in female bodies and vice versa), with the intention of examining more closely such elements and how they may be viewed differently.

\textsuperscript{93} These terms indicate, as stated before, how those differenced sexes & sexualities could ‘generate’ new bodily forms that do not relate to the traditional, and thus also ‘transform’ the usual expectations associated with sexual bodies.
what I term ‘slips’ and ‘slides’, explained later) in order to proffer a different reading of
the sexed body, one that disrupts the norm and moves its characters beyond clearly
polarized genders and sexualities into interstitial ones. In accomplishing this, her theatre
can be seen to disrupt and “redeploy”, borrowing Judith Butler’s terminology, the
typically dichotomized sexes and sexualities, as we shall see.

All of the critics who have studied Paloma Pedrero’s theatre agree that it has
altered the way in which society envisions and conceives of sex and sexuality94 since she
unabashedly has presented bodily incarnations of sex and sexuality that have defied
social norms, exposed the liminal and the peripheral, and promoted a multiplicity of
considerations of what ‘sex’ and ‘sexuality’ signify or can signify. In addition, her works
have often effectuated scandalous reactions, with many of her images on stage suggesting
the homo-erotic, masturbation fantasies, and hypersexuality, (Serrano Teatro breve entre
dos siglos 64) seen, for example, in her plays El color de agosto, La llamada de Lauren,
and Noches de amor efímero. Some critical analysis of her theatre also has located
specific themes such as female or male homosexuality (respectively in El color de agosto
and La llamada de Lauren) as evidence of these scandalous and ‘peripheral’ sexes and
sexualities, indicating, for example, that female sexual urges or actions directed toward
other females are really only masculine forms of the sexual in female bodies, and that the
same is true when there is evidence of ‘feminized’ behavior, dress, or actions in men. For
much of this type of critical analysis, the argument is that the gender or sexual trends in

94 For a listing of critics who have written about Pedrero’s works, refer to the Bibliography.

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her theatre\textsuperscript{95} points toward a clear-cut feminine or female presence in males.\textsuperscript{96} These scholars perceive of these instances of sexual forms as constitutive of a ‘limit’ or ‘boundary’, of one sex or another, yet terms such as these ultimately still depend on the two extremes (in the cases above, both heterosexuality and homosexuality). I submit that this very categorization of so-called ‘scandalous’ sexual imagery on stage, described by such terms as ‘male or female homosexuality’, ‘lesbianism’ or ‘transvestism’ is far too hasty and superficial a consideration of the actions, emotions, and psyche of her characters. Therefore, a more complex treatment is necessary in order to understand better the mosaic of sex and sexuality in her works.

I thus intend to show how the limits or boundaries of the sexual in the theatre of authors such as Paloma Pedrero really do not constitute ‘limits’ at all for once a different or new sexuality has been expressed, a new direction has been established, pointing toward a different landscape and horizon for a potentially new sexualized future. Instead of relying only on the polarized extremes to define the middle, I hope to show that the area of the threshold or the crisscrossed manner of sexual characterization\textsuperscript{97} is significant in and to itself, and constitutes a separate and different sexual and gendered space. What often occurs in her theatre is a momentary freezing in a moment of flux that both shows these boundaries and transgresses them. As theorist Paula Rust explains, “The moment of change reveals … boundaries… because the moment of change marks the crossing of

\textsuperscript{95} Refer again to the previous sentence.
\textsuperscript{96} Critical analysis such as in Phyllis Zatlin’s book \textit{El teatro alternativo español} p. 148 with regard to \textit{Noches de amor efímero} or in Carolyn Harris’s article “Juego y metateatro en la obra de Paloma Pedrero” with regard to \textit{La llamada de Lauren} p. 171
\textsuperscript{97} For a review of how the terms ‘crisscrossed’ or ‘on/at the threshold’ will be used in this study, refer to the discussion at the beginning of this chapter.
those boundaries” (from “Sexual Identity and Bisexual Identities: The Struggle for Self-Description in a Changing Sexual Landscape” in Queer Studies 79).

Thus, the characters in the theatre of Paloma Pedrero evidence many ‘slips’ and ‘slides’ that create spaces of sexual representation between, within, and even around dichotomized (and traditional) categories of sex and gender, thus rupturing or dissolving these dichotomies and establishing new and unique areas of representation in the middle ground that deviates from the poles. The theatre of the playwrights treated in this study will be examined not only for its fictive elements in terms of character but also in regards to the mimetic potential the works possess in relating to contemporary society. Hence, with her theatre and, later, with the theatre of Yolanda Pallín, I shall argue that the corporeal representations of sex and sexuality in character present new conceptualizations of what can be or is considered ‘sexual’, and hence serve to re-map established or traditional boundaries through a rupturing of these ‘normal’ or ‘typical’ sexes and sexualities, and a resulting sexualizing of the margins, the threshold, the ‘middle.’ Pedrero’s theatre, hence, is important since it offers a new epistemological methodology for conceiving of sex and sexuality, one that accurately depicts the multiply and complexly inscribed subjects that do exist in real life. Hers is theatre that problematizes the traditional homo/hetero, male/female binary, and seeks to illuminate non-traditional representations of sex and the sexual that she has allowed to emerge from behind the stage curtains.

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98 This is not to say that these works are always ‘realistic’ or even mimetic; what I mean by this statement is that the authors obviously convey an important message by the sexual-bodily forms they create in their works, and perhaps the point is that an expansion and re-consideration of such traditional forms is necessary to understand and value all types of people, with all types of different sexual constitutions (where the term ‘constitutions’ is explained more fully later).
Nearly all of Paloma Pedrero’s plays foreground considerations of the body and embodiment. Nude women painting each other’s bodies, playing with the notion of gender reversal, penetration of males by females (or by other males), older women seducing younger men (and younger men falling in love with these older women), and transsexual prostitutes demanding their orgasms are some of the many embodiments of the characters of the theatre of Paloma Pedrero. The issues in her plays related to embodiment discussed in this chapter center on articulations of sex(uality) that can be termed ‘crisscrossed sexes’ or ‘sexualities at the threshold.’ That is to say that her plays examine aspects of sexes within character whose manifestation in appearance or behavior appears contrary to the ‘normal’ and/or traditional sex or gender identities roles or norms, hence crisscrossed sexes) or that often reside at the ‘threshold’, that realm of blurred nomination between two usually recognized areas that pertains to both yet neither. The many ‘slips’ and ‘slides’ present in her theatre signal the gravitation away from so-called ‘stable’ sexual categories and toward a fluidity of sex(uality), a variable and ever-changing representation flowing along known categories instead of residing exactly only at such names or categories. Again, the importance of Pedrero’s plays is that they provide a new lens by which sex and sexuality can be viewed. Her plays serve to expand the semantic capabilities of sexual(ized) terms, and enable the spectator/reader to reconsider traditional, ‘normal’, or usual characterizations of sex and the sexual in the plays focusing on character. Hence, her plays offer new forms, understandings, and

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99 Again, refer to the earlier note on these terms.
100 These end up being much more complex than merely the ‘reversal’ of either masculine or feminine sexual roles.
potential realities to conceive of the sexual on the stage and beyond and thus enabling a move past hegemonic considerations of the body.
2 A) Violent penetrations: *Cachorros de negro mirar*

As mentioned in the Introduction, I intend to analyze the plays of Paloma Pedrero in accordance to the types of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold (hence, the ‘slips’ and ‘slides’) that they possess. The two plays to be analyzed in this chapter will approach the ways in which sex and sexual bodily forms are re-articulated through violence towards oneself or other characters. Although many scholars would deem this topic as utterly negative and objectifying in the treatment of those characters towards whom violence is exercised, I intend to illuminate the positive ramifications of such re-articulations that are engendered through the very acts of violence. The play included in this analysis is Pedrero’s *Cachorros de negro mirar*.

*Cachorros de negro mirar* (written in 1995 and premiered in 1999) has been analyzed by many scholars, such as Iride Lamartina Lens and Dennis Perri, examining aspects such as violence generated by a radical and hateful youth, and terrorism. A myopia that I have located with some analyses of her plays is that, frequently, certain bodily forms or incarnations are (unfortunately) unilaterally or superficially analyzed, resulting in a passing over of other potentially rich nuances of meaning. The majority of the articles about this play (such as *Diario* from 10-1-1999 and *La Razón* 31-12-1998) concentrate almost exclusively on the characters as social outcasts and violent.

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101 See Iride Lamartina-Lens’s article about terrorism, “Trampas del demonio: el terrorismo en *Cachorros de negro mirar* de Paloma Pedrero y Yudita de Lourdes Ortiz” and violence in radical youth, as in Phyllis Zatlin’s introduction to Paloma Pedrero’s theatre in *El teatro alternativo español*, or Perri’s discussion of this work (and others by Pedrero) in “Paloma Pedrero’s Theater: Seeing is More than Believing” (*Estreno* Vol. 29 No. 1 2003 p. 45).
delinquents\textsuperscript{102}. Nearly all of the articles about this play concentrate almost exclusively on the violent and anti-establishment overtones, pointing to the negative characterization of the characters as an allegory for the violence of today’s youth. However, these kinds of examinations disregard the potentially positive characterizations of the characters for the criss-crossed sexes (or ‘swinging’) and peripheral sexualities that they encapsulate, emerging through this very violence, and which serve to rupture long-standing and traditional considerations of sexuality. These types of characterizations in this play offer a challenge to normative conceptualizations of gendered or sexed bodies. Even though many of the characters’ actions in this play are less than scrupulous, the very nature of their sexed selves (one that is crisscrossed or at the threshold) can and does permit a positive delineation, despite the fact that violence is necessary for this to occur.

\textit{Cachorros de negro mirar} takes place in a middle-class sitting room in contemporary Madrid during the month of August. Present are two young men, Cachorro, a 17-year old ‘student’ and potential convert to an anti-establishment and violent separatist group, and Surcos, his 22-year old self-proclaimed ‘professor’ and already inducted and militant member of the hate group. Both are alone and bored in Cachorro’s house for the weekend and decide to find ways to pass the time and amuse themselves.

\textsuperscript{102} In \textit{La Razón} the article states “En esta obra se reflexiona críticamente sobre cierto sector de la juventud de hoy, perdida entre valores absolutos, y encolerizada con grupos sociales débiles y vulnerables como los emigrantes, las prostitutas o los homosexuales, tres de los blancos favoritos de la violencia de estos peligrosos y consentidos cachorros” (“El mal de la violencia”, Juan Antonio Vizcaíno”) and in \textit{Reseña} from 3-1999, it states “El aburrimiento, la vaciedad personal, la consideración de que el mundo está mal hecho, la obsesión por buscar el orden y la limpieza, el desarraigo vital son las circunstancias que la autora apunta como posibles causas del lamentable fenómeno de la violencia racista” (“Cachorros de negro mirar: Una reflexión sobre la violencia ultrat” de Eduardo Pérez-Rasilla) ; also \textit{El Mundo} from 7-1-1998 states “La directora afirmó que la obra es de actualidad y sirve como instrumento para exponer los puntos de vista que caracterizan a los radicales respecto a la violencia y al sexo, que les llevan a pretender ser fuertes en todo momento y rechazar todas las actitudes que puedan ser vistas como debilidad.” (“Paloma Pedrero reflexiona sobre la violencia juvenil”).
Ignoring the supplications of Cachorro that they leave the house and seek amusement outside, Surcos suggests that they contract the services of a transvestite prostitute to come over to the house in order to have sex with (and subsequently de-virginize Cachorro), as well as provide them with information (such as the names of other gays and prostitutes and the places they frequent so that their neo-Nazi type group can target them for future attacks). After that, they intend to assault her, all of which Surcos justifies citing ‘the cause.’ Once Surcos leaves to obtain money, Bárbara, the prostitute, is warned by Cachorro, and agrees to play along with Cachorro, pretending to have had sex with him (so that Surcos could listen), in an effort for Cachorro to prove his manliness to Surcos as well as protect Bárbara from Surcos’s threat of post-coital rage. After Surcos and Cachorro both attack Bárbara, who ironically appears to be a biological female (a ‘real’ woman), Cachorro then turns his pent up anger toward Surcos, and strangles him almost to the point of death, while the play ends in a rapturous and bestial-like union between Cachorro and Bárbara.

As stated earlier, this play provides many instances of the slips and slides present in the theatre of Pedrero, in this case as crisscrossed, or swinging, and peripheral sexual forms of embodiment, evidenced through violence exhibited or received by all three characters. In Cachorros de negro mirar, the first instance of this occurs in the character of Surcos. Surcos superficially is presented in a highly masculinized and militant manner, with a shaved head (hence, a ‘skinhead’), wearing combat boots, and a tee-shirt with the group’s emblems on it (35). Yet, a cursory examination and classification of him as an uber-male and only highly virile is severely inadequate. Surcos is consistently violent.
through the play yet the sexual embodiments of his violence take many forms, none of which can singly be linked to any one sexual fixity.

One of the ways in which Surcos’s violence and concomitant embodiment of sexual slips and slides lies in his statements and actions. For example, he clearly evidences what would stereotypically be categorized as ‘hypermasculine’ behaviors. He acts quite violently towards Cachorro throughout the play, and admits to enjoying violence, commenting to Cachorro (after Cachorro hits him), “Joder, me has hecho daño. ¡Qué carácter más violento! (Se ríe). Así me gusta” (39). Although violence in itself is not constitutive of masculine behavior, traditionally, violence has been associated more with the masculine than with the feminine. This is discussed by theorists such as Marilyn French, who in her text Beyond Power: On Men, Women, and Morals, discusses characteristics typically associated with males and females. Some of the values traditionally associated with men are what she terms “authority”, “property”, and “power over” [meaning the ability to hold power over others] (92 – 93). Part of this authority and power over others includes acts of violence or aggression.

An additional element that Surcos also manifests is an obsession with order, another of the qualities French cites as that which is typically ‘masculine’. In the play, Surcos articulates a preference for all that is ordered and a distaste for everything that, in his opinion (and most certainly the opinion of his radical hate group) falls outside of this order. He states, “Yo quiero el orden. Me mueve ver lo guapo que es el mundo cuando

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103 Although there is no real evidence that any behaviors or bodies are either ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine,’ it is important for this analysis to recognize typical associations or stereotypes, in order to show how the characters in Pedrero’s play deviate from these and evince their own bodily-sexual forms.
cada uno está en su lugar. Y lo feo, lo débil, lo enfermo, lo negro, no tiene lugar” (40). He also displays traditionally ‘masculine’ tendencies in his announced preference for action rather than for words, when he explains to Cachorro: “Hay que conocerse en la acción, chaval. No en las palabras” (41). Later on he justifies all of the aggressive actions that he and Cachorro will undertake as part of the cause, the mission, yelling “¡Es una misión!” and “¡Viva la patria!” (44). Hence, throughout much of the play, Surcos’s acts of violence easily situate him within what is typically or traditionally understood or connoted as ‘masculine’104. Yet, as we shall see, this is merely a directional ‘slip’ or ‘slide’ towards the masculine, and proves to be ephemeral, for, just as violence can posit him within the ‘masculine,’ so too can it do the same within the realm of what is stereotypically considered ‘feminine’.

For example, at the very beginning of the play, in the middle of the sitting room of Cachorro’s house is “un tótem africano con un gran falo” (35). In seeing the totemic statue with the giant phallus, Surcos’s first thought is to revile the figure, calling it a “bestia empalmada” and a “pedazo de…” (sentence unfinished), going so far as to hang his hat on it, thus covering up the phallus (“Ah, yo creía que era un perchero” and the stage direction states “Cuelga la gorra en el pene” 35). Later on he bumps into the statue and breaks off the phallus (36). Although this move may be taken as comedic, I submit that it could be thought of as significant of the rejection of the phallus, the refusal of the symbolic order (the Law of the Father)105. This albeit minor violence against a statue

104 It also appears that Pedrero purposefully creates such ‘stereotypically’ gendered individuals, only later to subvert their bodies and show how they can become something else.
105 His very name (studied later) itself suggests ‘plowing’, the overturning and undoing of established patterns of dirt and earth.
cannot be overlooked since it sets the tone for the manifestations of Surcos’s violence that point to his peripheral state of sexuality. In order to ground this analysis in theory, it is helpful to turn to Freud. In his landmark essay, “Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes” (1925) [as part of the Three Essays], Freud argues that young boys experience a castration fear (249) present in the Oedipal complex for males. While this appears to have proven true for Surcos (see the above-cited examples), the actions and perhaps psychic fears of Surcos in this case locate him more within the ‘feminine’ (as Freud would describe it) in certain instances upon closer examination.

Within the lines quoted above regarding the totemic figure with the large phallus on it, Surcos does not fear the loss of the penis but rather is adamant about actively castrating other figures like the transvestite prostitute Bárbara (to be seen shortly). His insistence on destroying the phallus is similar to Freud’s description in “Female Sexuality” (1931) about girls’ recognition of their castrated state as inferior and their rebellion against it, thus their wanting to give up phallic activity in general. Freud states that the female “acknowledges the fact of her castration, and with it, too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority; but she rebels against this unwelcome state of affairs” (229). This migration of Surcos’s statements and behaviors away from an association with the ‘masculine’ and more towards an association with the ‘feminine’ is evidenced in the play in many instances. For example, as mentioned earlier, Surcos immediately covers up the statue after viewing it (35), and shortly thereafter ‘accidentally’ breaks off the phallus (36). Later on Surcos proves to be enraptured with
female garb such as a garter belt (belonging to Cachorro’s mother), which he steals out of the drawer and kisses: “¿Qué hace un liguero en el salón? (Lo besa). . . . Quítamelo si puedes” (38). This results in Cachorro’s struggle to retrieve the garter from Surcos, and then subsequent bodily harm to Surcos when he attempts to remove the garter from him, a physical act and injury that Surcos enjoys:

*Cachorro:* (Nervioso, salta con habilidad y lo agarra. Pelean). Dame eso, suelta, tío. (Retuerce la muñeca de Surcos).

*Surcos:* (Soltando el liguero). Joder, me has hecho daño. ¡Qué carácter más violento! (Se ríe). Así me gusta.

*Cachorro:* Es la rabia. Yo también tengo.

Yet, before he is forced to relinquish the garter belt to Cachorro, Surcos verbally and physically makes a connection between the garter belt (obviously a female piece of clothing) and the totemic statue, in saying (while struggling with Cachorro) “Ah, ¿así que tu madre se lo monta con el tótem…?” (38, my emphasis). Although this passage may be perceived as just an attempt for Surcos to joke and play with Cachorro, it is by no accident that the verb ‘montar’ is used, with highly sexual connotation, not just to describe the placing of the garter belt on the statue itself, but also to signify the action of ‘mounting’ the totem pole (a phallic symbol), an action indicative of the female who ‘mounts’ the pole sexually. Here, the garter belt, a typically female piece of clothing has acquired significance as a symbolic sexual device, perhaps a penis ring (that Surcos asks if Cachorro’s mother placed on the statue). The significance of the penis ring (here as the garter belt) most typically connotes use by the female in a heterosexual pairing in order to
prevent the male partner from ejaculating too soon, yet such use of the ring may be extrapolated in this context to indicate something more severe.

Although the penis ring would most certainly not accomplish a phallic removal (in reference to Freud’s discussion of the fears of the male of penis removal), it is possible to interpret the sexual device as an attempt at least partially to remove the phallus. Such an interpretation is fortified by Cachorro’s urgency as he nervously tries to wrest the garter belt away from Surcos (Cachorro: “Te he dicho que me lo des. . . . Nervioso, salta con habilidad y lo agarra. Pelean” 38). Hence, Surcos has symbolically transformed a piece of clothing usually worn by women into an aggressive means of removing that which is male (the phallus), an action to which Cachorro negatively reacts. However, it is unclear as to whether Surcos in this very moment is psychically enacting a masculine fear of having his own phallus removed (as the son would fear this action by the father, according to Freud [explained in Three Essays]), or if he is actively embodying the figure who would relish in removing the penis [of Cachorro] as a father figure, (to be discussed later), or even if he is anticipating his own castrated state that, according to Freud, females would feel (229), thus endowing Surcos himself with psychical-feminine qualities. Pedrero appears to have intentionally left this ambiguous in order to emphasize the peripheral, liminal nature of Surcos’s sexual personality which has been made salient through acts of violence.

More examples abound of the peripheral nature of Surcos’s body and sexuality, especially in relation to the characters of Cachorro and Bárbara. After forcefully spraying perfume on Cachorro’s genitals (another act of violence directed towards the phallus),
Surcos decides to elaborate on the origin of his name, that appears to be anything but arbitrary, thus signaling his own liminal nature as he explains to Cachorro: “¿Sabes por qué me llaman a mí Surcos? Por mi inteligencia. Mi cabeza, por dentro, ¿entiendes? Tiene surcos, grietas, pozos inmensos” (43). According to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, ‘surco’ is defined as “Señal o hendidura prolongada que deja una cosa que pasa sobre otra”. This type of comment offers both an insight into the complex nature of Surcos’s interior psyche (that which contains “pozos inmensos”) as well as a symbolic reference to the ‘surcos’ or ‘grietas’, that may be translated as ‘grooves,’ ‘furrows’ or ‘cracks’ that signify the blurred or incomplete nature of Surcos’s sexual identity. In other words, the ‘cracks’ or ‘furrows’ can be seen as the lines of boundary between two clearly-defined wholes, marks that, according to the definition, indicate where something has passed (or will pass) over something else, boundaries that make up the psycho-sexual figure of Surcos and that dominate his character.

This liminal nature of Surcos’s sexuality is further evidenced with Cachorro later when Surcos easily slips into a feminine association upon role playing the figure of the highly sought-after transsexual prostitute the boys will soon contact. He begins his role playing in stating “Pues yo me llamo Bárbara y tengo una polla como una olla” (50), concentrating his commentary on the phallic (masculine) aspect of the transsexual prostitute. Yet, his role playing as the transsexual turns out to be as ambiguous as the physical-sexual nature of the transsexual ‘herself’ (as we see later). Immediately following the comment about the transsexual’s phallus, he makes the following statement in role playing with Cachorro: “Ahora soy Bárbara, muñeco. Y no te pienses que soy
bestia, soy muy dulce y cariñosa” (50), thus highlighting both the masculine and feminine nature of Bárbara\textsuperscript{106}, to which Cachorro comments “Lo haces muy bien. Pareces un perfecto maricón, Surcos” (50). In the above-quote passages Surcos may be considered more female-identified (although he is role playing a transsexual); he is masquerading as ‘Bárbara’, which minimally would posit his embodiment at that moment as female\textsuperscript{107} (at least as far as the name goes), yet his sexual nature proves more complex than just that.

To interpret these scenes, it is helpful to return to Butler’s reading of Lacan, and the idea of the masquerade. For Lacan, women ‘appear’ to be the Phallus, meaning that women seem to be needed by men in order to reflect the power and represent the reality of the phallus’s positions in the male (\textit{Gender Trouble} 58)\textsuperscript{108}. Hence, women appear to be as a substitute for ‘having’ the phallus since women may never ‘possess’ the phallus, being women and not men (\textit{Gender Trouble} 59). This results in a masquerade in which women appear to possess that which they can never possess. With regard to the cited passages in this play, Surcos masquerades as a liminal figure (here more female than male-identified) and pretends to possess the phallus of Bárbara (“Pues yo me llamo Bárbara y tengo una polla como una olla”), but he can never fully possess it (although he

\textsuperscript{106} ‘Masculine’ in the sense that she is part male (with a phallus), but ‘feminine’ (again, stereotypically) in the sense that she is ‘sweet’ and ‘loving’, to quote Surcos
\textsuperscript{107} As we see later, the ‘feminine’ qualities of his body far transcend just a mere masquerade.
\textsuperscript{108} To quote Lacan directly, in “The Meaning of the Phallus,” he states about the relation between the sexes, “. . . these relations will revolve around a being and a having which, because they refer to a signifier, the phallus, have the contradictory effect of on the one hand lending reality to the subject in that signifier, and on the other making unreal the relations to be signified” (84 – 85); cited in \textit{Gender Trouble} p. 59; Butler herself states that, for women to ‘be’ the phallus, “According to Lacan, this is done through masquerade, the effect of a melancholy that is essential to the feminine position as such” (59), and also adds, regarding ‘being’ the Phallus, “To ‘be’ the Phallus is to be signified by the paternal law, to be both its object and its instrument. . .” (58).
is ‘male’) since, as a liminal figure, he will never be granted full access either to the male or to the female but will embody the middle ground that is both yet neither.

As the level and seriousness of the role playing continues, so too does the violence. While he role plays, Surcos repeatedly pushes Cachorro into a wheelchair (instructing Cachorro that he must pretend to be paralyzed from a traffic accident), with Surcos commanding Cachorro that he dance in the chair: “Pues baila. (Surcos comienza a cantar y a girar la silla con violencia) Baila, baila, baila…” (51). Here Surcos begins violently to obsess over making a ‘real man’ out of Cachorro (sexually) through Bárbara: “Hoy te voy a hacer un hombre de verdad, de los nuestros. Verás, <<ella>> se puede poner así, sentadita en tus piernas…Y tú te agarras fuerte…Agárrame” (51). In role playing, Surcos accomplishes a psychic comparison between his own sexuality as one of peripheral or liminal qualities and that of the liminal figure of the transsexual Bárbara, evidenced above in the verbal transference of what Cachorro will say to Bárbara (whom Surcos is embodying at that moment). As Butler states, “through the practice of gender performativity, we not only see how the norms that govern reality are cited but grasp one of the mechanisms by which reality is reproduced ‘and’ altered in the course of that reproduction” (Undoing Gender 218). In other words, the sexual slips and slides that Surcos evinces through violence supply the means both to reveal traditional or (hetero)normative sexual embodiment and practice, as well as undo these, shifting the sexual landscape into that blurred, middle ground.

Following his role playing, Surcos, now performing as ‘himself’, gravitates more towards the masculine when he states to Cachorro that he will masturbate while he listens
to Cachorro and Bábara: “Vale, yo me haré una paja mientras oigo vuestros gemidos” (51). Yet, the type of masturbation appears as multi-faceted as the bodily constitution of Surcos himself, for one cannot ignore the fact that the sexual stimulation that Surcos will experience will occur as a direct result of the encounter between his friend (a virgin) and the transsexual whore, Bábara. Instead of the traditional view of male heterosexual masturbation, in which an individual man is usually sexually stimulated by a ‘woman,’ the object of sexual stimulation of Surcos here will be a transsexual, who is both male and female, as well as his friend Cachorro, who is presented as ‘male’ yet also, as we later see, possesses feminine bodily qualities as well. The masturbation fantasy for Surcos will thus prove to be an encounter that will emphasize the peripheral sexualized states of all parties involved.

Nonetheless, the best examples of the crisscrossed or liminal sexual nature of Surcos are manifested through his violent comments to Bábara. When Bábara arrives, Surcos blatantly threatens her in saying “Te voy a capar” (55) and mentions to Cachorro when Bábara is in the bathroom, “Está buena, ¿eh? Si no fuera por lo que le cuelga. Si quieres luego se lo cortamos. . . . Es un favorcito. Tan mujercita, tan mona, y con esa monstruosidad entre las piernas…Así se ahorra la operación. Un tajo limpio y ¡zas!, mujer completa” (56). His selective use of the word ‘monstruosidad’ (monstruosity), is quite telling since it pathologizes the peripheral sexual state of the body of Bábara. In Freud’s article “The Ego and the Id,” Freud pathologizes the erotogenic parts of the body, and links this to a guilt discourse that ultimately leads to self-prohibition (Bodies That Matter 64). Interestingly enough, the prohibitions against such non-(hetero)normative
sexualities (such as homosexuality and perhaps even bisexuality) relate directly to that very same sexuality and desire: “this prohibition against homosexuality ‘is’ homosexual desire turned back upon itself; the self-beratement of conscience ‘is’ the reflexive rerouting of homosexual desire” (Ibid 65). In other words, Surcos’s angry comments directed toward the phallus of the transsexual Bábara in turn signal his own sexually repressed desires and feelings (from anger and violence to sexual stimulation) about his own sexually liminal body.

Later Surcos states to Bábara herself “Si no fuera por lo que te sobra serías una estafa perfecta” (65) and “Te voy a castrar” (67). One may interpret these comments as a desire for violence that would operate synechdochally to annihilate the phallus, thus destroying the liminal figure in totality (Surcos says to Cachorro about Bábara, “<<Ella>> es un degenerado, un peligro social” 66). Yet, in order to understand the complexity of these kinds of comments, one must look again to Lacan and, in this case, the mirror stage. In “The Signification of the Phallus,” Lacan explains how a body pre-exists the law, and this very body, in pieces before the ‘mirror’, is in a state of symbolic castration, without the physical presence of the phallus, although the (absent) phallus is already signifying as it describes the body in pieces (Bodies That Matter 80 – 82). Hence, the disintegrated and scattered body before the mirror is as if it were castrated (Ibid 83). One may argue here that Surcos in these instances of verbal violence directed towards Bábara is acting as reification of the mirror that signifies the Law of the Father and which reflects the symbolically ‘castrated’ (or desirably ‘castrated’) state of the transsexual Bábara. As Butler states, violence often results from the necessity to ‘undo’
one’s personhood, rendering it unreal and impossible, unrecognizable and unhuman \cite{Undoing_Gender35}. Surcos wants to ‘undo’ the liminal embodiment of Bárbara, after she accomplishes what he needs her to do for him. It is within these textual passages that we see Surcos as enforcer of the Law of the Father; nonetheless, the type of phallus that Bárbara, a liminal and transsexual figure, possesses, could be deemed a ‘lesbian phallus.’ The ‘lesbian phallus’ is especially threatening to males since it posits a figure that both possesses the phallus which threatens castration to males, and simultaneously causes males to fear the loss of their own phallus through castration anxiety \cite{Bodies_That_Matter84}.

These theoretical underpinnings serve to explain Surcos’s anger in those passages: he both recognizes the presence of the phallus in another figure, Bárbara, and hence desires to destroy it, fearing his own castration by this phallic figure. As Butler states, “the phallus constitutes an ambivalent site of identification and desire that is significantly different from the scene of normative heterosexuality to which it is related” \cite{Ibid85}. This lesbian phallus, according to Butler, may emerge “through a castration occupation of that central masculine trope” \cite{Ibid87}. When Surcos discovers that, according to the stage direction, Bárbara “es una mujer” \cite{67),}, he is greatly confused and asks “¿Dónde está?” and “¿Te has operado?” \cite{67),}, and then screams angrily “¡Dame el periódico! . . . <<Bárbara. Travesti…>> ¿Qué pasa aquí? Nos has engañado. (Mirando a Cachorro) ¡Me habéis engañado!” \cite{67–68). At that very moment, when Surcos sees Bárbara for what ‘she’ truly is \cite{109}, he appears to lose any power he previously had (over them), and the

\footnote{109 Or appears to be}
others are then able to exert violence toward him. As we shall soon see, one of the reasons for his anger (and the rationale behind his loss of power over others as well as the change that occurs in the plot from that moment forward) present in the revelation that Bárbara is a ‘real’ woman is that he needed the phallus of Bárbara to penetrate Cachorro. Nonetheless, Surcos simultaneously depended on her feminine nature for him to penetrate (and enjoy sexually once discovering she is a female), as he states to Cachorro, “Te has divertido tú, niñato. Yo estoy que ardo. Lo mío empieza ahora. (Surcos levanta el machete hacia Bárbara)” (68). Hence, through the violent comments directed toward the figure of Bárbara, we are able to see the psycho-sexual development and manifestation of Surcos’s own sexuality at the threshold.

As stated earlier, the success or failure of Surcos’s liminal sexuality depends highly on the figure of Bárbara. Surcos needs Bárbara to be female (able to be penetrated by him and Cachorro) and also needs her to be male, able to penetrate Cachorro and successfully ‘de-virginize’ him. Having acknowledged that Cachorro is a virgin (45), Surcos desires for him to be a ‘real man’ through having sex with Bárbara. One may even describe his feelings about Cachorro’s de-virginization as ‘ecstatic.’ For theorist Judith Butler, ‘ecstasy’ is described as the state of being outside oneself, transported beyond oneself by a passion such as grief, rage, or sexual excitement (Undoing Gender 20). It is also important to recall that one’s gendered or sexualized self is done or undone through others, which Butler describes as varied “modes of being dispossessed” (Ibid19 – 20). Hence, Surcos’s own liminal sexuality is completed and enacted by something outside of...
himself (hence, ‘ecstatic’), Cachorro, and also through the body of Bárbara, one over which he intends to exert violence and, thus, ‘undo’.

Returning to the text, the description of how Surcos wishes for Cachorro to have intercourse with Bárbara, penetrating her, is quite telling since it ec-statically represents his own desire to penetrate Cachorro. Surcos states “Hace hombre meterla fuerte, rápido. Como de una patada. No hacen falta besitos ni chorradas. Tú como el que mete la llave en la cerradura de su casa cuando está a punto de mearse” (45), after which he immediately seizes Cachorro angrily and looks upon him with violence: The stage directions state “Le agarra agresivo” and “Mirándole con violencia” (45). These quotes indicate the means by which Surcos sexually hopes to penetrate Cachorro, his love object, in a violent manner. Although the quotes describe the penetration that Cachorro will enact towards Bárbara, they appear to represent the projected sexual desires of Surcos toward his pupil. In metaphorically penetrating Cachorro, Surcos hopes to ‘initiate’ him into the neo-Naziesque hate group and perhaps also demarcates him as belonging to or pertaining to Surcos, a phallic extension of himself. Yet, as stated earlier, this is unachievable without the presence of the medium, Bárbara, who will operate as both penis and vagina, penetrated and penetrator, and as thus needs to be a liminal figure. The choice of this peripheral sexual figure by Surcos, as one that he both desires and yet despises, reveals Surcos’s own liminal or mixed sexuality, one that ‘slips’ and ‘slides’ between what is commonly understood as ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ but which indubitably establishes its own unique space as well.
Perhaps the most interesting examples of the liminal sexuality of Surcos occur when he evinces paternal tendencies toward Cachorro, again, through violent behavior or statements. Surcos’s sexuality in these instances is manifested through the use of affectionate epithets (towards Cachorro), accompanied immediately thereafter or preceded by violent comments or behavior. Surcos often calls Cachorro “pequeño” (36), “cachorrito” (37), “niño” (38) or “niñato” (43), and even “muñeco” (42), terms of endearment that a parental figure, usually the mother, would direct towards a child or child figure. These terms are not surprising since Surcos is the self-proclaimed ‘professor’ of Cachorro, his pupil, yet the affectionate terms under the circumstances in which Surcos utters them reveal a more maternal sensibility, especially when accompanied by behaviors such as the kissing of the garter belt (discussed earlier), a clearly feminine raiment. Nonetheless, it is clear that these terms always coexist with violent behavior or actions either preceding or following their usage, and this violent behavior is almost always connected to some manifestation of sexual urges or desire. For example, after referring to Cachorro as “pequeño,” Surcos bumps into the totemic statue and breaks off its phallus. Later he calls Cachorro “niño” and then proceeds to steal and kiss the garter belt. With the other epithets (enumerated above), Surcos forcefully atomizes Cachorro’s genital region (against his will), and also threatens to attack and beat the prostitute after using yet another epithet.

One may argue that the use of these parental epithets symbolically links Surcos to the Law of the Father, (the laws and restrictions that govern desire and rules of

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110 Again, working within the parameters of known stereotypes for what usually constitutes ‘maternal’
communication), since, often times, immediately following their utterance, Surcos commands Cachorro to obey him in his mandates to direct his sexual actions, such as when he instructs Cachorro that he will have intercourse with the prostitute: Surcos demands, “¿Quién manda aquí? Sí, ¿quién es tu jefe, soldado? ¡Contesta!” to which Cachorro responds “Tú”, and Surcos continues “¿Quién va a decidir tu futuro? ¿Quién?”, again soliciting a response of “Tú” from Cachorro (46). After this exchange, Surcos pulls out the machete, an obviously phallic symbol, and appears to threaten Cachorro with it (46). Yet, these passages provide an alternative reading as well to the sexuality of Surcos.

Returning again to the theories of Freud and the idea of the Oedipal complex, as well as my argument about how Surcos embodies a sex(uality) at the threshold, one may maintain that Surcos represents both father and mother simultaneously in this complex. Pre-Oedipally, the boy identifies with the father figure and discharges sexual excitation through masturbation (discussed earlier when Surcos desired to masturbate while spying on Cachorro and Bárbara) and this stage is also associated with the fear of castration (“Some Psychical Consequences…” 249); the boy child, according to Freud, desires the mother as love object (Ibid 249). However, Surcos also identifies with the female, similar to the girl child during the Oedipal complex, who knows she cannot possess the penis, so instead substitutes the desire for the penis by the desire for the child (“Some Psychical Consequences…” 256; also “Femininity” 128). In this case the ‘child’ desired by the mother figure (Surcos) would be Cachorro, the ‘pupil’ or ‘student’ whom Surcos will instruct and mentor. Hence, Surcos embodies in his actions and desires both male and female psycho-sexual manifestations, manifested and co-articulated through the other
characters, Cachorro and Bárbara. Yet these other characters evidence the ‘slips’ and ‘slides’ of crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold as well, and, as with Surcos, these manifestations are made salient through violence.

In the points discussed above regarding the usage of maternal epithets by Surcos toward Cachorro, I have demonstrated the dual or combinatory (male and female) nature of Surcos’s sexuality, according to which Cachorro becomes both child and love object. Surcos, wanting to possess him (as a phallic symbol) yet also remain a child, is thus posited as somewhere in the middle ground between masculine and feminine. Just as Freudian theory can be used to explain the mixed nature of Surcos’s sexuality, so too can it elucidate Bárbara’s\textsuperscript{111} sexuality, which may also be determined to be crisscrossed or liminal.

Returning to the focal point of this chapter, the figure of the transsexual prostitute Bárbara offers a clear example of the physical embodiment of a crisscrossed sex. She encapsulates the idea of the peripheral in that she is tall and strong (usually associated with the masculine) yet feminine looking. The stage direction describes her as “alta y fuerte pero muy guapa y femenina” (52). The very name ‘Bárbara’ connotes something masculine and fierce, ‘barbaric’, yet she is revealed later to be ‘female’, when Surcos demands of her that she lower her underwear. The stage direction states “Bárbara lo hace. Es una mujer. Los dos hombres la miran, fijamente, asombrados. Ella se cubre el pubis con las manos” (67). While this quote may appear undoubtedly to posit Bárbara’s sex as ‘female,’ it should be maintained that there not only exists the possibility that Bárbara is

\textsuperscript{111} and concomitantly Cachorro’s
not an entirely biological female (explained below) but that she is still a liminal figure. Even if it were completely accepted that Bárbara is, in fact, proven to be a ‘real’ woman, one must bear in mind that her liminal status is not based entirely on biology, meaning that, while some may choose to accept as fact (as per the stage direction), that Bárbara “es una mujer” she still functions as a sexually ‘liminal’ character due to her actions.

To examine more closely the possibility that Bárbara’s biology does not anchor her entirely in the feminine, but instead situates her more on the threshold between the usually accepted and clearly defined ‘male’ and ‘female, one must turn to the text. When Surcos screams angrily that she and Cachorro have deceived him (67 – 68), Bárbara’s retort is weak and unconvincing. She stammers out a reply through tears in which she appears to have almost to convince herself, as well as Cachorro and Surcos, that she really is a woman, most likely in order to avoid a thrashing. She states “Es…no sé, será un error. Hay cientos de anuncios de esos. Se equivocan…Será otra Bárbara. Sí, es otra. (Llorando). No me hagáis nada, por favor. No soy ningún travesti… ¡Os lo juro!” (68). Pedrero appears purposefully to have inserted into Bárbara’s defense the traditionally viewed female mechanism of defense and attempt to convince others, that of crying and begging, in order perhaps hyperbolically to feminize Bárbara in those instances, yet in such an exaggerated way that her statements lack veracity. Hence, Pedrero has made use

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112 For many, the lack of a penis is visually sufficient enough to constitute a biologically ‘real’ woman.
113 I opine, as we shall soon see, that, despite the stage direction, Bárbara, in fact, is not a ‘real woman’ biologically.
of traditional feminine qualities in order to subvert those very same qualities to point towards something different and liminal.

In addition to Bárbara’s weak defense of her ‘female’ body (resulting in a hyperbolic reversal\textsuperscript{114}), before this, in her sexual banter with Cachorro, he makes very clear to her that he is uninterested in her type of sex (perceiving her to be a transsexual), and she apparently understands his meaning, commenting “¿Lo\textsuperscript{115} has probado alguna vez? Puede ser una gran experiencia” (60) and “Lo hago muy bien y tengo mucho rollo” (60), a comment that both acknowledges and affirms her transsexual self. The question posed to Cachorro, if he has ever ‘tried’ it is also intriguing since it not only refers to the possibility of his attempting sex with a transsexual but also may signify an alternative usage of the verb ‘probar,’ that of ‘proving’ or ‘testing’ something out, in this case, her liminal body that Cachorro will be able to validate upon having sex with her. In this case, Pedrero inserts a retort that appears to accomplish the affirmation of Bárbara’s liminal body through play and innuendo, instead of the previous textual reference, that used hyperbole, yet both reinforce that she is both male and female, a liminal physical-sexual figure.

In addition to her sex (that is to say, her body), Bárbara’s sexuality (her actions and interactions with or toward the others) is also proven to slip and slide along the ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ continuum yet which, like with Surcos, proves to be both yet neither one entirely, somewhere in the amorphous middle. As with Surcos, the sexuality

\textsuperscript{114} That is to say, a hyperbolic usage of one gender quality in order to signify another that is the reverse of the first
\textsuperscript{115} ‘Lo’ here, and in subsequent lines, refers to the notion of sex with a transsexual.
is made manifest through violence yet in a much more subtle way than the blatant means by which Surcos’s sexuality was evinced. Bárbara encompasses more of a traditionally accepted ‘masculine’ sexuality116 in a masturbation scene with Cachorro. Cachorro explains to her that her services have been contracted as an “apuesto entre amigos” (59), and that she has to help Cachorro since he has “jugado con [Surcos] una pasta a que soy capaz de follarte” (59), but instructs her that she and he must act as if they are having sex but without her touching him: “Hacer todo como si lo hiciéramos. Todos los ruidos. Pero sin tocarme” (60). Bárbara agrees and the scene that follows again reveals her liminal sexuality in multiple ways, through a somewhat more muted sense of violence.

The violent undertones that surface in the masturbation scene between Cachorro and Bárbara are revealed in the verbal commands that Cachorro yells to Bárbara, instructing her in what to do sexually in order to simulate intercourse between the two. He first instructs her to remove her blouse, revealing her breasts, a typically feminine or female marker: “Entonces, quitate la parte de arriba. Lo otro ni se te ocurra”, to which Bárbara replies, “Es que…hasta me estoy poniendo cachonda” (61). Cachorro continues to command her telling her to moan (“Gime”) and continue (“¡Sigue!”), also “¡Gime, folla!” [61 – 62]. After these harsh commands, Bárbara, role playing the part of female, the ‘receiver’ in the sexual exchange with Cachorro, begins to masturbate with a cushion, much in the same way that Surcos said he would before the sexual union of Cachorro and Bárbara. This masturbation, although outwardly female, carries with it masculine undertones in the sense that a figurative act of penetration occurs, in this case, a phallus

116 Traditionally ‘masculine’ in the sense that she possesses (or makes use of) a phallus that she actively touches in order to masturbate
that Bárbara makes use of in order to ‘penetrate’ Cachorro, an action that not only substantiates Bárbara’s liminal body (as one that is both masculine and feminine) but also reinforces the earlier comments about Surcos needing Bárbara to act as phallus to penetrate Cachorro.

Preceding the scene, Bárbara, responding to the mandates dictated by Cachorro, moans, yet with a lowered voice, as if to prepare herself for the masculine masturbation that she undergoes in the following scene. According to the text, while “Bajando la voz” (61), she begins to address Cachorro commenting on his appearance and body in the traditional (or stereotypical) way in which a man would address a woman, saying “Sí, me gustas. Eres cantidad de atractivo a pesar de lo de las piernas” (61). In doing so, Bárbara not only reinforces her liminal body (that is both female and male), but also begins to posit the body of Cachorro as female, as the recipient of catcalls and commentary usually associated with the sexual banter that a man directs toward a woman.

Following that scene occurs the actual masturbation sequence, during which Bárbara grabs a cushion, a vaginal substitute for Cachorro (whom she may not touch as per his command to her), and places it between her legs, thrusting against it, again, thus having the cushion penetrate her while simultaneously penetrating the cushion, which acts as a substitute for Cachorro. The stage directions state: “Agarra un cojín y lo abraza fuerte….Comienza a bajar el cojín hacia sus piernas….Está absolutamente real” (62). As she masturbates with the cushion, she manages to achieve orgasm, without ever even touching Cachorro: “Bárbara abre la boca, mientras parece tener un orgasmo. Se queda quieta de pronto, exhausta. Mira a Cachorro y comienzan a saltársele las lágrimas. Sigue
callada‖ (63). She then announces to Cachorro “Es que cuando me corro me salen lágrimas por los ojos” (63). As stated earlier, Cachorro, her sexual object, parallels the cushion that Bábara uses to penetrate. Instead of penetrating him physically, she penetrates the cushion, an obvious metaphor for Cachorro, who becomes in the exchange the vaginal recipient, while she thrusts against him with a figurative phallus and achieves orgasm, not only for herself but for him as well.\footnote{While one may argue that the pillow penetrates Bábara, given the other circumstances in the scene, I aim to make clear that she acts much more as the ‘penetrator’ than ‘penetrated.’} During the moments of orgasm, despite the fact that Bábara has not physically penetrated Cachorro, it may be stated that she does, in fact, penetrate him, achieving orgasm for herself and for him (keeping in mind that, as we shall see, he masturbates to ejaculation into a condom). Thus, although she never physically touches Cachorro, she manages figuratively to penetrate him in a phallic manner, thus de-virginizing him.

Bábara also does so with some degree of force (a type of nuanced violence). Many times she attempts to touch and come near Cachorro, who rebukes her and demands that she keep her distance and not touch him. When she tries to walk near him, saying “Déjame ayudarte. Eres, eres un buen chaval” he reviles her saying “No me mires. . . Quita,” and when she asks “¿Por qué ni una caricia?” he responds “Por que te odio. Odio todo lo sucio del mundo, lo feo, lo negro, lo extraño” (62). It is following these comments and the even stronger commands from Cachorro that she shut up, moan, and hump that she begins the masturbation scene (he says to her, “¡Cállate! Deja de lloriquear como una maricona… ¡Gime, follá!” 62). During her masturbation the stage directions state that “Cachorro que la ha estado mirando perplejo comienza a excitarse” (62), and,
after asking for and receiving a condom from Bábara, masturbates and ejaculates into the condom: “Cachorro se da la vuelta en la silla y se masturba con rapidez. . . . Cachorro se cierra el pantalón y se gira hacia Bábara. Le muestra el preservativo lleno” (63). This scene once again demonstrates the crisscrossed or liminal sexual nature of the body of Bábara; she is simultaneously both female (possessing breasts “de cine” [61]) and male (given her words and actions toward him as well as her ability to “penetrate” and consequently de-virginize Cachorro), symbolically ejaculating on the pillow, the transferred vagina, Cachorro.

As has been shown, Bábara does ‘slide’ toward the masculine in the masturbation scene where she succeeds in psychically and forcefully ‘penetrating’ Cachorro, de-virginizing him, yet there are moments when she is most definitely stereotypically ‘feminine’ and ‘motherly’ towards Cachorro. At the very end of the play, what occurs is a Freudianesque re-enactment of the Oedipal complex in the flesh.

Cachorro, the ‘student’ or ‘pupil,’ like a child to Surcos, having previously identified with his ‘father’ (desiring to be a part of the radical hate group and that kind of lifestyle and following his every command), now usurps the phallic machete from Surcos and threatens him with it, desiring to murder his ‘father’ and sexually associate with the ‘mother’ (Bábara). Once he has realized his own sexuality, he becomes the physical aggressor towards Surcos, attacking him and choking him, leaving him for dead:

“Cachorro, furioso, se lanza por la espalda de Surcos y le agarra del cuello. Surcos intenta retirarle las manos pero Cachorro aprieta con todas sus fuerzas. Surcos, va perdiendo fuerza. Cachorro continúa apretando fuera de sí. Surcos abre los ojos que ya están en
blanco. Al momento, se desvanece y cae” (69). Thinking he has murdered his friend, he begins to cry hysterically, and is comforted by the figure of Bárbara, now acting as mother. He ‘sees’ her as a sexual figure to be penetrated perhaps for the very first time. The stage direction states, “Mirando a Bárbara por primera vez” (71), and Cachorro himself states “No veía…Estaba ciego por dentro. Sentí un calor…(Se toca la cabeza). Un calor aquí” (71). Bárbara says to him “Pobrecito, tan joven…Pobrecito…Tranquilo, mi niño, tranquilo” (71). Immediately after she uses a maternal language towards Cachorro, and now with Surcos unconscious (possibly deceased) he desires Bárbara sexually, saying “Dame un beso” (71). The play ends when Bárbara, now the mother figure, and Cachorro, her Oedipal son, engage in a sexual encounter, the outcome of which is left ambiguous. The ending stage direction states “Bárbara besa a Cachorro en los labios. En ese momento, Surcos se mueve en una convulsión. Bárbara y Cachorro se tiran al suelo agazapados. Surcos emite un aullido largo, doloroso, abismal” (72). It is not clearly stated but surely insinuated that the two consummate their relationship with intercourse, thus completing the Oedipal cycle: Cachorro, the son and child, has successfully murdered his father (Surcos), and desired and united with his mother (Bárbara). Without the presence of the liminal sexual figure of Bárbara, Cachorro’s sexuality would have remained in the shadows.

In conclusion, this play has evidenced the many ‘slips’ and ‘slides’ of sex and sexuality as shown by the three characters in it. I submit that Paloma Pedrero’s goal with Cachorros de negro mirar was not to celebrate the violence exhibited by the characters, nor was it to present clearly cut examples of easily defined sexes and sexualities. Rather,
I maintain that this play of hers instantiates support for a reading of the characters as possessing and articulating crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold. Although the usual tendency lies in delineating or demarcating either one bounded form or another (such as the female acting ‘masculine’ or the male acting ‘feminine,’) I hope to have proven with this play that the sexual bodily forms articulated herein, in this case through violence, submit an alternative reading of sex and sexuality that does not cleave to one univocal embodiment but rather allows its multiplicity, blendedness, and slides among sexualized positions to surface. This play demonstrates how Pedrero has eroticized the boundaries, the threshold, the liminal of the sexual, yet this threshold has acquired its own significative space that establishes the tone throughout. The importance, and positive ramification, of this particular reading of the play is that anyone can experience these liminal sexes and sexualities, at times, as evidenced here, brought forth through violence. With *Cachorros de negro mirar* Paloma Pedrero has succeeded in undoing the typical heterosexual or even homosexual connotations of what sexual behavior, emotions, or sexed bodies look like and how they act, and has re-done the spaces that sex and sexuality can occupy, freeing the obsession with fixing it in the center and allowing it to flow freely among the margins.

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118 This is not to suggest that one should engage in violent activity in order to experience liminal sexualities, but rather that, in this play, Pedrero has shown how certain activities such as violent actions can and do ‘push’ people to reveal their true interior sexualities that perhaps in society have no place.
2 B) Age as a function of liminal eroticization: *En la otra habitación*:

We have already witnessed Paloma Pedrero’s art in regards to constituting liminal sexes and sexualities through the use of violence, as with the play *Cachorros de negro mirar*, yet the true depth and richness of her theatre are revealed when she artfully presents yet another medium by which those liminal and peripheral sexes and sexualities are evidenced, and that occurs by means of encounters between characters of differing ages. The different sexes and sexualities that surface in another of Pedrero’s plays differ from the previously analyzed plays in that violence is no longer the driving force between the marginalization of the sexualities but rather intergenerational sexual encounters. These resulting sexes and sexualities that occur do not necessarily revolve around masculinity and femininity, as with earlier plays, but instead bring to light a different type of marginal sexual realities, seen in the morphings and vacillations from adult to child (or child to adult), dependent to independent, mature to immature, mother to daughter etc.

Nonetheless, although masculinity and femininity are not the major emphases in this section, this is not to say that the sexual forms evinced do not still involve gender and/or the erotic. As we shall see, intergenerational sexual encounters or exchanges can and do trigger sexual transformations in the characters that again represent a slipping and sliding between the axes of what is traditionally accepted sexually for certain ages with regard to behavior. The resulting sexes/sexualities borne of such encounters may be considered ‘crisscrossed’ since the characters evince sexualities commonly associated with a different age or stage of life than themselves, such as a sexually immature older mother or a very adult-like, mature young daughter, and are considered ‘liminal’ because
the characters simultaneously possess characteristics of different sexualities, such as the male character who displays both mature and immature sexualities, showing experience and inexperience at the same time, or the female character who shifts between sexual maturity and immaturity.\footnote{It is here crucial to address the common assumption with regard to this particular issue in Pedrero’s plays, that the intersectionality of age and sex merely signal for the characters either a maturity or lack thereof, that is to say, the commonplace progression of one’s life stages from verdant youth through mature adulthood. I find that such assumptions ignore the complicity that sex(uality) play(s) in such transformations in the characters in many of Pedrero’s plays. I thereby argue that sexual forces are, in fact, the driving force behind such changes, and that, without the presence of sexuality as it is presented through intergenerational encounters, such changes would not occur.}

Discussed in the introduction, an important focus for analysis is the ‘third space’ that is established as different from the two extremes of the dichotomy and that merits its own crucial realm of critical attention. We shall see that this space is not constituted in the same way as with the previous play (Cachorros de negro mirar) in the sense that it was a composite or blending of masculine, feminine, or mixed bodily attributes, but rather in some of her plays is articulated as an occupation of multiple sexual roles (associated with age) simultaneously, for example the older woman who is highly sexualized yet still shows love and affection for her daughter, or the younger professional man who sexualizes and in turn becomes sexualized by (and depends on) the much older woman.\footnote{As we shall see in this play, and present in other plays of Pedrero, such as Locas de amar} As stated earlier, the sexual manifestations in these plays are not really ‘limits’ at all but rather signal a new and different sexual realm of possibilities that allow a redefinition and reconstitution of what ‘sex’ means for people whose bodies are affected by interactions with those of a different age than themselves, thus creating and esteeming sexualities usually occluded in traditional considerations. Additionally, like the
previously analyzed plays, Pedrero demonstrates how it is possible to move beyond the binary\textsuperscript{121} and consequently recognize and validate the multivocality of the many sexual constitutions that occur in her characters. The upcoming analysis of Pedrero’s play will reveal how the characters can simultaneously occupy many differing and often contradictory (again, considering stereotypes of traditional ‘binaries’) sexual states and, many times, achieve success as an integral and whole figure while manifesting these very different sexual configurations, in order to underscore the differenced sexes or sexualities that occur by means of intergenerational encounters with the goal of revealing how these sexual modes of being offer a new way of looking at sexualized bodies (functioning differently as a factor of age). These new and different sexualized bodies provide a means by which to challenge the normative with regard to age, thus emphasizing the complexity of their constitutions.

Hence, a play that exemplifies the crisscrossed or liminal sexual state(s) of its characters due to intergenerational encounters is Pedrero’s \textit{En la otra habitación}. Written in 2003 and premiered as a dramatic reading in 2005, this play involves crossings\textsuperscript{122} and new occupations of the sexual in the character of a mother and wife. Pedrero’s characters here stretch the limits of what is usually considered sexual for a ‘mother’ and ‘wife’, allowing the reader/ spectator to re-conceive and, in essence, re-define the parameters of the sexual body for these characters who mimetically serve (or may serve) as

\textsuperscript{121} Take for example, the typical bifurcation of sex with regard to age: The sexless, older woman/ mother who stands in counter-position to the highly sexualized jezebel-like daughter, or the independent young lothario-type man who seduces any and all women around him, compared, at the other extreme, to the asexual older man.

\textsuperscript{122} Again, meaning characters that evince the ‘opposite’ or non-normative with regard to what is typically sexually associated with their ages
representations of real people in current society today. The discussion for this play will not focus so much on the physicality of the body (as with *Cachorros de negro mirar*), but rather the behavior associated with that body and the social-sexual roles that the body performs. Similar to the characters of Surcos, Cachorro, and Bárbara, so too does the main character Paula assume and evince a new sexual characterization in her interactions with a person of a different age than herself, thus displaying the ‘crisscrossed’ nature of her sexuality (that is, a different or atypical manifestation of sexuality considering her age and status as wife and mother), in addition to a ‘liminal’ status of this sexuality (since her new sexuality ultimately synthesizes both traditional and non-traditional elements). The importance of the sexual morphings and new occupations in this play lies in its transformative or generative power of what the ‘sexual’ is or can be for an older woman, thus shifting the paradigm of what sexuality means for people of all different ages and challenging the status quo in offering these differenced sexualities.

In an introduction to the piece, Paloma Pedrero herself writes that the tale is about a “mujer trabajadora, importante y madre en una sociedad que no está preparada para

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123 Again, this is not to say that these characters necessarily refer to actual people, but rather that Pedrero has made them recognizable enough that they could represent anyone who finds him/herself in the situation presented in the play, thus allowing them to be understood (and perhaps sympathized with) by most.

124 In this discussion, I intend to show how Pedrero displays the hyperbolic extremes of sexual characterization in her characters; that is to say, she delineates her characters as in possession of an exaggeration of, for example, ‘motherhood’ (‘motherhood’ usually being associated with women of an older age) only later to contrast that with the opposite extreme of that characterization, ‘lack of motherhood’. She also shows how her characters encompass many facets of different sexualities (such as the figure of the concerned mother who is highly sexualized and demands eroticism in her life), which ultimately posit them in their own sexual space that is clearly different from each extreme and that establishes its own importance in the play and beyond.
Pedrero chooses to describe the heroine’s value as being different than other women around her who sacrifice for themselves and their families, yet ultimately do not renounce that which they desire most at the end, love: “La protagonista es una mujer que ha querido tener y ha defendido una familia con esfuerzo, pero sin ese espantoso espíritu de sacrificio que caracteriza a tantas mujeres. Ella ha puesto toda su energía en lograr sus metas sin renunciar al amor” (Ibid). Although no one can deny the strong feminist undertones of the play (Pedrero herself writes “En la otra habitación quiere ser una obra de profundo espíritu femenino” 151), one area of the play that Pedrero does not elaborate on in the piece’s introduction, and to which this discussion will be directed, is the importance of the complexity of the sexual characterizations. I hope to show that the intergenerational encounters (specifically between a young male lover and an older wife and mother) both reveal the constructedness of the sexual roles that women such as the mother Paula must perform to be successful in life, while also revealing the true self of that character at odds with those roles, a self that can simultaneously be both sexualized lover yet concerned mother, successful and functional in both roles (as we shall later see). It is through the crisscrossed\(^{126}\), liminal nature of the sexual body that Pedrero elucidates the reality for women such as Paula, demonstrating the necessity to undo typical connotations regarding age and the sexual body, and calling for a redeployment and redoing of such considerations.

\(^{125}\) The entire quote reads: “Este hecho novedoso de la mujer trabajadora, importante y madre en una sociedad que no está preparada para él ni lo apoya, está teniendo duras repercusiones para ellas, para nosotras” (151).

\(^{126}\) Again, referring to a different or atypical manifestation of sexuality considering what is usually expected of one’s age and status
As with many of Pedrero’s plays, the opening scene is again dominated by a highly visual and significant metaphor. In this case, the action occurs in a “buhardilla” that is brightly lit inside (“[un] espacio diáfano con dos puertas”) yet stormy outside, seen through a skylight: “Por la claraboya del techo se cuela una luz de atardecer tormentoso” (167). The significance of the clearly lit room suggests perhaps clarity with regard to the inner sexual constitution of the main character, Paula, yet that is complicated and occluded by the exterior world of norms and roles, metaphorized by a storm. The stage direction also states that outside the season is “otoño”, a possible metaphor for Paula’s body, that is ‘fall-like’ or ‘dark’ on the exterior (her age), yet young and vibrant inside. Paula herself is described as “una mujer de cuarenta y pocos años delgada y atractiva” (167), an older woman yet still beautiful, whose body contrasts with that of her daughter Amanda, described as “una chica muy joven, gordita y bastante guapa” (167). Whereas the beginning of other plays of Pedrero’s, such as her comedy *Locas de amar* presents an aged woman (Eulalia) acting like a child while her young daughter (Rocío) is the more mature and adult-like, here the situation falls much more into traditional stereotypes: Paula is the older, more mature adult and mother, and Amanda is the younger, inexperienced daughter, however, as is typical with Pedrero’s plays, the dynamics of this piece prove far more complex, as we shall see.

The play’s action commences with a heated argument between mother and daughter over the use of the room. When Paula sees Amanda in the room, she is clearly upset since Amanda was supposed to be in Paris (“Pero, ¿tú no estabas en París?” 167) to take a course on film (“¿Y el curso de cine que ibas a hacer este fin de semana?” 168). In
a frenzy, Paula then summarily attempts to oust her daughter from the room (“Necesito la buhardilla esta tarde. Así que ya puedes ir haciendo planes” and “Vete a gastar la pasta que te di ayer. Te la regalo” 168 – 169). While Amanda explains that she received a phone call from a ‘friend’ and has thus returned to meet him for a tryst in the room (“Tomé el tren, de verdad. Pero antes de llegar a la frontera…me llamó. O sea, recibí la llamada, la llamada que llevaba esperando tantos meses” 170), Paula retorts that she also needs the room for a romantic encounter with a lover, an encounter that is much more necessary and urgent for her than for her daughter Amanda since Paula, after all, is not as young as Amanda (“Tú tienes dieciocho años y todo el tiempo del mundo para mostrar tu intimidad a ese amigo. Pero yo…” 171 and “nunca he tenido un amante. Pero…hoy voy a inaugurarme” 172). Paula’s sexual constitution and drive are thus established early in the play when she not only announces that she has a much younger lover but also rejects her role as mother (and clearly as wife), telling her daughter that she does not even like to be called ‘mother’: “No me llames madre. Ya sabes que no me gusta. No entiendo esa manía que te ha dado de llamarme madre” (169), thus prioritizing her sexual need for the tryst above her role as wife and mother (Amanda asks “Es la primera vez que le vas a engañar [al padre]?” to which Paula replies “De obra sí” and “Pero espero que no sea la última” 173).

Amanda, on the other hand, appears to embrace her role as daughter and desires for her mother to act like a ‘traditional’ mother, telling her “A mí me gusta [llamarte madre]”, to which Paula flagrantly replies “Eres una esnob” (169). What to Amanda appears to be temporary insanity in the mind of her mother (“Madre, estás
Paula believes she has achieved clarity for the first time ever, knowing what she wants and how she must accomplish it (‘Hija, nunca había estado tan en mis cabales. Creo’ 172), although the decision for her has been as tumultuous as the storm outside (‘Me ha costado un tormento tomar esta decisión. Pero ya está. Tengo que saber qué siento por él, qué siento por mí, qué siente mi cuerpo. Si siente o ya no se siente’ 173, my emphasis). The idea of role performance becomes crucial for both mother and daughter as Paula notes that she has been performing the role of mother and wife for some time and now has ceased the masquerade in order to be who she really is: “Amanda, tengo que maquillarme, acabar la cena, y hacer cinco ‘saludos al sol’. No puedo ejercer de madre ahora” (my emphasis) [173], to which Amanda replies, “¿Ahora? ¿Y qué pasaba ayer?” (173), insinuating that in the past she may have failed to perform the role of ‘mother’ well. The dual movement between the abandonment of Paula’s role as wife and mother and her crossing (hence, crisscrossed) into an alternative role that is highly sexualized and self-centered can be elucidated through Judith Butler’s theory about the drag masquerade and gender subversion.

Judith Butler’s chapter titled “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” (in Bodies That Matter) addresses the concept of the masquerade, specifically with regard to gender. Butler begins in examining the performative using the theory of interpellation, through which consequences are produced that exceed the intention of the subject’s hailing; she argues that the interpellation loses status as a
performative and consequently signifies more than it was supposed or meant to\(^{127}\) (122). In other words, there is a sense of over-determination or exaggeration with regard to what is being masqueraded: that which serves as the performance in the drag masquerade comes to signify in excess of its original intention. Butler expands her argument by showing that the drag ball (seen through the medium of film in the movie \textit{Paris is Burning}) is a space of dissension that destabilizes heterosexuality by its very presence, yet which also succeeds in positing the ultra-heterosexual/ normative through the inclusion of certain men and women in drag\(^{128}\). Butler argues that the norm in drag is a “morphological ideal that remains the standard [and] which regulates the performance, but which no performance fully approximates” (129). This suggests the dual nature of drag as a subversion or appropriation of gender yet simultaneously a force that re-inscribes and references the very heteronormativity it succeeds in subverting. Butler speaks of the “double movement of approximating and exposing the phantasmatic status of the realness norm, the symbolic norm” (130). In a different vein yet using the same framework as Butler describes, as we shall see, Paula’s ‘drag’ performance thus both

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\(^{127}\) Butler explains that the problem with Althusser’s idea of hailing or interpellation (in which he perceives of the hailed subject as being recognized through reprimand) is that Althusser does not consider the range of disobedience that the interpellating law may produce, resulting in consequences that exceed the intention motivated by the law (121 – 122).

\(^{128}\) To quote Butler, “The balls are contests in which the contestants compete under a variety of categories. The categories include a variety of social norms, many of which are established in white culture as signs of class, like that of the ‘executive’ and the Ivy League Student; some of which are marked as feminine, ranging from high drag to butch queen. . . . The competition in military garb shifts to yet another register of legitimacy, which enacts the performative and gestural conformity to a masculinity which parallels the performative or reiterative production of femininity in other categories” (\textit{BTM} 129).
reinforces the normative values for a woman of her age and also subverts these very same traditional values\textsuperscript{129}.

Paula’s revelation and rejection of the masquerade of ideal femininity and womanliness (meaning a stringent and perfect socially-sanctioned and traditionally expected adherence to her role as ‘wife’ and ‘mother’) and the embracing of her new (‘true’\textsuperscript{130}) crossed sexuality (evinced in the rejection of her traditional role as mother and wife and new, atypical desire to be lover to a young man who later turns out to be her student\textsuperscript{131}), as we shall see, does instantiate Judith Butler’s theory of drag as subversion, even though her form of ‘drag’ does not involve the typical notion of cross-dressing. In other words, I submit that in both announcing and rejecting the traditional values and norms associated with her age and status, as well as choosing a differenced and atypical sexuality, Paula, in essence, metaphorically ‘dresses in drag’\textsuperscript{132}. In a typical drag performance, one dresses in a particular way so that one stereotypical or usually gender-identifiable raiment is worn by someone of the opposite gender (hence, a man wearing feminine-identifiable clothing or a woman in masculine-identifiable clothing) in order both to emphasize the discrepancy between the gender of the wearer and the gender

\textsuperscript{129} Keep in mind the earlier explanation in the Introduction that I implement terms that use theoretical concepts (in this case, ‘drag’) in a different way than their traditional or typical usage. The argument in this chapter stands as one such example.

\textsuperscript{130} ‘True’ in the sense that it is the role she wishes to embrace

\textsuperscript{131} This is not to say that the pairing of an older woman and a younger man never occurs in reality; I mean to suggest that one must keep in mind that Pedrero is playing with extremes: establishing the role of “perfect” womanliness (as wife and mother) only to dash this and reveal a woman who desires neither to be wife nor mother, a role that is frequently commonplace in today’s world, yet often frowned upon; Pedrero hence offers a tale of resistance in order both to reveal the trigger mechanisms that can and do initiate the embracing of a different sexual role (in this case, the trigger relates to inter-generational encounters) as well as to unsettle with the notion of a woman who rejects all traditional womanly roles and must then deal with societal consequences.

\textsuperscript{132} As we shall see, this type of drag does not involve ‘male’/ ‘female’ but rather ‘traditional’/ ‘non-traditional’ roles.
identified in the clothing itself, and also in order to posit certain values with regard to the
clothing itself. In essence, drag accomplishes the creation of a relief of one set of values
(in the case of clothing, (hetero)normativity), achieving both an exaggerated form of one
value and, conversely, that which opposes that very same value. In other words, with drag
involving clothing, the viewer/ spectator to the drag show or individual wearing drag
simultaneously glimpses both the visualization of one set of values with regard to gender
(that which is masqueraded through drag, typically hyper-masculinity or femininity), and,
due to the extreme exaggeration of those values, the suggested negative or converse of
those same values (that is to say, hyper-heterosexuality). Therefore, this double
movement involved in the drag masquerade, both the establishing of certain values
signaling the dashing of normativity and suggestive of that very same normativity
itself, serves as framework from which it is possible to substitute different players in
the drag masquerade.

In En la otra habitación, although Paula clearly is not a woman dressing in man’s
clothing (or vice versa), she does, in essence, participate in a different type of drag
performance, such as that described above, wherein one particular set of values is
established in order to refer indirectly to another and thus draw attention to the
discrepancy between the two, as well as point toward the difficulties involved with both.
Her figurative donning of the traditional ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ roles only later to reject
these and announce and reveal the constructedness of such roles positions her within the

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133 More of Butler’s argument will be explained below.
134 Explained more below
135 The degree to which she performs the role of ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ are explained more fully below.
potentiality of drag’s subversive nature, one that Butler deems “reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality” (Bodies That Matter 125). That is to say, drag for Butler reveals the artificial and constructed nature of sexuality, demonstrating that what appears original or natural (in this case, traditional sexual expectations) is but an illusion. Butler concentrates her argument on the masquerade of masculinity and femininity (in discussing heterosexuality and homosexuality), but, as explained earlier, it is also possible to extend this meaning to incorporate other factors of sexuality as well, such as the exterior social-sexual roles one is forced to perform in life with regard to age and gender, and the true (interior) sexual roles (differing from those foisted social roles) that one wishes to espouse.

With regard to the first prong of Butler’s argument about drag, Paula’s masquerade as ideal spouse and mother would be, according to her definition, over-determined and hyperbolic, revealing the ultra-hegemonic and traditional roles that she was made to occupy as wife and mother. Although we are not witness to all of the details of that aspect of Paula’s life, what the reader-spectator does see, however, is Amanda’s diatribe against her mother for how she has failed to live up to those referred-to

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136 One must again recall that the usual significance of ‘drag’ involves the visual meshing or reversal of masculinity and femininity, and concomitantly the breakdown of heteronormativity (and sometimes heterosexuality); here, Pedrero appears to use the same framework of drag yet with different forces in operation, those of the social-sexual roles, values, and/or expectations associated with one’s age.

137 As we have seen just a bit of with Paula

138 Following Butler’s theorization, this means that ‘mother’ or ‘wife’ comes to signify for Paula more than just the role, but rather a perfect adscription to that role, meaning that she in society is expected to ‘out mother’ what is mother and ‘out wife’ what is wife. See, for example, Butler’s quote about drag queens: “if a white homophobic hegemony considers the black drag ball queen to be a woman, that woman, constituted already by that hegemony, will become the occasion for the rearticulation of its terms; embodying the excess of that production, the queen will out-woman women” (Ibid 132, my emphasis).
traditional standards. Amanda, serving as mouthpiece of the normative/hegemonic, constantly reminds her mother of all of the duties that (in her opinion), as mother and wife, she has failed to do, thus establishing and emphasizing the norms and values associated with what is expected of a woman of her age and status. Therefore, the type of masquerade that occurs in this play is in truth a negative or indirect masquerade\textsuperscript{139}, thus using Paula’s current behavior and sexual status as it stands in stark contrast to the normative and traditional, articulated by Amanda. In other words, the type of ‘drag’ described in this play allows for a revelation of those roles and values that she performed (that of ‘perfect wife and mother’) in order to subvert these and allow Paula to embody different qualities. This dynamic interplay occurs by means of dialogue between Paula and her daughter Amanda.

The dialectic begins when Paula comments to her daughter that when Amanda was younger she was “agarrada a mi falda hasta…” (185), and then Amanda finishes her line, stating, “Hasta cuando quieres quitarte la falda” as well as “Creía que el papel de madre no se perdía nunca” (my emphasis, 185), thus underscoring the reality that being a mother is clearly a ‘role’ that one assumes and performs, one that Paula no longer wishes to masquerade\textsuperscript{140}. Amanda initiates her normative parroting of the proper and accepted roles for her mother when she tells her, “Estás peor de lo que pensaba” (175), “me has hecho daño” (204), “no lo has hecho bien” (215) with regard to her poor upbringing of

\textsuperscript{139} Meaning that Paula herself does not masquerade for the reader-spectator the embodiment of traditional values; rather, these values are refracted indirectly by what she does not achieve in terms of normative roles, emphasizing how far removed from those roles she is in her occupation of just the opposite

\textsuperscript{140} As we shall see later, this also becomes more complicated as Paula still desires to be a mother to Amanda but has chosen to put her own needs first.
her daughter, and “Pobre papá” (175), also adding about her father, “Pero, madre, si papá es un buen tipo. De verdad, no hay muchos como él” (175), thus vilifying her mother for treating her badly, pathologizing Paula’s sexual choice, prioritizing the importance of perpetuation of the marriage contract, and encouraging her mother to remain in an obviously unhappy relationship with her father. She also goes so far as to say that she was not a good mother since “nunca me has hecho la comida” (215), thereby pinning down yet another marker of traditional standards and values for a woman Paula’s age and status (that of cooking for her family). The ensuing conversation continues the dialectic between Amanda, representative of traditional and expected values, and Paula, who is rebelling against these to create for herself a different sexual constitution.

Amanda’s mirroring of the hegemonic and traditional value system goes on as she attacks her mother’s integrity at becoming involved with her own student. When Paula tells Amanda that her lover is Mario, a student of hers (“¿El alumno de tercero de Dirección?...¿El gilipollas de tercero de Dirección?” 176), the same Mario who possesses, according to Amanda, “fama de gran follador” (178), Paula, now announcing her new choices, responds what she desires is more than just sex, since, “Mario y yo estamos compartiendo...una emoción” (178). Interwoven with the reinforcement of the traditional in the ‘negative’ masquerade (Butler’s first point about the hyperbolic) lies the subversive nature of the drag that Paula effectuates (Butler’s second point about how drag serves to subvert the (hetero)normative or (hetero)patriarchal, which in this case involves expectations related to one’s sexuality and age, not heterosexuality or

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141 Here, ‘constitution’ refers to the way she defines and carries herself with regard to her sexuality—in other words, her sexual make-up.
homosexuality). In this play, this subversion\(^{142}\) (that takes the form of Paula’s comments) is usually presented concomitantly with Amanda’s remarks about all that her mother is not doing to be a good ‘wife’ and ‘mother,’ and is, in a sense, designed to ‘undo’ or devaluate her daughter’s commentary.

For example, Amanda attacks Paula’s age in comparison to her lover, arguing that she is at least twenty years older (“Mario tiene veinte años menos que tú” 179), to which Paula fires back that her husband was twenty years older (“¿Y qué? Tu padre tiene veinte más” 179), pointing toward the double standard with regard to age in marriages\(^{143}\). Later, Amanda not only assails her mother’s lack of skill as a mother (“Pero a ti, como siempre, lo mío te importa una mierda” 173), but also she directs her rage toward signaling what she determines to be her mother’s feeble-mindedness and immaturity in this situation (due to being swept up in a ridiculous emotion) that contrast with her own maturity and foresight about the situation, claiming: “Estás en peligro” (181). . . . Yo, aunque sea joven, hay cosas de las que sé más que tú. Puedo aconsejarte” and “Si te acuestas con él te arrepentirás” (180), to which Paula retorts “No puedo esperar. Llevo años esperando. Siendo la buena esposa de su marido, siendo la buena madre de su hija” (180). Paula’s response underscores not only the constructedness of the masquerade that she has, for years, performed, but also the current distance she wants to place between that role and her newly preferred sexuality. When Paula admits that she no longer loves her husband and cannot even stand to be around him (“No soporto a tu padre. . . . Es una tragedia no

\(^{142}\) ‘Subversion’ in the sense that one set of (traditional) values are dashed and supplanted with another set of non-traditional or atypical values that are presented in an exaggerated manner in order to contrast with the first set, thus causing a significant gap between the two types of values

\(^{143}\) That is to say, the acceptance of older men being with younger women, but not the reverse
soportar a la persona que más has querido en la vida” 193), she adds a crucial comment about her need to end her masquerade as happy wife and mother, and follow her own sexual impulses, a revelation for her that has been like a moment of clarity, reminiscent of the initial visual metaphor in the room: “Es como si cada año de convivencia me hubiera ido desvelando una verdad…demasiado vulgar. Se ha roto el misterio. No sé, no sé cómo explicártelo, he dejado de admirarle, se me ha roto ese último hilo, esa ilusión que me hacía verlo como a un hombre único” (194). Paula also states that she spent many years in the ‘masquerade’ as wife and mother, working hard for her family, a situation she now sees as like a ‘hell’: “Trabajaba diez horas diarias en una oficina infame, con jefes infames. . . . No tenía un duro porque entregaba hasta el último céntimo en casa. . . . tenía que luchar como una loba para salir de ese infierno. Porque ese no era mi infierno” (216). Her actions and behavior for years served as the (different usage of) ‘drag’ as she proceeded through the postures and poses of ‘good wife’ and ‘respectable mother’, roles that she clearly now inveighs against and no longer wishes to tolerate. That ‘drag performance’ that she endured for years in the past thus contrasts with her verbal articulations and expressed preferences with regard to sexuality in the present. Hence, while the reference to certain traditional standards and values for a wife and mother such as Paula (evidenced through the dialectic with her daughter) instantiate a drag performance or masquerade of one kind of (traditional and normative) values, Paula’s comments have effectively served to undermine this very normativity and thus effectuate a unique kind of drag performance. She has finally made the decision to end the drag masquerade and remove the ‘clothing’ that bound her tightly for so long.
To return to the main thrust of this chapter, the idea of crisscrossed sexes or sexualities, the presence of a crossed sexuality (again, ‘crossed’ with regard to her deviance from traditional values and norms) in the main character Paula surfaces again by means of dialogue with her daughter Amanda during the last parts of the play. Throughout the play, Paula has made abundantly clear her voluntary choice to end the masquerade, reject the values typically associated with a wife and mother of her age, and embrace a differenced sexuality. Yet, the nature of her sexual self in this play shifts towards the end as she shows that not only is she still able to maintain the sexual desires and choices she has declared but also be a mother to her daughter. Paula, in essence, demonstrates a liminal sexuality in showing that she can successfully synthesize both roles as sexualized lover and concerned mother\textsuperscript{144}, yet, as we shall see, she is not the only character who changes her sexual constitution to embrace a mixed one, for a parallel situation occurs also with Amanda\textsuperscript{145}.

As has been already mentioned, throughout the play Paula rejects traditional or typical values related to being a spouse and mother (for example, in one instance, when Amanda states “Ya no sé si pensar en mí, en papá, o en ti”, Paula replies “Piensa en mí, cariño. Vete” 178), instead preferring to prioritize her sexual needs with her student Mario. Yet, as the argument between Paula and Amanda becomes more intense and as Amanda begins to reveal how truly vulnerable and self-conscious she is, Paula begins to

\textsuperscript{144}Many in society would argue that such a constitution is an oxymoron (the ‘sexualized good mother’); Paula, as we shall see, decides toward the play’s end that she is able to incorporate both aspects into her life with at least some degree of success.

\textsuperscript{145}Later on we shall see how Amanda’s opinion about her mother’s sexuality and her role as daughter changes as well.
show her motherly concern (that she most likely has maintained all this time yet that has not surfaced until now\textsuperscript{146}). For example, when Amanda states that she believes herself to be overweight and ugly (182), Paula responds “Tú eres tú, Amanda. Y eres cantidad de bonita aunque te empeñes en disimularlo…Y vas a ser gran directora de cine” (183).

With regard to the idea of ‘slipping’ and ‘sliding’ between different bodily constitutions, it may be said that Paula does in fact vacillate between being a concerned mother about her daughter, encouraging her not to see herself negatively, while still articulating her own desires to be with her young lover. One instance occurs when Paula becomes angry with Amanda and tells her “…no confío en ti. Siempre has estado a su favor. Siempre en mi contra” (200), and Amanda replies, “Tú te quieres a ti. A nadie más” (200), yet, only a few pages later, Amanda, after admitting that she told her father about Paula’s illicit affair, regresses to a childlike state and tells Paula (“Con voz infantil). No le había dicho nada” (206). This temporary embodiment of a small child again draws Paula back into her motherly role, evidenced when Paula provides words of encouragement to her daughter when Amanda states she is bulimic and may not want to go into film: “lo primero que quiero que sepas es que eres preciosa” (209), and “Si los hombres no ven lo bonita que tú eres, se va a hundir el mundo” (211).

When Paula realizes that much of what Amanda has said to her was made up on her own part out of resentment and jealousy (since she, too, likes Mario but, according to

\textsuperscript{146} Again, one must recall that Pedrero has purposefully set up a relationship of extremes, playing with the notions of extreme normativity and its opposite in order to emphasize how there is usually a social conception that such extremes may never co-habitate in the same individual, yet Pedrero desires to complicate such a notion and show how some (like Paula) attempt to reconcile those very same roles and make their synthesis viable.
her, “A Mario no le gustan las gordas” 220), Paula yet again demonstrates her motherly concern, even singing a lullaby to Amanda and coddling her as if she were a little girl again, while Amanda complains about how her womb hurts her, a metaphorical reference for the inability to sever totally the umbilical cord, as well as the hurt Paula has caused her in denying (Paula’s) ‘motherly’ impulses:

_Amanda_: (Llorando): ¿Qué has hecho, mami? Qué has hecho? (Tocándose el vientre encogida) Me ha dolido. Me ha dolido mucho aquí.

_Paula_: (Conmovida): Vamos, vamos cielo, ¿qué pasa? Si eso nunca se corta. Ni con tijeras de verdad. Eso nunca se corta.

_Amanda_: (Como una niña pequeña): Pues me duele. Ay, me duele…aquí.

_Paula_: A ver, ¿dónde?

_Amanda_: (Se toca el vientre): Aquí.

_Paula_: (Tomándola como si fuese una criatura): Cura sana, culito de rana, si no curas hoy, curarás mañana…na…na. Ya está.

_Amanda_: ¿Esto nunca se corta?

_Paula_: Nunca, hija, nunca. Ni cuando te dejo, ni cuando me odias, ni cuando me perdonas. Ni cuando me muera.

_Amanda_: (Aterrorizada): Tú no te vas a morir. Tú no te vas a morir. Tú…

(222)
Immediately after this exchange, the childish regression in Amanda heightens and Paula sings to her a “nana para la Amanda despierta” (223), and then, at Amanda’s request, yet another (“Otra y te vas”) (223), as Paula tucks her into bed. Paula, now realizing the entire situation with Amanda (that Amanda made up her tryst to get even with her mother for bringing Mario there), truly internalizes her role as mother (and somewhat rejects her sexualized self) when she says to her, “…aunque creo que he escrito alguna obra buena, aunque hay alguna que me gusta mucho, la mejor, la mejor que he hecho en mi vida, eres tú” (225).

In addition to Paula, a crossing appears to take place in Amanda as well (as mentioned earlier). Always echoing the normative and traditional, Amanda now, in a surprising turn, honestly confesses to her mother about her acceptance of Mario and her mother’s relationship: “Mario es sólo el gilipollas de tercero de dirección. Otro tipo vulgar. Puedes quedártelo”, to which Paula replies “Amanda, tienes que prometerme que éste será el principio de una grande amistad” and Amanda says “Prometido. Mira, a partir de ahora, esta será la habitación de las dos. La otra habitación. El lugar en el que desnudarnos” (227). In doing so, she not only stops viewing her mother as a rival for Mario’s affections, but also endorses the non-normative and atypical sexual relationship that her mother is currently engaged in with Mario. Amanda thus effectuates a ‘crossing’ as well from the normative into the non-traditional as she accepts her mother’s sexual relationship, and new role, with her student. Amanda, hence, has slid from amidst the typical and center (in her acceptance of social-sexual roles for a wife and mother), to the
margins, the realm where traditional and stereotypical expectations for women like Paula may be re-examined and redone.

Additionally, Paula herself undergoes yet another transformation or movement with regard to her bodily or sexual constitution, and that is a slip away from her need for men altogether, encouraged by Amanda. At one point both mother and daughter appear almost to swear off men. Paula states “Y es chungo, es chungo para los hombres, Ami, aceptar que las tías, además de inteligentes, podríamos vivir sin ellos” (229), and Amanda comments “Creo que tendremos que pactar con ellos. Entendernos”, yet Paula adds “Pero sin resignación, Amanda, sin sumisión” (229). Yet, almost immediately after uttering these lines in which both declare their independence from men, the phone rings (230), and Paula again shifts back towards her sexual need for an encounter with Mario that marks the end of the play. As Amanda began to state to Mario that Paula was not present (“Pues no está”), Paula demands “Dame ese teléfono, Amanda” (230). Amanda, still hoping they will dine together (on the meal that Paula had cooked for herself and Mario), and again regressing to a more childish nature, begs her mother to eat with her instead: “Me habías prometido cenar conmigo. ¡Me lo habías prometido!” (232), yet Paula is insistent that Amanda leave so that she may have her encounter with Mario: “Lo siento, hija, tienes que esperar. Tienes que irte” (233). After Amanda throws a tantrum and wildly stuffs the food into her mouth (233), Paula begins to cry, an action that triggers yet another shift in Amanda, from one of anger and resentment to that of resignation and perhaps even acceptance: “(A Paula, callada, comienzan a caérsele las lágrimas. Amanda se levanta y corre a coger el telefonillo). ¿Mario? ¿Mario? ¡Mario! No contesta. (A

Returning to the theories of Butler, for her, the subversive nature of drag itself is ultimately undone, effectuating an erasure of its rupturing. I submit that this is not the case with what happens with Paula in En la otra habitación, for it appears that the rupturing of the hegemonic that occurs via Paula’s socio-sexual decisions regarding her young lover, and the substitution of a differed and crossed sexuality (as opposed to the norm) dominate the end of the play and leave the reader-spectator with the knowledge that Paula has not only embraced her new sexuality with a much younger man, but also she has continued to be her own kind of concerned yet non-traditional mother to Amanda. She has, hence, accomplished a sense of harmony in embracing both roles, despite the conflict that has occurred as a result. The very last lines of the work include Paula’s command to her daughter Amanda to let Mario in (“¡Vete a buscarlo!” 235), Amanda’s acquiescence (“Yo te lo traigo” 235), and at last the connection between Paula and Mario (“[Paula se levanta inquieta y contesta]. ¿Quién es? [Con los ojos iluminados] Te abro” 235). At the end of the play Paula has proven to have effectively and successfully embraced a liminal or marginal sexuality since she simultaneously occupies the spaces of

147 Butler cites the movie Paris is Burning to demonstrate that transsexual men in drag, like the character Venus, ultimately strive to be real women, thus decimating their own gender subversivity exemplified in the drag ball. According to Butler, “as much as she crosses gender, sexuality, and race performatively, the hegemony that reinscribes the privileges of normative femininity and whiteness wields the final power to ‘re’naturalize Venus’ body and cross out that prior crossing, an erasure that is her death” (133, my emphasis). In other words, the gender that is masqueraded in the drag ball really supports already present hegemonic constructions of gender, thus erasing itself as soon as it subverts heteronormativity.
‘erotic, sexualized lover’ as well as ‘good mother.’ Although some may argue or concentrate on the possibility that she is an adulterous, absent mother, I argue that her choices have shown her daughter (and even other women) that one may occupy multiple roles that often seem conflicting yet that can ultimately be reconciled no matter how complex or contradictory they appear.

In summary, Paula’s sexual-corporeal constitution has been complexly shaped through the series of intergenerational encounters she has experienced, first with her non-present yet constantly referred-to husband, who was much older than she and because of whom she was forced to masquerade or perform as ideal mother and wife, her much younger lover Mario, who realized a sexual awakening in Paula and who has caused her to end her masquerade and re-create for herself a non-traditional and atypical sexual constitution, and most certainly her eighteen year old daughter Amanda, through whom both the normative is shown to dominate and control, only eventually to be dismantled (or at least somewhat dismantled) by the end of the play. The dialogue between Paula and Amanda has revealed and clarified Paula’s crisscrossed sexual nature, has held up a mirror to the traditional sexual expectations for a woman of her age and status, and has shown how these can be successfully undone, resulting in a redeployment of a differenced and liminal conceptualization of what sexuality is or can be for society. Paula thus represents yet another example of Pedrero’s affinity for creating characters who possess crisscrossed or liminal sexualities, as she is able to synthesize and occupy multiple, often conflictive roles simultaneously, seemingly to show how these very roles

148 Again, in relation to what is typically or stereotypically expected of a woman (wife/ mother) of her age...
also exist in real life. *En la otra habitación* demonstrates yet again the complex treatment necessary in order successfully to comprehend the sexual constitutions of its characters, and also highlights the reality and importance of liminal occupations of these sexualities, thus moving the reader-spectator beyond the typical binary into a fuller realization of alternative spaces of representation and characterization.

In conclusion, the multi-faceted theatre of Paloma Pedrero touches upon a mélange of themes, yet I hope to have proven with these essays that one of the most intriguing and complex facets of Pedrero’s theatre lies in her treatment of sex and sexuality in the characters. Her argument against the stereotypical and traditionally accepted, dichotomized poles of sexuality and for the often times blurred, complex, and layered middle serves as unique and refreshing in its presentation of differenced sexual constitutions. No matter what the manifestation of these atypical crisscrossed sexes and/or sexualities at the threshold, whether by violence or through intergenerational encounters, Pedrero’s plays analyzed herein accomplish what Julia Rodríguez describes as a “rhizomatic” concept of identity formation, defined as a process in which identity is construed as an ‘and’ instead of an ‘is’, focusing on processes, dimensions, and sites of rupture where new identity formations are engendered (*Queer Latinidad* 22). Pedrero effectuates Rodríguez’s concept of identity formation with regard to her characters in the plays described, in which she accomplishes “the breakdown of categories, questioning definitions and giving them new meaning, moving through spaces of understanding and dissension, working through the critical practice of ‘refusing explication’” (*Queer
Latinidad 24), thus highlighting the multivocality of the many differenced sexual understandings that occur in her theatre.
Chapter 3

Crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold:

Yolanda Pallín:

While the 1990s in Spain marked a crucial apogee of theatrical production for female playwrights,\textsuperscript{149} this period also experienced many material changes that enabled these female authors to become more visible and represented, such as the appearance and acceptance of alternative theatres, and a new recognition of the contributions of these same female playwrights (Leonard, \textit{Nuevos manantiales: Dramaturgas españolas en los 90}, 9). Efforts were made to shift female playwrights into the public eye and display their talents, highlighting their importance not only to the stage but to drama overall as well. In order to rectify the lack of historical representation of female authors, in 1996 the Instituto de la Mujer and the Asociación de Directores de Escena (ADE) began the crucial index \textit{Autoras en la historia del teatro español}, a four-volume catalogue prepared by Juan Antonio Hormigón listing names and information\textsuperscript{150} of female authors in Spain from 1500 – 1994 (Leonard, \textit{Nuevos manantiales} ...11). In addition to other written works that highlighted female authors, such as O’Connor’s \textit{Dramaturgas españolas de hoy}, the

\textsuperscript{149} See the Introduction of this thesis for more general information about this period and theatre in general.
\textsuperscript{150} The information included in the anthology includes short biographical information about the author, the list of works by the author, information on the composition year of the work and (if premiered) the year of the premiere, as well as the genre and, in some cases, a short synopsis of the works.
Catálogo de escritoras españolas en lengua castellana edited by Falcón and Ciurana, and the Autoras dramáticas españolas entre 1918 y 1936 by Pilar Nieva (Leonard, Nuevos manantiales... 10), several theatrical awards in the 80s and 90s were created in order to reward the talents of so many writers. Hence, as we shall see, the playwrights of the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s often are known as and referred to by the theatre awards of that time.

For example, in 1985, as an homage to Valle-Inclán, the Instituto de la Juventud created the Marqués de Bradomín Award, bestowed upon authors under thirty years of age. Although no woman earned this award in the 1980s, four women in 1999 received the second place (accésit) spot, a significantly higher representation than a decade earlier. Other awards of the period include the Born Award, won only twice by women, and the Calderón de la Barca Award, again won only twice by women. The overall lack of dramatic awards bestowed upon female authors prompted the creation in 1994 of the María Teresa León Award for Female Playwrights (Leonard, Nuevos manantiales... 13). Awards such as the Bradomín and the María Teresa León have thus facilitated the visibility of alternative playwrights of the current generation, and attracted more female authors (as well as criticism in general) to the dramatic scene.

An excellent representative of this current generation is another promising young playwright that has both dazzled and shocked Spanish drama with her alternative theatre,

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151 The Premio Marqués de Bradomín includes an amount of money given to the author, the publication of his/her play, and its representation (Leonard, Nuevos manantiales... 12).
152 Only two women received the second place (‘accésit’) award, Daniela Fejerman in 1985 and Margarita Sánchez in 1989.
153 Carmen Delgado, Eva Hibernia, Itziar Pascual, and Yolanda Pallín.
Madrilenian Yolanda Pallín (1965--). Pallín made her debut on the dramatic scene in 1993 with her unpublished mythological drama *Hiel*. Along with other playwrights, she belongs to the so-called ‘Bradmín Generation,’ named after the award. The playwrights in Pallín’s circle are known as ‘alternative playwrights’ (*alternativos,* ‘named by Miralles in 1994) since they usually begin or become known in alternative theatres. According to César Oliva (*Teatro español del siglo XX*), the three main characteristics of this alternative group include the following: “a) proceden del teatro, es decir, son intérpretes, directores o gestores; b) se forman en cursos o seminarios generalmente impartidos por autores de generaciones anteriores, y c) buscan con urgencia el estreno, como forma de reafirmar su oficio, en grupos propios o afines” (320 – 321). To quote Pallín, one of the primary tenets of her generation of dramaturgy is the presentation of issues without resorting to didacticism, and the provocation of thought, sometimes instigating response:

> Creo que la mayoría de los autores, por lo menos de nuestra generación, no pretendemos enseñar nada a nadie, ni adoctrinar, por supuesto. Lo único que pretendemos es generar un movimiento, un pequeño movimiento. Además, los pequeños movimientos por ese efecto mariposa, confiamos en que pueden generar grandes movimientos (Interview with author, 2004).

The majority of the playwrights in Pallín’s circle almost always dedicate themselves to many facets of theatre, often times directing, acting, teaching, and

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156 Oliva, *Teatro español del siglo XX*, 320
participating in workshops and seminars, in addition to writing plays. This is most
certainly the case with Yolanda Pallín. Having earned a degree in literature and
interpretation at the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático (RESAD) of Madrid,
Yolanda Pallín now teaches there, thus fully integrating herself into the dramatic world as
not only author but also as teacher (http://www.muestrateatro.com/autores/a0088.html 1).
Besides teaching, acting, and writing, Pallín has attended many workshops (another
characteristic of her group) with José Ramón Fernández, Marco Antonio de la Parra, and
José Sanchis Sinisterra, all of whom are ‘alternative’ writers as well (Ibid). Additionally,
as with many other authors of her generation, Pallín collaborates on specialized theatrical
journals such as Primer Acto, ADE Teatro, and Escena
(www.muestrateatro.com/autores/a0088.html 2). Of the more than a dozen works that
Pallín has penned since the early 1990s up until the present, fourteen have premiered at
various theatres in Madrid, and ten works have been published. Four remain unedited.
Her premiered works include: Hiel, 1993, Tierra de nadie, 1994, D.N.I., 1996, Como la
Anselmo Fuentes, 1998, Trilogía de la Juventud I: Las manos (co-written with José
Ramón Fernández and Javier G. Yagüe, 1999), El diario del sol rojo, 1999, a version of
No son todos ruiseñores by Lope de Vega, 2000, La mirada, 1999, a version of Don Juan
Tenorio by Zorrilla, 2000, Trilogía de la Juventud II: Imagina (co-written with the same

157 Other playwrights in the Bradomín Generation include (Galician) Roberto Vidal Bolaño, Joan Casas,
Esteve Grasset, Alfonso Zurro, Luis Araujo, Ernesto Caballero, Ignacio del Moral, Antón Reixa, María
Manuela Reina, Eduardo Galán, Marisa Ares, Josep Pere Peyró, Sara Molina, Xabi Puerta, Lluïsa Cunillé,
José Ramón Fernández, Antonio Onetti, Leopoldo Alas, Sergi Belbel, Chema Cardeña, Antonio Álamo,
Rodrigo García, Carles Alberola, Raúl Hernández Garrido, Francisco Sanguino, Alfonso Plou, Juan
Mayorga, Ignacio García May, Maxi Rodriguez, and Paco Zardoso (Oliva, Teatro español del siglo XX pp.
323 – 333).

As the critic Virtudes Serrano notes, since the mid 1990s a group of female authors (such as Pallín, Pascual, Ripoll, Cunillé, Dorado, Cánovas, Sánchez, and others) has come to be associated with the theatre awards, most prominently the Bradomín award, discussed above, and for which Pallín won second prize in 1995 for *La mirada*. Of the awards listed, Pallín also received the Calderón de la Barca in 1996 for *Los motivos de Anselmo Fuentes*, and the María Teresa León Award for Female Playwrights in 1995 for her work *Los restos de la noche*. Additionally, she was a finalist for the Mayte Award for theatre in 1999 for *Los motivos de Anselmo Fuentes*, the Critical Eye Award of Theatre (‘Premio Ojo Crítico de Teatro’) in 1999, and the Celestina Award in the same year for best author, for her collaborative play *Las manos (Trilogía de la Juventud I)*. This play also earned her (and the co-authors) the position of finalists of the Max Awards in 1999 and 2000 (www.muestrateatro.com/autores/a0088.html 2).
Returning to the characteristics of this newer generation of Spanish playwrights, the authors of the 1990s in Spain, quoting Virtudes Serrano, also possess identifiable traits that distinguish them from their 1980s predecessors and thus establish them as their own unique group:

...el rasgo que distingue a esta promoción de la de los ochenta reside en la estética ‘neovanguardista’ con que elaboran las piezas tanto, en lo referente al lenguaje verbal como en los mecanismos de construcción del drama. La influencia del ‘teatro de la crueldad’, del nihilismo beckettiano, de la desorientación en las relaciones humanas a lo Pinter, se perciben en las obras de las autoras y autores más jóvenes. El de los años noventa es un panorama que se nos presenta cargado de nuevos nombres que son otras tantas promesas. (“Dramaturgas españolas de fin de siglo”, http://www.is-koeln.de/matices/21/21sautor.htm).

Pallín’s theatre successfully synthesizes many of the above-mentioned characteristics in a multiplicity of ways and through various thematic prisms. To quote Yolanda Pallín herself with regard to the ultimate goal of her theatre, she states, “Quiero ser espejo de lo que ocurre en la calle para que la gente tome postura” (From Virtudes Serrano, “Dramaturgas españolas de fin de siglo”, http://www.is-koeln.de/matices/21/21sautor.htm). Some of those ‘postures’ to which she holds up a mirror include the inane yet common need for so many in society to present a façade, such as that of a happily married couple, that Pallín ultimately proves artificial and illusory (Los restos de la noche), or even the apparent straightforwardness of societal institutions, seen, for the example, in the union of a newly married couple enjoying their
honeymoon, that Pallín reveals to be far more complicated and layered that what it seems (Luna de miel). While in some of her plays she demonstrates that authentic human connections are often thwarted and rendered impossible (for example, La mirada, or Siete años), in others she examines how seemingly fragmented people or groups of people somehow succeed in creating connections in unexpected ways (Trilogía de la juventud I, II, III). Pallín additionally places a mirror (and sometimes, as we shall see, a microscope) before or above certain inexplicable human behaviors, such as the meticulous justification of murder (Los motivos de Anselmo Fuentes), the marginalization and violence of skinheads whose delinquency often lacks explanation (Lista negra), or the seemingly irrational desire to create unrealistic connections with whoever crosses one’s path, only to conclude that profound human connections do not always occur and attempts to force them can and do result in disaster (examined in La mirada). In some instances, form mirrors content with regard to the human behaviors manifested in her plays, such as the ramblings of a woman searching for an identity and only accomplishing circumlocution and confusion (D.N.I.), or the often forced and difficult dichotomization between the body and the spirit that results in a stagnation of the individual (as well as the text) (Como la vida misma). Pallín also pulls the curtain back

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158 To quote Pallín, “Trilogía es un recorrido por los cambios que se han producido durante el siglo XX en nuestro país, desde el medio rural a la sociedad de la información. La primera parte, Las manos, está centrada en la España de los años cuarenta. La segunda parte, Imagina, tiene como protagonista a un grupo de jóvenes de una generación posterior a la búsqueda de otro futuro en el cinturón industrial de una gran ciudad. La tercera y última parte de esta trilogía estará situada en nuestro tiempo, a principios del siglo XXI” (www.muestreteatro.com).

159 In the case of Como la vida misma, the text is composed of seemingly ridiculous or senseless statements that appear to lack cohesion and flow between lines, uttered by what appear to be arbitrarily chosen characters who have nothing in common with each other.
(both figuratively and sometimes literally\textsuperscript{160}) in her revelation of the horrors of incest and adultery, yet simultaneously shows how one can empower oneself in such horrific circumstances, as in her play \textit{Memoria}.

Perhaps the most telling statements about the theatre of Yolanda Pallín come from the author herself. With regard to her general purpose for writing theatre, as mentioned earlier, she states, “Quiero ser un espejo de lo que ocurre en la calle para que la gente tome postura” (Serrano, “Dramaturgas españolas de fin de siglo” 6), and “Yo pretendo hacer una cosa distinta a la total uniformidad de criterios que estamos viendo en la cartelera” (\textit{El Mundo}, 7-3-98). She also chooses to eschew commercialized theatre (as many of her group do), boldly declaring, “Creo que los productores se equivocan al primar el teatro comercial” (\textit{ABC} 28-11-96). In no way would Yolanda Pallín’s theatre ever be considered ‘commercial’ since it rejects commercial principles in terms of both theme and form, such as her monodrama \textit{D.N.I.}, an ongoing monologue with very few stops about a woman engaged in various affairs, or \textit{Lista negra}, a series of punctuation-free sequences about violence in hate groups. Critic Candyce Leonard describes the general style of Pallín’s theatre as “una tendencia de rechazar las convenciones dramáticas a favor de una forma de teatro innovador” (\textit{Nuevos manantiales...} 19). Her theatre may be considered neo-vanguardist (and most decidedly postmodern) in that it often incorporates self-referential elements (such as metatheatrical devices), ruptures traditional realist dramatic conventions (many times favoring monologues over dialogues and textual arrangements in sequences rather than typical acts), implements highly

\textsuperscript{160} In the case of \textit{Memoria}, as we shall later see, the play involves many televisual special effects such as the use of a screen, a video camera, and recording devices played throughout the work.
symbolic elements, and deals with what many would consider taboo themes (such as lesbianism, abortion, and incest).

Quoting Pallín herself, one of the themes she consistently returns to in her theatre is that of the social:

…en el sentido la sociedad me parece el tema fundamental, lo social…pero…a veces lo social se manifiesta como lo social…

contingente, es decir, lo social muy liado a unas condiciones concretas…y a veces se plantea como lo social mucho más universal… (Interview with author, 2004)

It is this recurring interest of the social in her works that, according to her, has become both the object of her analysis within her plays and the intended meaning behind her plays as they are presented to the public. In their delivery, also according to Pallín, it would appear that sometimes her plays offer solutions, and other times, even more importantly, they merely generate more questions than answers: “Creo que el teatro, una de las funciones es plantearnos, ponernos encima del escenario para que el resto de la sociedad vea como se manifiesta la inadaptación, a veces para expresarla mediante ofrecer soluciones, otras veces para ofrecer simplemente preguntas…” (Interview with the author, 2004), decidedly encouraging a consideration of the topic(s) presented in the work, without necessarily offering up a resolution of those topics. This reference to ‘inadaptation’ (in the above quote) additionally underscores a linchpin found in the
majority of her works, that of the inertia that often generates within the individual and that leads to criticism of both oneself and of others 161:

La incidencia de lo social en el ser humano es, digamos, fundamental en casi todas mis obras, a ver si puede hacer un rastreo en unas de manera más evidente, en otras de manera más sutil. Creo que probablemente la inadaptación…la inadaptación genera el conflicto. Un ser inadaptado es un ser insatisfecho, un ser crítico, aunque a veces no tenga la capacidad de plantearse la crítica de una manera consciente. (Interview with author, 2004)

Nonetheless, for Pallín, regardless of the characters’ conflict or inability to adapt to societal circumstances (that indubitably reference mimetic society), her ultimate goal is that her texts produce a reaction, or, better stated, a reflection: “Si un texto te produce una reflexión después de haber visto la obra, ya ha merecido la pena, aunque no tiene una solución…”, and also, “Para mí, lo mejor [del teatro] que puede aprender cualquiera…es la experiencia de la pregunta de sembrar, de alguna manera, una duda, sembrar una necesidad…” (Interview with author, 2004). Ultimately for Pallín, her theatre wishes to offer up as raw material that which may be worked and reworked, digested and processed, so to speak, by all who take interest in it: “Lo que sí me interesa es un teatro de la contención, un teatro en el sentido sí que puro, teatro en que el texto no sea redundante…en el que estemos ofreciendo a los actores, al director, al público los materiales con los cuales trabajar y reconstruir” (Interview with author, 2004).

161 For example, in works such as Los restos de la noche, La mirada, and even Memoria
As stated earlier, as the number of alternative theatres and playwrights became more visible, the investigative interest in this type of drama also became more popular. Despite being known in much smaller and more intimate circles than the somewhat commercialized theatre of Paloma Pedrero, Yolanda Pallín has received a great deal of critical attention for her plays. The interesting and often controversial or disturbing themes and images create a rich realm of potential analysis of her works. As discussed earlier, themes common to Pallín’s plays range from reworking classical myths in order to concentrate on female characters (as with *Hiel*), to female bisexuality (the plays *¿Entiendes?* and *Siete años*), to desire and the difficulty in finding lasting interpersonal relationships (as in *D.N.I.* and *La mirada*). Much of the criticism around her plays examines feminist and gender issues (see, for example, Susana Lorenzo’s article “The Feminine Imaginary in Yolanda Pallín’s Plays”), issues of space, time, and language (such as Catalina Buezo Canalejo’s “*D.N.I.*, *Como la vida misma* y *La mirada*: espacio urbano y vacío en el teatro de Yolanda Pallín”), and vision and visuality (see Hartwig’s article “Descentralización visual: La escena fragmentada del teatro español contemporáneo” and Buedel’s “Myopia and the (Fe)male Gaze in Yolanda Pallín’s *La mirada* and *¿Entiendes?*”).

Pallín’s characters move in and out of symbolic spaces such as dreams, the technological realm of the Internet, and the terrain of patriarchal entrapment, but, as with the theatre of Paloma Pedrero, the most crucial element of her theatre with regard to characters, in my opinion, involves issues of the body. The bodies in Pallín’s theatre are not noted for their physical characteristics but rather for the emotional or mental
(internal) forces and frustrations that they experience or that are thrust on them. In order to understand and appreciate Pallín’s presentations of embodiment, the usual connotations about body and sexuality must be expanded in order to consider new significations for these types of characters that take into consideration the symbolic and the psychic. The characters in her plays examined in this section experience crisscrossed sexes and sexualitites at the threshold yet in a much different way than those characters in Paloma Pedrero’s plays. Instead of through violence or intergenerational encounters, these characters in the first play experience peripheral sexualities through their presence in what I call the ‘interspace’\textsuperscript{162}, a marginal area that lies between or outside of recognized or esteemed planes or realms, and where characters enter and exit and are affected by the space itself\textsuperscript{163}. The ‘interspace’ functions as a locus of signification that not only reflects the current social-sexual status of those in it but that also imbues those present in it with a particular dynamic, that of liminalization\textsuperscript{164}. In other words, the interspace serves the dual function of both reflection and of creation. The analysis of Pallín’s second play (*Memoria*) examines the degree to which the liminal may or may not be ‘contained’, and what occurs in the process of such efforts at containment.

In the first play to be discussed below shortly (*Los restos de la noche*), the interspace is viewed as a psychical space that contributes to the main character’s realization of the bodily coercion in which she finds herself, and facilitates her resolve to

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\textsuperscript{162} Explained more thoroughly below
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\textsuperscript{163} The characters also manifest liminal sexualities with regard to society’s interest and efforts to ‘contain’ that which is marginal, yet, as we shall in the last play, often fail.
\end{flushleft}

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\textsuperscript{164} This is not to say that these characters lack agency, but rather that the interspace aids in their own self-realization of the societal forces exerted on their bodies (with regard to sexuality) and steels their resolve to break free from these and develop their own sexual constitution, that is, in these plays, a liminal one.
\end{flushleft}
break free from these corporeal restraints and forge her own sexual self\textsuperscript{165}. This section will examine the interstitial sexualities that arise in the interspace, analyzing the bodily forms embedded with symbolism and complexity, at times nuanced and subtle and other times blatant. The purpose of the upcoming analyses will be to examine closely these crisscrossed sexes or sexualities at the threshold in order to discover the means by which Pallín offers differenced understandings of the sexual and to examine how they may challenge usual assumptions or connotations related to bodies, thus illuminating these marginalities.

\textsuperscript{165} In other plays by Pallín, such as \textit{La mirada}, it is a physical space on the margins of society where characters are freed from societal restraints and thus where their bodies may act far differently than society would mandate for them.
Los restos de la noche, written in 1995 and premiered as a dramatic reading at the RESAD in 1997, is a play involving a married woman, Laura, and her (traditional yet unfaithful) husband, Carlos, who have just celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary. Nonetheless, it becomes clear very early on in the play that Laura is deeply unhappy in their relationship, experiencing (or being made to experience) feelings of failure at not being able to conceive a child, at loving her husband more than he loves her, and even at being unable to achieve an orgasm. By means of oneiric sequences in which Laura is denigrated and insulted by a nameless ‘Man,’ Laura is reminded not only of her traditional, domestic duties as wife and future mother, but also of a freer and more unfettered period of her life when she was a child. The play ends when Laura (in another dream sequence) is met by the unnamed ‘Woman’ who provides her with the means to escape all of her angst and frustration and embrace the type of life and body she wants for herself, through suicide.

As we shall see, this play both highlights and undoes issues of bodily coercion with regard to Laura. Laura’s body is not her own and she is normatively compelled to assume or perform the role of ‘good wife’, future mother, and thus seamlessly blend into domesticity. This play’s presence of what I shall refer to as the ‘interspace’ allows the main character Laura both to break free from the inimical constraints that traditional or patriarchal society maintains over her body, and also forge a different bodily

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166 As we shall see, this period was not entirely positive, however.
Thus, the interspace (here a symbolic, oneiric space of undoing and redoing, of destruction and creation) provides the means to ‘reflect’ (hence the reference to interspatial ‘reflections’) upon the self that Laura currently embodies only to discard this and assume another. Since the interspace reflects the normative and also seeks to undermine it, it is a space lying outside of the traditional or patriarchal and where subversion of these norms may occur. It is the realm in which Laura is confronted by bodily expectations of her and also where she comes to the important realization about her own body and what she must do with it in order to persevere.

Instead of concentrating on the notion of ‘crisscrossed sex’ (as with earlier discussions), this analysis will turn to sexualities at the threshold (discussed more in detail as the analysis occurs). As with some of the analysis of Pedrero’s plays, the notion of the ‘liminal’ again will be used to refer to the means by which the main character Laura chooses both to eschew traditional or normative societal expectations of women (again, keeping in mind the stereotypical or most common associations with the roles women are expected to espouse) and forge a self that differs from that, lying somewhere in the margins, beyond the sphere of what ‘woman’ should or could be (as well as incorporating both halves of the usually connoted psyche, that is to say, both ‘male’ and ‘female’). Interestingly enough, the marginal area in the play metaphorizes into a physical area that is the interspace, and it is there that Laura clarifies her dissident and differenced self. The purpose of this chapter is thus to reveal how, in this play, the characters’ psychological or physical presence in the interspace both contributes to and

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167 This will also be explained more thoroughly in the analysis that follows.
highlights (that is to say, ‘reflects’) their liminal sexual status in a specific way, as we shall see.

The opening scene of this highly symbolic play immediately foregrounds the interspace as an important area of psychological reflection for the main character Laura to contemplate her life, serving also to mirror traditional or patriarchal standards of what is expected for a woman like Laura. The play thus opens with a poetic monologue by the Man, discussing the idea of failure (“Se nace con la semilla del fracaso como se nace moreno, alto, diabético” 51), referring to someone in the informal (“Como si todo el mundo tuviera los ojos puestos en ti. No te equivoques” 51), who can be none other than Laura (although she is as yet absent). The Man makes reference to the wise rats who do not desire to be more than they know they can be (“Raza sabia. No desean por encima de sus posibilidades. Siempre saben lo que tienen que hacer” 51), an obvious metaphor for Laura, as we shall see. This particular reference to rats will be crucial later (since a real rat appears) because it will aid in re-considering the figure and function of the Man. The Man also comments that, despite being wise creatures, the rats do not help to decipher the truth (“…no nos ayudaron a dar con la verdad” 51), a telling statement about society’s standards for a woman like Laura (what society sees as the ‘truth’ for her), standards that can be at odds with what she may be capable or desirous of.

The unhappiness in Laura’s life becomes painfully obvious as the play proceeds with dialogues between Laura and her emotionally absent and work-obsessed husband Carlos, whom she feels would have forgotten their five-year anniversary had she not reminded him (Laura: “Cinco años. Carlos: ¿Ya? Laura: Mañana. Carlos: Qué susto.”
Laura: Se te había olvidado” 51). Carlos’s main concerns in life do not involve Laura (other than when he verbally insults her and instructs her to get out of the house and do something) but rather his job (“Siempre estoy pensando en la reunión de hoy y después preparo la de mañana” 52). Laura acknowledges her husband’s emotional absence while also recognizing his desire for her to be a domestic wife who fulfills traditional ‘wifely’ duties. She states “Soy casera. Ya lo sabes. Siempre te ha gustado que sea así”, to which Carlos responds “Y me gusta. Pero podrías distraerte. Salir a merendar con la mujer de Gerardo. De compras”, after which Laura retorts “No me va” (53). Although her husband desires for her to leave the house, it is only so that she may participate in more domestic, traditional behavior as a wife should, according to him. The house in the play thus becomes a metaphor for Laura’s body: as she is socially restricted to the space of her house, her body is physically regulated by the social-sexual standards imposed upon it.

In Scene 3 when the Man refers to “habitáculos independientes” destined for women like Laura, she refers to them as “celdas” (55). Despite Laura’s declaration to the contrary (“Soy feliz. Nunca he estado tan bien” 54), she not only is unhappy, but is also a failure. Carlos makes mention of her going to the doctor, perhaps in reference to Laura’s inability to conceive a child (“Nadie va al médico tan pronto. . . . Todavía es pronto” 53), and Laura’s guilt in that matter (“¿Tengo la culpa?” 54). Yet, in addition to failing at maternity, it appears that Laura also has failed at love, since her husband blatantly states to her that she loves him more than he loves her: Carlos: “Yo también te quiero. Laura: Yo más. Carlos: Sí. Tú mucho más” (54). These statements coupled with the Man’s
denigration of Laura (within the interspace) begin the process of her refusal of the prescribed body that society has set forth for her and the embracing of a liminal one.

Returning to Scene 3, when Laura and the Man meet for the first time in an oneiric sequence, he cruelly reproaches her “incapacidad moral” and the “conclusiones nada halagüeñas” with regard to her case (54), and how she and those like her are social dangers (“La sociedad comprenderá el peligro que ustedes representan, no sólo para la población, sino para ustedes mismos” 55), referring to her inner lack of devotion to domestic duties, as well as her outward failure as wife and mother. Laura’s only retorts are weak, one-word or two-word responses to the Man, whose presence has rendered her incapable of speaking (“Gracias. . . . Pero. . . . Lo siento. . . . Comprendo” 55), and has caused her later to interpret this scene as a nightmare (“Esta noche he tenido una pesadilla” and “Había un hombre muy desagradable. . . . Me torturaba” 57).

The Man during these sequences with Laura represents what Monique Wittig referred to as the ‘straight mind,’ “discourses of heterosexuality [that] oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms” (The Straight Mind and Other Essays 25). Laura’s lack of linguistic ability underscores her incapacity to speak to the Man on terms that he is able to understand, that is to say, those that pertain to the normative and/or patriarchal sphere with regard to women’s ‘duties’. The content of this scene is interestingly paralleled by form since the Man’s speaking parts are long and poetic, overshadowing Laura’s short and unimpressive utterances. The interspace (here the dream sequence between Laura and the Man) at this point in the play has served
to reflect patriarchal standards articulated by the Man in order to upbraid Laura for her failure at ascribing to these in her real life, and this continues in many more scenes.

In more oneiric sequences with the Man (such as Scene 5), we witness yet another failure of Laura, this time with regard to her own sexuality. The Man, now speaking to her in the informal, instructs her to masturbate herself to orgasm, saying “Lo intentaremos de nuevo” but notes that Laura is not trying hard enough (“Lo que puedes es bien poco. . . . Las piernas te pesan. . . . Intentas levantarte y no puedes” 58 and “No puedo decirte lo que tienes que hacer y decir. Vamos. Empieza” 59). The Man does remind Laura of the societal gaze that has always been fixed on her, in saying “Los ojos de tus padres espiando tus continuas renuncias. La mirada de piedad en sus ojos, amonestando cada suspiro. Cada deseo. Cada nuevo deseo” (59). Scholars like Zachman interpret the figure of the Man as representative of patriarchal roles and standards, and rightfully so (“the Man personifying the patriarchal order against which Laura struggles” Playing Gender on the Contemporary Stage 216); yet, I choose to interpret this figure as not wholly negative but as possessing positive ramifications for Laura as well, as we shall see. I aim to prove that this monologue underscores the Man’s wish for Laura to achieve her own bodily desires, those that are not dictated by societal standards.

Hence, although some scholars have interpreted this reprimand by the Man towards Laura’s inability to masturbate as yet another failure of Laura’s 168, one may also argue that this scene is the beginning of a sexual freedom that one half of Laura’s psyche

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168 To quote Zachman regarding the Man, “Laura attempts to please him and perform these [sexual] exercises correctly, while he consistently belittles her and threatens her with abandonment” (Playing Gender on the Contemporary Stage...208).
(the Man) has awakened in her. Even though she is unable to reach orgasm by pressing her legs together (The Man says to her “Las piernas te pesan” 58), this scene shows an increase in Laura’s verbal articulations and the inception of Laura’s reclaiming her own sexual body. As she engages verbally with the Man, she attempts to establish her own autonomy regarding her purported ability to leave the house, stating “Mire, voy a abrir los ojos. Esto es absurdo. Por supuesto que puedo levantarme y correr y saltar, puedo salir a la calle y gritar y puedo elegir qué es lo que quiero gritar y nadie va a decírmelo…” (60), yet the anger with which she utters such a statement appears to capture accurately her own incredulity concerning this articulation, that is to say, it stands as a failed attempt at convincing her own self. That is to say, she fails at convincing herself of her own words. The Man in these exchanges reflects the interior desires of Laura, especially with regard to what she would like to do with her marital relationship. At one point he even appears to egg her on in order to procure some sort of a reaction from her, telling her (with obvious irony), “Eres una mujer feliz, felizmente casada con un hombre que te adora. . . . Ya tienes los ojos abiertos. Si no ves es porque no quieres ver. . . . Abre los ojos. Baila. Pégame” (61), to which Laura responds “Ahora no”, indicating that perhaps at this moment she is unable to break free from bodily constraints and act outside of the box into which she has been caged, but is hopeful that soon she will be able to.

Interwoven with Laura’s text in first person is that of the Man as well, who, speaking as if he were Laura\textsuperscript{169}, echoes what she mentions about her inability to

\textsuperscript{169} We have already recognized that he is the archetypal representation of the masculine present within her.
masturbate, saying “Lo intento, lo intento cada noche. No puedes decir que no estoy esforzándome” (60). This not only proves the Man’s presence in Laura’s psyche but also reveals the beginning of the development of her self that she is slowly reclaiming in the interspace. In this same scene the Man tells Laura to rehearse what she will say to her husband about her desire to go on vacation to the beach (“Vámonos de vacaciones, cariño. Nos iremos muy lejos, donde no podamos acordarnos del tiempo pasado, ni de las calles llenas de coches, ni de mis padres, ni de los tuyos” 62), another type of interspace where she (and perhaps Carlos, at that moment at least\(^{170}\)) could dictate their own terms for existence instead of following society’s mandates. Shortly after (and like before), the Man pushes Laura in order to procure some sort of reaction from her, saying she should “Gritar con rabia” (63). What the Man appears to be accomplishing is the creation of Laura’s own discourse that has begun in the interspace; in essence, one part of herself (the part connected to the masculinist, patriarchal world yet desirous of undoing this as well) begins in compelling the rest of her to action.

Laura’s comment about possibly being able to feel a sensation in pressing her legs together is crucial since during this discourse she also refers to words coming for her much easier than before (recall the type of responses she initially gave the Man). She states: “La sensación sube desde el estómago y se coloca un poco más arriba, aquí.

Entonces las palabras salen solas, sin esfuerzo. Lo que antes parecía imposible resulta de golpe tan fácil” (63, my emphasis). Laura’s self-creation of speech relates to Irigaray’s concept of mysticism, that is, when subjectivity is denied women, she unknowingly gives

\(^{170}\) We shall see how this changes later.
up her relationship to the imaginary, and involves the loss of subjecthood (Moi, *Sexual Textual Politics* 137). According to Moi, “exiled from representation, [woman] constitutes the ground on which the theorist erects his specular constructs, but she is therefore also always the point on which his erections subside” (136).

The woman, for Irigaray, then, returns to the mystical imagery that transforms all into fluidity and as such dissolves difference: “This orgasmic experience eludes the specular rationality of patriarchal logic: the sadistic eye/ I must be closed” (Moi 136). The experience of the feminine imaginary, very much like the interspace, for Irigaray is connected to her idea of *le parler femme* (‘womanspeak’) [Ibid 144]. Although one may not necessarily subscribe wholeheartedly to her idea of womanspeak, it is possible to accept her argument that certain bodies (for her, female bodies) are “multiple, decentered, and undefinable” (Ibid 147). Laura’s body at this moment encapsulates this concept of ‘womanspeak’, in that it is multiple (both reflecting traditional standards while simultaneously desiring something else), decentered (located on the threshold), and in the beginning stages of Laura’s own self-definition (although still undefined at that moment). Her articulation of her sexualized self during these scenes also resonates with the anticipated goal of Judith Butler, that of becoming a ‘speaking subject’: “Women. . . must become the authoritative, speaking subject in order to overthrow the category of ‘sex’ and the heterosexual matrix” (*Gender Trouble* 147). Laura’s determination to begin speaking in the interspace marks an important step towards overthrowing the social restraints on her body and creating a different bodily constitution.
As she gains more ability to articulate her own bodily desires in the interspace, so too does Laura begin to express more distaste verbally in her home with her husband regarding the unhappiness in their relationship. When Carlos refuses to wear the green shirt that Laura suggests he don to his important meeting at work (64 – 65), she discovers a salmon-colored shirt that she knows she did not give her husband (“¿Quién te regaló esa camisa? . . . Yo no fui” 65 and “Lo siento por ella” 68, in recognition of the obvious mistress Carlos possesses). Coupled with this discovery of the shirt and, consequently, Carlos’s infidelity, are Laura’s realization and proclamation that she feels time is slipping away from her and that the best years of her life are now, commenting about an old man she witnessed on the street lamenting his loss of years\(^\text{171}\): “A él se le habían pasado los mejores años de su vida. ¿No es terrible?” (66). She then states “Sólo tenemos una vida” (67), an indication that she no longer will embrace her societally promulgated role as housewife and mother, but rather will create one for herself.

Scene 7 of the play presents an extended, poetic monologue that is an apostrophe to the Virgin Mary. Although Laura sadly discusses her failed attempts at being a good wife and person (in the eyes of an institution such as the Church, for example), she reflects upon a positive time in school when she was young, a freer time when “me encerraba en el cuarto de baño del cole y me fumaba la mitad de un cigarillo” (69). She blames the Virgin and the religious institution for ignoring her supplications to hear her prayer (“Yo hacía todo lo que había que hacer y nada, ni una señal” and “Tú tienes la

\(^{171}\) This occurs via an encounter of hers on the street with an elderly man: “Ayer oí a un señor por la calle hablando con una niña. Hablaban de un programa de la tele que se llama los mejores años de nuestra vida, o algo así. De repente el señor se quedó callado y al cabo de un momento dijo, los mejores años de la vida son los que van de los veinticinco a los cincuenta” (66).
culpa, tú y los tuyos, María santísima y la corte celestial” 70). Nonetheless, Laura’s ultimate desire is crystallized in this scene as she makes the decision that will affect the outcome of her life (and also foreshadowing what will later occur), stating “Sólo quiero dormir. No tener miedo” (71) and also “No quiero volver” (71).

In reflecting on the more liberating moments of her youth 172, Laura uses this interspace as a means of seizing upon and expanding those fleeting moments of freedom in her adolescence, thus continuing the creation of the liminal self that for so long has been interrupted and that she is now slowly engendering. Although the problems she bemoans to the Virgin Mary in her prayer involve matters of faith, this lack of faith may not only relate to the religious institution of the church but also signals a lack of faith in herself. Laura boldly brings up the idea of ‘truth’ again, much as the Man in the opening monologue, in saying that “La verdad, lo reconozco, no debía haber venido. . . . Pero me he hecho mayor y aunque he andado por ahí, sin conciencia, ahora podría ser el momento” (71, my emphasis). Laura now realizes that the arrival at the truth will occur not by faith in religion or in another individual, but rather through a faith in herself—now is her ‘moment’ of recognition, and of actualization.

As the scenes progress, the amount of dialogue between Laura and her husband Carlos is much less compared to the scenes between Laura and the symbolic figures of the Man and Woman. In the last two scenes with her husband (scenes 8 and 10), Carlos continues to insist that Laura occupy herself with activities such as studying (‘Si

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172 While the rest of her monologue also expresses suffering during this time, such as difficulties with classes and feeling invalidated spiritually, the recall of her youthful activities solidifies her final decision in the play.
volvieras a estudiar” 74), yet only so that she may meet people and be the kind of wife he
expects of her (“Estudiando se conoce gente. Da igual lo que estudies” 74). Laura
courages the two of them to go to the beach together: “Vámonos de vacaciones. . . . A
la playa” (74), yet Carlos’s reaction is typical, that he does have the time to go (“No
puede ser” 74), pathologizing Laura in the process: “No duermes bien. A lo mejor
tendríamos que ir al médico” (75). Laura finally appears to grasp the true situation with
her husband, rebuking him for his comment to her (“No me trates como si fuera idiota”
75) and accepting the fact that she needs to go to the metaphorical ‘beach’ alone (“Voy a
acostarme. . . . Tengo sueño” 75), to go to sleep so that she may, in essence, ‘wake up.’

In the final scene with her husband (scene 10), the figure of the rat appears, at
least to Laura, hidden under the bed (80), although Carlos cannot see it (“No veo nada”
80). As if metaphorically to interpret its physical actions, Laura claims that the rat is
“comiendo la colcha” (80), a possible reference either to the destruction of one of the
domestic symbols of wifehood (the bedspread), or a ‘biting’ reminder to Laura of the
decision she should take. Laura also warns Carlos that the hungry rat may even bite him,
with the rat in this reference as yet another metaphor for herself: “Creo que tiene hambre.
No te acerques. A lo mejor te muerde” 81). The final scene with Carlos ends when Laura
gives him one last warning about the rat, which has now metaphorized into a
representation of the final decision that Laura will take, and that may be somewhat
painful and shocking (to Carlos), although necessary: “Va a salir segura de que cuando
menos te lo esperes saldrá. No me preocupo porque a ti no va a morderte. Pero a mí sí.
Así que me voy” (82).
In the final scene (alone) with the Man, although Laura is still unable to achieve orgasm while the Man belittles her, two important themes are discussed. Laura explains: “Las noches se están haciendo jirones y cada vez más lejos. Sólo quedan los restos cuando me despierto. Tal vez la culpa sea de los restos, que de día no me dejan pensar. Pienso, pero distinto, cada vez más lejos, en alguna parte que está de este lado. . . . Como devolverle al día lo que no tiene” (76 – 77). This first point relates to Laura’s desire to accomplish during the ‘day’ (in real society) what she has accomplished during the ‘night’ (the interspace, when she enters the dream world, ‘far away’ from the real world of expectations and societal pressures, and where she speaks with the Man), and that is the realization of her liminal self (and also the origin of the play’s title). The ‘remainders’ (“los restos”) of the night that linger into the day refer to the few instances (as we have seen throughout the play) during which Laura begins to develop her liminal self that was present previously in the interspace only and that she has attempted to bring into the real world, yet that ultimately have no place there.

The second point in the last scene (with the Man) occurs again in dialogue with the Man, who continues to attempt to push Laura toward achieving what she desires with regard to her body, especially when it comes to the child she will never have. When Laura asks “¿Qué será de mi hijo?,” the Man, again speaking to her in the formal (and echoing the patriarchal), tells her that the baby “estará metido en una caja rodeado de naftalina” (79), in other words, a lifeless, dead baby, more of a memory covered in mothballs than a reality. This mention of a lifeless baby suggests Laura’s lack of desire for motherhood, a point that will later be solidified in her discussion with the Woman. As
this scene and the final scenes (with the Woman) progress, the realm of the interspace becomes less of an oneiric area but rather supplants ‘real’ life with Carlos, which has become degraded to an illusion, a type of bad dream. The final scenes of the play demonstrate how Laura has successfully accepted her liminal self\(^{173}\) and has made this world her reality, thus rejecting life with Carlos and its many unreasonable and unacceptable bodily requirements.

In the last several scenes, the figure of the Woman finally emerges, engaging Laura in probably the most crucial dialogue of the entire play. The Woman states to Laura that she should not hide (“Pero tampoco te escondas” 83), since it is possible for everyone to fit (“Cabemos todos” 83), indicative perhaps of the dual occupation of both herself and the Man within Laura’s psyche and the encouragement for Laura not to ‘hide’ her true self. The Woman represents not only the female part of Laura but also a manifestation of Laura’s changing body, as well as the true corporeal desires in Laura that have been repressed for so long and have now finally surfaced. Yet, this self that has emerged does not necessarily fit typical associations of women, but rather is one whose characteristics may easily be denominated as ‘marginal’ as we shall see.

A self-proclaimed “observadora” (84), the Woman, like the Man, will not force Laura to act but rather will provide Laura with the necessary tools to do so for herself, in the interspace. One such tool is the physical re-enactment of the more liberatory moments in Laura’s life. The Woman embodies the sense of freedom that Laura experienced years

\(^{173}\) Again, this is ‘liminal’ in the sense that she rejects what is stereotypically expected for women and attempts to create a differed self that, while still borrowing somewhat of what is considered ‘womanly’ (take, for example, when she still wants to make things work for her husband by offering to go on vacation with him), is far different than the typical ‘body’ or roles that society expects of her. Her new self thus lies on the threshold of what woman typically is for society, and what she has fashioned it into for herself.
before; just as Laura smoked when she was young (in Catholic school) [84], the Woman asks her for a lighter (“Pásame un mechero” 84) and even wants Laura to smoke some sort of a drug\textsuperscript{174} with her (“Es una hierba muy buena. Lo estoy hacienda para ti. Te vendrá bien. Relaja y clarifica las ideas” 84), reminding her that there, in the interspace, “No te ve nadie” (85)\textsuperscript{175}. After discussing the drug she wishes Laura to smoke, the Woman articulates Laura’s true and ultimate desire, “Tú no vas a volver a tu casa. No quieres volver” (85), and “Enciéndelo” (referring to the cigarette filled with the drug, 85).

Echoing the earlier metaphor about the house (as a symbol of entrapment for Laura), the Woman discusses the house she once had, beautiful outside (the exterior semblance of Laura’s ‘happy’ life), “rodeada de flores y soleada en invierno” (86), yet inside replete with dark stains on the carpets (“Le habían salido [en el suelo] unas manchas negras extrañas que no se quitaban con nada” 86), another metaphor for the dark, blemished interior of Laura’s body. As the Woman describes how she left her house and has not been found yet\textsuperscript{176} (Laura: ¿No te han encontrado? Mujer: Tal vez no me hayan buscado. Yo no me escondo de nadie” 86), Laura becomes dizzy and nauseous (most likely from the drug) (“Me estoy empezando a marear” 86), while the Woman begins insisting “Vámonos a la playa” (87). Laura responds that in the city “no hay playa” (88), but the Woman replies “Eso era antes. . . Esta mañana” (88), highlighting the

\textsuperscript{174} We shall see how this ‘drug’ provides the means for Laura to escape permanently from her real life with Carlos.

\textsuperscript{175} Recall the earlier comments by the Man about how the “ojos” of all of Laura’s family are on her, monitoring “cada deseo”.

\textsuperscript{176} This serves as a blatant allusion to the Woman’s ability to have broken free from societal norms of what is expected of ‘women’ (yet note that she still is ‘Woman,’ yet ‘woman’ on her own terms) and located a space where she is unfettered, and where none with their slew of expectations (that she chooses not to endorse) have been successful in finding her.
interspace as a realm where time is not measured as it is in the rest of society, and where true bodily freedom for Laura is possible. The freedom of such a space is emphasized when Laura comments on the Woman removing her shoes at the ‘beach’, so that she can wet her feet in the water (“El agua sube de vez en cuando y me gusta mojarme los pies” 88). Lorenzo Zamorano (in “The Feminine Imaginary in Yolanda Pallín’s Plays”) comments that “Laura’s liberation is associated with water and this is the locus where Laura manages temporarily to experience some fulfillment” (34), yet I interpret this space as not temporary but rather permanent, one that signifies the death of Laura’s former body (regulated by her parents, husband, and the Church) and the re-birth of another.

The Woman reminds Laura that her body, up until now, has been acting according to the wishes of others for so long, such as her parents (“Tus padres te guardaron en un nido confortable durante más de veinte años. . . . Eran felices teniéndote calentita y protegida” 89), and her husband (Laura: “A él también le daba igual. Llevo años intentando hacer de mi casa otro nido. . . . Mujer: De vez en cuando puede ser bueno estar sola, no querer a nadie, no desear que nadie te quiera, no necesitar a nadie. Solamente vivir” 89 – 90). Following these comments, Laura finally articulates one true desire with regard to her body, saying “Yo no quiero tener hijos” (90)\textsuperscript{177}. Like the Man, the Woman again returns to the idea of truth\textsuperscript{178}, which for her is specific: “La verdad. . . es que siempre sé lo que va a pasar. . . . Desde que me fui de casa empecé a ver claro” (90), echoing Laura’s earlier statement about opening her eyes (60) and revealing to

\textsuperscript{177} Considering that what is liminal lies on the borders of what is typical or acceptable, Laura’s refusal of motherhood and eventually of being a spouse as well clearly marks her body as ‘on the threshold’.

\textsuperscript{178} Recall the earlier Man’s meaning of the ‘truth’ as what society holds as ‘truth’ for women like Laura.
Laura how she can be in control of her own self, just as the Woman has been since she left the ‘house’. She even mentions to Laura that she may cut her feet on the rocks (“Vas a cortarte los pies con las rocas” 90), and Laura adds that her feet are bleeding yet do not hurt (“Me están sangrando los pies y no me había dado cuenta. No me duelen” 91), a type of symbolic de-virginization of Laura’s new liminal body, yet that does not bring her pain but rather pleasure and freedom.

After rejecting the type of body that Laura’s parents and husband (hence society in general) desire for her, the Woman continues to present Laura with more examples of the liminal embodiment, such as when she describes a man she sleeps with, yet who is not her boyfriend (“¿Mi novio? No. Simplemente es un hombre que me gusta. Me gusta como me besa y me gusta como me abraza” 91), and also engages in voyeurism in a scene when she watches Laura and the Man together (Laura: “Ella nos está mirando. Hombre: A ella le gusta mirar. Laura: Me gusta que me mire” 96). The Woman additionally refuses to return to the ‘real world’ with Laura when Laura suggests they rent a flat and work together (“¿Por qué no volvemos tú y yo y hacemos algo? Podríamos alquilar un piso y buscar trabajo” 91), a suggestion the Woman rejects since she is happy and free in the interspace, where one’s merit is not based on the usual rubric of values that society upholds but rather personal freedom and enjoyment regardless of one’s recognition of rules or norms: “Todavía no. . . . No hay nada que pueda hacerse. Así que olvidalo. Disfruta” (92). The Woman reminds Laura that she has renounced the ‘other’ life since she could contribute nothing to it (in terms of what her body could give it, much like Laura), and it provided her with nothing as well: “Yo no compro los periódicos, no
sé lo que pasa fuera, he renunciado. Renuncié porque no podía hacer nada y nadie podía hacer nada por mí” (94). With this encouragement, Laura now boldly declares “No voy a volver. Ya lo tengo decidido” (94), and recalls the sense of freedom she has now again reclaimed, remembering times in her youth (besides the smoking in school) when her body acted according to its own will and not the will of others: “Me acuerdo de una figurita de porcelana que rompí sin querer. No he tenido que luchar por nada. Nada me ha costado trabajo” (95).

When the Man re-appears in Scene 13, Laura is initially afraid yet the Man reminds her of her amazing accomplishment, thus proving his role as a type of reverse psychologist who was purposefully hard on her as he tried to encourage Laura to seek and create her own self:

Te equivocas. ¿Quién te ha dicho que no has podido hacerlo? Estás aquí. Has venido a la playa después de desearlo tanto. No te resistas. Quiero ayudarte. He sido duro contigo, pero lo necesitabas. Ha merecido la pena. Has tenido una noche maravillosa y lo has conseguido tú sola. Me has conmovido. Me has convencido de que mereces la pena, de que se puede tener esperanza. ¿Sabes lo que te digo? Ahora ya me entiendes, ¿verdad? Después de tantos encuentros hoy soy yo mismo, sin trampas. Ven aquí. Todavía no me conoces. Había estado escondido, espiándote. Quería saber si lo que intuía era cierto. Y has venido. Eres una mujer valiente. No desconfíes. Entrégate. (96)
The presence of both the Man and the Woman in this scene (a first-time occurrence in this play) stands as a physical representation of the liminal nature of Laura’s self: she both recognizes the traditional restraints on her body, past and present (evidenced in the Man), as well as the means to experience a differenced self that is completely free from those corporeal-sexual restrictions in society (in the Woman). Nonetheless, the Man also reveals to Laura that ‘they’ are looking for her, indicative of the societal eye that constantly seeks to maintain women like Laura under its gaze: “Ya vienen por ti. No pierdas un momento” (96). What for the Woman can be a freedom forever in the interspace, for the Man can only be temporary since Laura is already being sought after. Therefore, Laura must choose, and her decision is made in the last two scenes.

In the penultimate scene, the Woman speaks as if she were Laura, and vice versa, as she states, “Van a venir a buscarme. Me han encontrado. Quiero despedirme de ti”, and Laura replies “No es posible escapar” (97). While Laura is concerned that she may not awake (recalling the drug she smoked with the Woman earlier), stating, “¿No voy a despertarme?” (97), the Woman, again embodying one part of Laura, responds that she will remain alive for Laura, despite the fact that she (the portion of Laura that has been enjoying freedom in the interspace) is the one sought after: “Yo estaré despierta por ti. El dolor es mío. Es a mí a quien vienen buscando” (97). What this means is that Laura, with the help of the Woman and the Man, has decided to commit suicide in order forever to escape society’s social-sexual bodily standards and requirements foisted on her. The Woman explains to her the process: “Será rápido. . . . Me subirán en una camilla. . . . No veré nada porque estaré dormida. . . . No podrán hacer nada” (97). In the final scene of the
play (Scene 15), Laura reiterates the same words of the Woman, as she speaks of her suicide:


Un estallido. Nada. Un momento de dolor y luego nada. (98)

Although this scene may constitute another failure for Laura, this scene may be interpreted as a success for Laura\textsuperscript{179}, since she has finally come to terms with the bodily restrictions that society, the Church, and her husband have forced onto her, and has chosen a means to stay in the freedom of the interspace forever\textsuperscript{180}. The liminality of her self (composed of both Man and Woman, and simultaneously aware of and choosing to reject those expectations for women like her, in her position) cannot survive in real life, so she must die in order to become part of the interspace where both halves can freely come and go\textsuperscript{181}. One may find highly interesting the fact that the last scene of the play is written in the past tense, as if Laura has already experienced a death of her former self and a re-birth, speaking from a point in the future, already free and enjoying her body as she desires to in the interspace\textsuperscript{182}.

\textsuperscript{179}So too does Susana Lorenzo Zamorano: “Her final death undoubtedly involves a failure, and yet, it could also be interpreted positively as her subversive half (Woman) states that she will remain alive for her; therefore, this work could be taken as an appeal for women to free themselves from their oppressive roles.” (“The Feminine Imaginary in Yolanda Pallín’s Plays” 34).

\textsuperscript{180}It is also interesting that society will explain her suicide not as self-inflicted but rather as a type of aneurysm, refusing to acknowledge the reality that someone like Laura would ever take her own life.

\textsuperscript{181}The freedom of the coming and going of both Man and Woman in the psyche of Laura has been proven throughout the play as both appear and disappear in the interspace without force or restraint.

\textsuperscript{182}This most certainly does not suggest that suicide is ever an answer; in this highly symbolic play, this is the chosen response to patriarchal society by the main character with regard to freeing her body.
In conclusion, Laura’s experiences of a liminal self occur on a symbolic, psychic level in a unique environment, that of the ‘interspace.’ The splitting of her psycho-sexual self into Man and Woman underscores her sexuality on the threshold as her body is torn between being forced to act according to traditional, patriarchal standards (the likes of which are articulated by the Man) or being allowed fleeting moments of corporeal freedom that she intermittently experiences throughout yet that finally are within her grasp at the end of the play, and that are intrinsically connected to the Woman. Nonetheless, when attempting to reconcile the realization of traditional society’s requirements with the desire for bodily freedom from these constraints, Laura’s only recourse is death. Although the option she chooses may be extreme, it is the only viable means for her body to escape. Thanks to the liminal realm of the interspace, Laura has reflected for her the traditional values of society that regulate bodies, and from which she chooses to flee. In bringing together the two parts of her self that have for so long been divided, she ultimately is able to ‘see’ and reject traditional societal demands on her body, come to terms with her own sexual, marginal self, and accept it, for the first time, on her own terms.
3 B) Containing the liminal?: Memoria

In a 1982 essay (―Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence‖), Adrienne Rich states, “if we think of heterosexuality as ‘the’ natural emotional and sensual inclination for women, [bisexual] lives . . . are seen as deviant, as pathological, or as emotionally and sensually deprived” (in The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader 241). Although times have changed since 1982, many would argue that in society today there continues to exist a propensity toward blocking or ‘containing’ the liminal, whether it be bisexuality, or any abnormal sexual constitution. Postmodern theorist Judith Butler problematizes the naturalization of (hetero)normative/ (hetero)sexual gender and sexual patterns and the concomitant pathologization and desire to ‘contain’ or ‘block’ any non-(hetero)normative or non-(hetero)patriarchal sexuality. She states: “In other words, for heterosexuality to remain intact as a distinct social form, it ‘requires’ an intelligible conception of homosexuality and also requires the prohibition of that conception in rendering it culturally unintelligible” (Gender Trouble 98). For her, hence, functional heterosexuality depends upon this ‘containment’ and prohibition of all that is non-heterosexual.

Although Butler concentrates almost exclusively on the lesbian experience (within the parameters of the heterosexual/ homosexual binary), her argument can easily be extended to encompass any liminal or marginal sexuality as well, and, as we have seen thus far, this topic is readily taken up by contemporary playwrights such as Yolanda Pallín (and, of course, as we saw earlier, by Paloma Pedrero). Thus, using the idea of

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183 ‘Abnormal,’ that is, according to the (hetero)patriarchal and/ or normative standards
‘containment’ of any kind of abnormal or liminal sexuality, the analysis of this last play by Yolanda Pallín aims to reveal the traditional societal response to marginal sexualities (specifically, bisexuality as well as inappropriate [according to societal standards] sexual desire), in addition to the consequences of such attempts at containment. The question mark (?) in the title of this section relates to the degree to which the efforts of containment (in this play) truly are effective or not, and what occurs when they fail to contain those sexually liminal bodies.

Yolanda Pallín’s play Memoria\textsuperscript{184}, published in 1999 in Un sueño eterno, and as of yet unpremiered, directly relates to the notion of the ‘containment’ or possible containment of liminal or non-normative sexualities, yet differs from other plays of hers like Siete años\textsuperscript{185} in that the non-traditional sexualities present do not involve lesbianism or bisexuality but rather other sexual constitutions such as adulterous relationships (between a young single woman and a much older married man), illicit desire (deemed inappropriate in normative society), and incest (that society frowns upon yet covers up as well). Another element that renders this play distinct in comparison to the others analyzed thus far in this investigation is the use of the televisual, namely a large movie screen that flashes images throughout the play that connect to and impact the main discourse uttered.

\textsuperscript{184} To the best of my knowledge, only two articles analyze this play, along with several other of Pallín’s plays, and they are “Heterotopias femeninas: análisis del espacio teatral en clave neomoderna” by Susana Lorenzo Zamorano describing the spatial arrangements of the play, and by the same author, “Avant-Garde Metatheatre from Spanish Women Playwrights”, in which a short section on Memoria is dedicated to examining intertextuality in regards to cinema and self-reference.

\textsuperscript{185} Siete años is Pallín’s one-act 2001 play about two former lovers, one of whom is dying of AIDS in the hospital, where she is visited by the other, whose purpose of the visit is to remove the sick woman’s daughter from her. While at the hospital, the two painfully recount their lives and identities in the ‘seven years’ that they have been parted. The containment with regard to Siete años involves not only the bisexuality of the main character Ana but also her AIDS-stricken body that also pathologizes her as a marginal figure.
by the principal character of the Woman. These images are either romantic or painful flashbacks (‘memories’, hence the title) that focus and reflect society’s ever-present gaze (evidenced by the movie screen and camera), and that always present sexualities that either are contained in some way (as we shall see), or perhaps should be contained, while they also need to be looked at (explained later). As Lorenzo Zamorano states, “la proyección trasciende... el espacio teatral como lugar sagrado, negándole el límite escénico a la representación” (“Heterotopías femeninas: análisis del espacio teatral en clave neomoderna” in Dramaturgias femeninas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: espacio y tiempo 458). The uniqueness of such a filmic discursive space is that it is not merely one-dimensional (only to be looked at) but also transcends the typical theatrical space, to quote Lorenzo Zamorano, affecting and being affected by the main space of the stage, often times resulting in a blurring of distinctions between the two. The highly significant cinematic space that is the area of containment of the sexually marginal emotions and desires of the characters, also can be the space of liberation of these sexualities. Once again, Memoria evidences many bodily sexual forms that are on the ‘threshold’ of what is ‘normal’ or ‘normative’ in traditional society. This essay aims to analyze the complex nature of the attempted containment of the sexually liminal as that which attracts the gaze (and also creates and focuses its own gaze) yet that ultimately, according to society, needs to be contained, although often times the efforts at containment fail and result in a liberatory experience for those embodying these liminal sexualities.
Divided into three parts, Pallín’s play presents the ‘memories’ of an unnamed Woman whose recollections (either happy or traumatic) or projected desires from her childhood up until the present day are displayed on the movie screen, and with which she appears to interact, as the characters in the projections (at least one of whom is always herself) often times exchange glances with her, usually causing one of the two engaged in the glance to look away. Part One begins with the Woman, dressed in a comely and modest manner (all in gray), holding a suitcase and with her gaze fixed forward (toward what is later discovered to be a video camera recording her). The stage direction states, “Vamos viendo cada vez mejor a una mujer joven vestida de gris. El pelo recogido en un moño. . . . la mujer se levanta de una maleta en la que estaba sentada, siempre mirando al frente” 161. As we shall see later, the suitcase is an important metaphor for that which sexually should be contained or hidden, either because it is illicit and prohibited or because it serves as an embarrassment for traditional, normative society.

The appearance of the woman, dressed in a non-conspicuous manner, soon contrasts sharply with what she will say about her sexual experiences. Almost immediately, this woman averts her gaze from its forward position and looks at the floor, as if setting the tone for bodily containment of the liminal that has begun first with her diverted glance: “Deja de mirar al frente. Mira fijamente al suelo” (161). Again fixing her gaze forward on the camera, yet also under the gaze of the camera (“Después, alza de nuevo la mirada…” 161), we soon become aware of why she is reticent to describe her experiences, as she begins to relate how her father used to take her to school and abandoned her there, subtly referring to a potential sexual abuse at his hands: “Cuando mi
padre me llevó a aquel colegio por primera vez. . . . O sea, cuando mi padre…me llevó al colegio por…por…segunda vez. . . . Así que ni la segunda, ni la tercera, ni la…Cuando mi padre…la vez que mi padre…” (161). Her words are then cut short not by another character but by herself, due to her own guilt about the likely incestuous abuse by her father, evidenced when the stage direction describes her highly bothered and emotional state, and how she is rendered unable to speak or even to provide the right or appropriate ‘look’: “No puede continuar. Baja ligeramente los ojos intentando encontrar la expresión adecuada” (162), and she then continues to say “El primer día que fui a mi segundo colegio mi padre me dejó en la puerta y mientras le veía irse. . . se me llenaron los ojos de lágrimas. . . . De verdad” (162).

As if gaining some confidence with her gaze that she now lifts toward the camera (“muy lentamente sube su mirada” 162), she alludes to the abuse, but does not directly articulate it: “Es…Ya sabía yo que esto no podía resultar muy cómodo. . . . Todo el mundo sabe cuándo le hacen daño aunque no hablemos nunca de ello. No es agradable. ¿Me entiende? . . . Quiero decir que sí, que es difícil de entender cómo alguien, un buen día, decide contar cosas así a una cámara…cosas de las que no hablamos entre nosotros” (162, my emphasis). Her commentary about discomfort (echoing the first speaking line of the play, “No es cómodo” 161) signifies not only the discomfort of the sexual abuse by her father but also the unease with verbalizing the abuse, so difficult that she must do so to an impersonal camera in order to view and hear the articulation herself (assumedly at a later time).
One may argue that the camera allows her therapeutically to relieve herself of her pain, yet, on the other hand, while she does this, both her words (that is to say, referring to the abuse yet not admitting it was, in fact, abuse) and look (the appropriate, covered, professional-looking woman who fears direct eye contact, especially when discussing that which much of society refuses to hear) appear almost to conform visually and verbally to what she should and should not say (or how she should appear) under society’s watchful eye, thus already constituting a sort of containment of her abused body. Nonetheless, as we shall see, although the liminal is contained on the screen, there continues to be a scopophilia in viewing these types of bodies, either on the part of the Woman in the scene, and/or by society in general. To quote theorist and film critic Laura Mulvey, “In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” (“Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”, from http://www.drama21c.net/writers/mulvey/mulvey.htm). That which is ‘looked at’ on the screen in this play is thus both encouraged to be seen as spectacle, exposing its flaws and dangers, and simultaneously not to be imitated (in a sense, a ‘not seeing’), but instead that which should be contained.

The first section thus references the awkwardness with which normative and/or typically traditional society often treats sexual abuse, many times making difficult (or impossible) its articulation by the victim; here, we see that the Woman tries to recall the

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186 This should never suggest that victims of abuse should not divulge their abuse to someone, but rather that, in this play, Pallín has chosen to allegorize the far too often societal response to incest, and that is to ignore it and pretend it did not happen. Here, Pallín demonstrates her point by confining the Woman’s description of it to the camera alone, and even there she cannot fully divulge all the painful details.
abuse but is struck with such pain in doing so that she is prevented from looking at the camera (a metaphor for society’s gaze) as well as speaking (her speech is colored by ellipses, pauses, and interrupted by her own actions of averting her look away from the recording mechanism). Her difficulty in speaking and looking also relates to her own internalized realization as to what society’s expected (negative) response will be to her uttered discourse. Additionally, the abuse is somewhat referred to only tangentially, and never visualized on the screen—the camera’s gaze focuses only on the uncomfortable victim of the abuse and not the perpetrator, thus establishing normative society’s need for containing and controlling both verbally and visually certain sexual aberrations such as incest, as well as those who wish to articulate such experiences.

Although the camera may provide the Woman with the opportunity to enunciate (and, hence, reveal) the painful abuse, this first section proves that she cannot even be truthful to herself (or society), covering up (i.e., ‘self-containing’) the abuse and saying she had been crying because her father left her at the school doors, an obvious internalization of society’s traditional treatment of such incidences (as well as a sense of betrayal toward her father who used her and then abandoned her). It may be said that her body at this point in the play is considered ‘liminal’ or ‘marginal’ because, according to traditional considerations, it lies outside of normative or appropriate forms and occupies an area of the unmentionable or the notion of that which should remain unspoken and hidden.  

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187 Specifically, the notion that child abuse often goes unreported and covered up, especially within a family
Nonetheless, the end of the first section does mark the beginning of the reclaiming of her self (that has been lost due to apparent sexual abuse as a child) and its expression as she ‘confesses’ to the camera all of the sexual traumas and escapades of her past. Despite the need to divulge these incidences in a confession-like mode, through this articulation of past events she is able to re-live and deal with these by means of her (other) self on the screen. Yet again we shall witness how the Woman’s liminal sexualized body must be ‘contained’ due to the surfacing of abnormal sexual behavior that should remain unarticulated (the sexual abuse of a daughter by her father), as well as the expression of unmitigated desire that is most certainly ‘on the threshold’ of what is normal or typical (to be seen in the next two sections). While the first part alludes to the non-normative sexual practice of incest, it does not fully explore it. The appearance of the Woman in this first section (dressed all in gray) is traditional and does not attract attention, thus presenting herself as a sort of homodiegetic narrator free to comment on the filmic images that flash on the screen in the next two sections, without being made to feel judged for their liminal content (even though she sees herself on the screen). It is in this next section where the deeper exploration and expression of liminal/ non-normative sexualties occur, and we shall see that this woman in the scene, despite being separated by the medium of film, is, in fact, greatly impacted by the parade of images that flash on the screen.

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188 This term by Genette refers to a narrator who is also a character; although this is a dramatic piece and not narrative, the term may apply because the main character (the Woman) not only is narrator but also character.
At the beginning of Part Two, the image of the same Woman appears on the screen, yet this time she is dressed in a deep red overcoat and waiting for someone in a train station: “En una pantalla se proyecta la imagen de la mujer atrevesando el andén de una estación de ferrocarril. Viste un abrigo de lana de color granate. Odia el gris.” (162). While the images of this woman are flashing on the screen, the woman dressed in gray watches the woman in red (herself in the past) on the film: “La mujer que está en escena se sienta en la maleta y observa aquellas imágenes” (163). In watching herself and narrating, it becomes clear that the Woman on the screen was waiting for a gentleman, most likely to meet up for an illicit (and extramarital) tryst. The Woman-narrator states “De acuerdo. Ya estabas allí. Se trataba de no perder la paciencia” (163), speaking for and to the Woman on the screen but also speaking for herself, since they are the same person at different points in their lives. The nature of the images projected onto the screen all deal with some non-normative sexuality, in this case, adultery. As if to ‘contain’ her own past on the screen, the Woman in the scene confesses instances of her life when her sexuality did not fall within what was acceptable. The choice of the screen as an apparatus by which she may re-visualize and re-narrate her sexual memories is greatly significant since, with another in control of the images projected on it, the sexualized bodies appearing there may (and do) undergo a ‘disappearing act’ when they become too intense (to be seen later).

189 Even at the level of color choice of garments, the woman on the screen’s red coat may instantiate her ardent passion and desire for sexual fulfillment.
190 Although she is the narrator, the Woman in the scene does not always control what images are flashed on the screen; it is never divulged who controls this, but Pallín’s play may suggest that traditional society itself affects what bodies are gazed upon and which ones are not, thereby also indicating those bodies that should be ‘contained’ for their non-normativity.
According to Laura Mulvey, “the look, pleasurable in form, can be threatening in content, and it is woman as representation/image that crystallises this paradox” (Ibid). Mulvey captures the essence of the filmic display of sexualities in this play since the structure of the screen and images represents normative society’s attempt to encourage the objectification (in this case, women are the objects, at least at this point in the play) through the gaze (as with the camera and screen), while simultaneously containing any sign of this liminal sexuality that threatens normative order. Although both women have fallen under society’s gaze (for the Woman in the scene, the gaze is represented by the camera that is recording her; for the Woman in the film, the gaze is presented by the means of the Woman in the scene as well as the audience watching both of them), both appear to break away from this powerful gaze when each looks at the other, initiated by the Woman in the film: “La mujer de la pantalla mira fijamente a la mujer que está en escena. Ambas intercambian una mirada tensa” (163, my emphasis). As Mulvey states, “Traditionally, the woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen” (Ibid, my emphasis).

The ‘tenseness’ of the look (quoting Mulvey and also the referring to the text) between the two women (one of whom is a ‘character’ and the other, who is the ‘audience’) simultaneously signifies the unease with looking at liminal sexualities (the Woman in the scene and the audience looking at the one in the film engaged in adultery), as well as the realization of being looked at (the Woman in the film knowing she is under
the gaze). The Woman in the scene thus performs the dual role of representative of society’s gaze (desirous of looking at that which is and needs to be objectified) and also reactant towards what is being looked at (liminal sexual bodies), while the Woman in the film ‘reflects’ the angst at being looked at and also literally returns the gaze toward society as a challenge to societal attempts at containment of those bodies. Hence, the character of the Woman in the scene, along with her projected image on the screen, serve(s) yet another purpose, that of the vehicle(s) by which re-appropriation of the gaze in service of liberatory purposes may be carried out, as we shall see.

According to Lorenzo Zamorano, the look exchanged by both women marks the first real break of the fetishistic control of the camera (“Heterotopias…” 457). This additionally is evidenced when the Woman on the screen begins to smoke a cigarette (“Recoge el mechero y lo enciende. Da una profunda calada” 163), and the Woman in the scene, following the example of herself in the film, also begins to smoke (“Saca un cigarrillo y lo enciende” 163). The smoking of the cigarette, following Freudian theory, may refer to these women’s re-appropriation of the phallus and then their discarding of it later (when they extinguish the cigarettes), but also instantiates the rupturing of the containing mechanism (the screen), as the Woman in the screen initiates the action and the Woman in the scene follows her example in imitation of it. Although this is not in itself a grand ‘liberatory’ act, the mere fact that the Woman in the scene is affected by her own image on the film is significant. Thus, despite the fact that the film screen is designed to contain and control the sexual imagery of the Woman, to a certain degree it can be liberating in that, while watching the expression of liminal corporeal-sexual
manifestations (in reference to the adulterous images that flash on the screen), the Woman in the scene also enjoys a small measure of liberation, such as when she describes the “sensación liberadora” (163) that the Woman in the screen (herself) felt at the time, and which she also must feel in re-visualizing her own colorful sexual past. Hence, the screen simultaneously functions as means of containment of the sexually liminal (i.e. the adulterous affair of the Woman in the screen), as well as the way by which she may re-experience those (now understood as forbidden) bodily forms and pulsions.

When the next image flashes forth on the screen, involving a small girl carrying a burdensome assortment of beach bags and an umbrella and following a young married couple (“…aparece una niña pequeña que intenta seguirles con dificultad. La niña apenas puede andar porque va cargada con una sombrilla y un par de bolsas playeras demasiado grandes para su edad” 164), the Woman in the scene does not (or cannot) look at the young girl, but the Woman on the screen does (“La mujer de la pantalla se levanta para ayudar a la niña. . . . La mujer que está en escena no la mira” 164), although her glance is interrupted by the words of the Woman in the scene (“…pero es interrumpida por la voz de la mujer que está en escena” 164). This refusal of looking on the part of the Woman in the scene most likely refers to the unwillingness to deal with the sexual abuse she experienced as a young girl (connected to her monologue from the first part of the play), that she does not wish to re-visualize and that society may not want her to remember, yet that the Woman in the screen (representative of her freer side, unblemished by society’s strict mandates) was willing to see and thus deal with, something that the Woman in the
scene in the past would have been able to do, yet now cannot since, as stated before, she represents (to a certain degree) the means of containment for her own liminal sexuality.

The role of the Woman in the scene is further elucidated in Part Two when she verbalizes society’s normative impulse, telling the Woman on the screen to return home and forget about the ‘madness’ that the idea of the tryst has brought her—she instead should return to the ‘normal’ means of finding happiness (‘normal’ most likely in this case signifying that which is arrived at through normative means): “…vuelve a tu casa, deshaz la maleta rápidamente, date un baño caliente, borra esta locura de tu vida, regrésate y espera a que la felicidad llegue por los cauces normales” (164, my emphasis). When she utters these words, the young girl on the screen (an obvious representation of the abused Woman when she was a child) “dirige una mirada de reproche a la mujer que está en escena” (164), as if vilifying the Woman in the scene for ‘looking’ at her (but not truly ‘seeing’ her) and doing nothing about the abuse she suffered, as well as foreshadowing the heartache she will later in life sense for not dealing with her emotional ‘baggage’ earlier on.

The images shift again and the scene now displays a sixty-something year old man at a park passionately kissing the young Woman (from the screen) who had been waiting for him. While the images flash different scenes where they kiss, the Woman attempts unsuccessfully to remove his overcoat, while the Woman in the scene watches these images: “Se suceden diferentes imágenes en las que vemos al hombre y a la mujer besándose en parques, vagones de tren, estaciones abandonadas, ascensores, azoteas de edificios, probadores de grandes almacenes, urinarios públicos. La mujer lucha
desesperadamente con el pesado abrigo del hombre. Intenta quitárselo sin gran éxito. La mujer que está en escena mira las imágenes” (164). The liminal, non-normative sexuality of the Woman\(^{191}\) on the screen becomes more intense with these images as her adulterous relationship with the much older man is visualized in several environments, many of which are seedy or unpleasant. The images also reveal the Woman to be the sexual aggressor in the coupling, something that the Woman in the scene watches with intensity, thus focusing her gaze on both the woman and the man, yet her verbal discourse does not necessarily match the scenes that occur. While the Woman and the man kiss passionately, she emphasizes how such a life was not the plan of that woman (herself in the past), and the degree to which it differs from the ‘normal’ posturings that she, as a child, imagined for herself when she played with ‘plastic dolls’ (a possible metaphor for the rigidity of traditional society): “Cuando eras una niña pequeña jugabas con tus muñecas. Te empeñabas en que aquellos pedazos de plástico estilizado reprodujeran las posturas que ciertas chicas, también de plástico, se esforzaban para mostrarnos como normales a través de la tele” (164 – 165, my emphasis). Once again, she has shifted towards embodying the normative gaze of society that wishes to view but contain (in its viewing) such non-normative sexual actions, yet concomitantly experiences the desire of such emotions as the Woman on the screen, who is the remembered projection of her sexual self in the past.

The next stage direction describes a rapid succession of images on the screen that show the increasing excitement and frustration of the Woman who continues to attempt

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\(^{191}\) Non-normative since she is a participant in an affair with a married man, who is much older than she is, and also since she is much more sexually forward than he is. 

to remove the overcoat from her male companion without success, and the man falling
onto a bed in a filthy hotel room (“Las imágenes de la pantalla, son cada vez más cortas,
se suceden a gran velocidad, y siempre nos presentan a la pareja forcejeando, intentando
ella desvestirlé sin conseguirlo. Por fin el hombre cae rendido en una cama” 165). Since
this portion reveals the apex of sexual aggression of the Woman (something that
normative society often times frowns upon), the images undergo the ‘disappearing act’
described earlier since this sexual liminality (an older married man and a younger single
woman who is sexually forceful) needs visual containment so as not to reveal too
much.\textsuperscript{192}

A subsequent stage direction describes the next grouping of images that include
the Woman and the Man in a hideous and dirty hotel room (“La cámara se desplaza para
ofrecernos minuciosamente un recorrido por la fea habitación de un hotel” 165), and also
demonstrate the Woman in the scene’s inability to look at these images (“La mujer que
está en escena mira un momento la pantalla pero inmediatamente dirige sus ojos al suelo”
165). Her aversion to the rapturous union between the two on the screen falls into line
with society’s codified response to such visions—that they should be looked at (as what
\textit{not} to do) yet contained as well (thus trapped on the film and not internalized). However,
this averted glance is far more complex than this, for I maintain that the Woman
internally undergoes a struggle (that many undergo in life) as she wishes to re-experience
the liminal sexuality she witnesses (and that is part of her own past), as well as follow the
normative values about sexuality currently foisted on her. Additionally, I submit that the

\textsuperscript{192} Note that the viewer/ spectator never sees the final act of fulfillment of the passion between the two.
Woman in the scene symbolically supplants the typical male figure who fixes his gaze on the female spectacle: “According to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification. Man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like” (Mulvey, ibid).

Witnessing herself on the screen in many sexually explicit displays, the Woman cannot bear to look at herself for too long, thus embracing the role (she does look at herself, although not for too long), but rejecting it as well (she always averts her gaze), symbolically evident when she empties the cigarette of its tobacco (hence refusing her role as patriarchal gazer), “Saca un cigarrillo pero no lo enciende, sólo juguetea con él, hasta conseguir, casi sin darse cuenta, vaciarlo de tabaco” (165). Later on we shall see that while she rejects a patriarchal gaze, she favors a uniquely feminine one.

This discrepancy between what the Woman in the scene internally feels and what she verbalizes externally is further substantiated when the Woman’s words describing the tryst do not match up with what the stage directions detail in the scene. While the stage directions describe the “vulgar cabecero de la cama, el papel pintado de dibujos geométricos, un lavabo amarillento, un flexo desvencijado” (166), the Woman in the scene enumerates the many beautiful places the couple visited, thus romanticizing their experiences:

La primera escapada que hicieron fue la más bonita. Toledo no era gran cosa, claro que se llegaba rápido y no tenían mucho tiempo. Él tenía que volver a casa a dormir, para arropar a los niños, es un buen padre. . . .

Así que volvieron a Segovia y a Toledo, que eran buenos sitios para ir y
volver en un día. Aranjuez sólo les cobijó en una ocasión. . . . La siesta era lo de menos a fin de cuentas, nada comparable a la ternura del viaje, a las horas cogiditos de la mano viendo pasar los árboles y las montañas y las estaciones. (165, 166)

The contrarieties between the stage directions and the Woman in the scene’s verbalization of these trips provide for a dual consideration. On one hand, the embellished verbal interpretation by the Woman-narrator of the adulterous outings that were visually anything but beautiful demonstrates her purposeful desire to describe that which is not pleasant, thus reinforcing society’s sordid consideration of such liminal sexual displays, whose ugliness should be seen and held up as that which should be gazed at yet not imitated. On the other hand, such flattering comments about the affair may also represent to a degree the Woman in the scene’s efforts to derive something that is romantic, worthwhile, and liberating from an experience that society clearly frowns upon.

As Part Two comes to a close, the filmic images focus on just the Man running through the train station looking for the Woman and finding only an empty bench: “Imagen de él corriendo, entrando en la estación, corriendo entre la gente, saliendo al andén, buscando con la mirada, no encontrando lo que busca, mirando el banco vacío en el que antes estaba sentada la mujer. . .” (166). The Woman in the scene describes the Man’s concern about his affair being discovered, and his taking precautions so as not to be seen in public with the Woman (The Woman-narrator states “…a él le gustaban las siestas en camas alquiladas, nunca la misma, nunca el mismo hotel, a pesar de que os marcharais a provincias” 166). As the Man on the film tries to eschew the gaze of society
(so as not to be judged for his participation in the liminal sexual display), the Woman in the scene, either encapsulating society’s omnipresent gaze on the sexually liminal, or, as a Woman, attempting to reverse the gaze that men usually fix on women (so that women now see men and not vice versa), takes out a camera and begins to video record the Man on the film with a personal video recorder: “La mujer que está en escena le observa, mientras él busca, ella abre la maleta, saca una cámara video y espera a que el hombre entre en escena” (166).

This symbolic action first represents the Woman’s ability to extract something positive from her negative emotional baggage she has been sitting on thus far (recall the little girl toting the heavy baggage as well as the Woman in the scene’s position always seated on top of the luggage), thereby ‘opening up’ and airing out her painful past memories of sexual abuse that society wished to keep ‘contained’ in a metaphorical suitcase. Secondly, her use of the video camera suggests a means of further containment of the sexually non-normative (trapping the Man not only on the actual movie screen but also on the slides of her video camera), thus following society’s mandates. And, third, this action, as stated earlier, may signify feminine empowerment of the typically male gaze (as well as the self-liberation concomitant with that appropriation of the gaze) and the transformation of the male into a fetishistic spectacle for the Woman (recall the earlier scene of the Woman in the screen trying to remove the Man’s overcoat.

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193 This explanation will make more sense when part three is analyzed, and the connection between the Man on the screen and the Woman’s father is made.
in order to ‘see’ him underneath). For Lorenzo Zamorano, the Woman’s recording of only the Man (since the Woman on the screen is nowhere to be seen) reinforces her decision to end the relationship and thus take control of her own situation (metaphorized by her grabbing the camera) [“Heterotopías femeninas…” 459]. Thus, in Part Two, we have witnessed society’s efforts to (and often success in) ‘contain’ the sexually liminal/non-normative through the gaze via the medium of film, and the liberatory exercises taken in order to rupture or combat this containment. This part also reveals the many instances of the scopic that either are dictated by normative societal standards or that serve as a contestation to these. Part Three of the play reinforces the appropriation of the masculine discourse by the Woman in the scene and represents her own means of dealing with the sexually liminal and the notion of containment.

As Part Three begins, the stage direction describes how the Man on the screen attempts to enter the scene (where the Woman-narrator is located on the stage), yet is unable to do so, for the Woman in the scene adjusts the camera so that his perfectly focused image appears on the screen: “En la pantalla vemos una imagen borrosa del hombre entrando en escena. . . . Pero el hombre no entra en escena. Ella ajusta niveles y la imagen de él aparece en la pantalla totalmente enfocada” (167). As the Man, now again on the screen, tries to approach the camera that is recording him, on the film flash images of the Man being chased by a camera: “En la pantalla vemos al hombre intentando acercarse a la cámara que lo graba. La mujer en escena recula y vuelve a enfocar. En

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194 It is additionally important to note that the Man’s verbal discourse never appears in the play, and this represents yet another containing of either the sexually liminal and/or the feminine appropriation of that discourse.
pantalla vemos la imagen del hombre perseguido por la cámara” (167). As if reversing traditional notions of containment and falling under the masculine gaze, the Woman in the scene both figuratively and literally ‘chases’ the Man with the camera, shown as a real image on the screen and also metaphorically positing the Man as object of the gaze. This thus ‘focuses’ him as a reprehensible participant in the affair, also responsible, and additionally displays his liminal sexual body that should also be contained (not just the Woman).

In subsequent stage directions, the Man, now realizing that he is under not only society’s castigatory gaze but also that of the Woman, hides his face, yet the screen will not let him remain hidden as it projects many different angles of his body: “[El hombre] oculta su cara con ambas manos. Vemos la imagen de él sentado desde muy diversos ángulos. La mujer en escena se deleita en la grabación” (168). He also appears not to understand what is occurring to him (now that he has fallen under the critical gaze of containment): “En la pantalla vemos cómo el hombre descubre su rostro y mira hacia la cámara que le graba como no entendiendo qué le está pasando” (168). His surprised reaction speaks to the shock that, unlike before, where the Woman offered the only non-normative and liminal sexuality to be contained, he also has been trapped under the gaze, yet this time it is not a patriarchal gaze but rather a uniquely feminine one, that of the Woman whom he has sexually wronged.

In addition to the visual containment and gaze controlled by the Woman in the scene, she has also succeeded in preventing him from verbal discourse. Whereas before she either spoke to the Woman (on the screen) or described the couple’s trips to
surrounding cities, she now speaks to the Man, although his verbal responses are absent from the section; in fact, we only hear her end of the conversation as she reacts to what he purportedly says. At first her angry words are directed towards the adult Man (the lover of herself/ the Woman on the screen), in which she criticizes him for the suffering she has had to endure as a result of their affair, while he has not, for example, “Hoy. Siempre aquí. Como en una película que vemos y volvemos a ver” and “No me he cambiado de ropa en un año, he soportado el frío de este invierno con el mismo vestido del verano en que te conoci” (168). Then, her discourse changes and blended with her verbalizations toward her lover are those that the young girl (from the beginning of the play) has yearned to say to her abusive father, and has not been able to until now. As the Woman unleashes the pain she endured (“¿Por qué me dejabas abandonada delante del colegio? . . . No, no me mires así, todavía falta mucho. . . . A lo mejor he sido fuerte porque me ha dado la gana. O porque he podido. O porque no me quedaba más remedio” 169, 170), the stage directions describe the entrance of the small girl (from Part Two), carrying the many beach items, that she now throws down to the ground (a symbolic releasing of the ‘baggage’ of her abuse) [“Vemos cómo entra en cuadro la niña de la estación cargada con sus bártulos. Los tira al suelo y coge la mano del hombre” 169]. The appearance of the small girl makes an important connection to the first part of the play, and, in her presentation to the public and the throwing down to the ground (that is to say, submitting the details of the abuse [the items of the suitcase] to the ‘gaze’ of society) of the items of her childhood that she has carried around with her so laboriously for so long,
the girl (the Woman as a child) helps to resolve (through making it visible and present) that which has remained painful and unresolved for the Woman, her prior sexual abuse. This third part of the play thus deals with unreconciled issues from Part One, especially that of the painful sexual abuse of the Woman (as a girl) at the hands of her father, for his crimes are finally made visible. The stage direction states: “En la pantalla vemos al hombre mayor arrodillándose delante de la niña y abrazando su cintura” (169). While the Woman in the scene stops recording (perhaps wishing not to focus her own personal gaze on such painful memories), the image continues to appear on the movie screen (“La mujer en escena deja de grabar, pero la imagen continúa en la pantalla” 169), signifying the first real instance of the unknown ‘controller’ of the filmic images at last exposing the actions of an abuser. As if intuiting the different types of images that have justly flashed across the screen, the Woman now puts away her personal video recorder since she no longer needs it, “La mujer en escena guarda la cámara de vídeo en la maleta” (169). At first she is unable to look at the images (“La mujer en escena no mira la pantalla” 170), but her discourse displays a renewed strength and resolve to put the Man under her gaze (and society’s gaze as well) and on the spot, asking him, “¿Vives cuando no estás conmigo? ¿Piensas? ¿Eres, cuando no estás conmigo?” (170).

When she is able to look at the screen, she and the small girl (herself as a young child) finally exchange glances, and she, at last, ‘sees’ her and in looking at her recognizes the abuse she underwent (seen in the subsequent actions toward the Man), holding accountable the Man responsible (“La mujer en escena mira la pantalla. Ella y la imagen de la niña cruzan una mirada” 170). As if to taunt the Man further for his sexual
abuse of the girl, as well as his inconsiderate indiscretions with his much younger lover (the Woman on the screen), the girl kisses him, causing both him and the Woman in the scene to avert their glances, perhaps pointing towards the Woman still feeling shreds of embarrassment for the abuse, and for the Man, shock that he is now the object of society’s cruel gaze: “La niña besa al hombre en la boca. La mujer aparta bruscamente la mirada. El hombre en la pantalla se aparta bruscamente de la niña” (170). After this image, the Woman in the scene describes how she will not react when she sees the Man (referring to him as her lover) on the street with his family, and how he will be startled that she has recovered from him: “Algún día, dentro de muchos, me cruzaré contigo por la calle. Irás acompañado y yo también. . . . Te preguntarás. Harás cálculos. Es imposible. ¿Verdad? Eres tan listo. Lo sé. Vas a sacar la duda de tu cabeza de un tajo seco y preciso” (170). As Part Three comes to a close, the Woman has proven that she no longer needs society’s apparatus for citing and containing that which is liminal or non-normative, since she has encountered her own lens by which to do so, and has re-discovered herself (and made public her abuse) in the process.

At the end of the play, the girl on the screen, as well as the Woman in the scene, both look at the Man, who again hides his face, now in apparent full recognition of his wrongs toward both, and concomitantly aware that he is not only under society’s gaze for participating in liminal sexualities (that is to say, both an adulterer and an abuser), but also under a feminine gaze: “La mujer en la escena mira la imagen de ambos. El hombre de la pantalla mira por un segundo a la mujer en escena. Después vuelve a sentarse en el suelo y oculta la cara entre sus manos. La niña le mira” (171). The Woman-narrator’s
final discourse fuses her memories projected on the screen with fiction as she describes how movies such as a girl on the beach, and a man and a woman trying to say goodbye on a train platform (all that happened in her real life and flashed as images on the screen) can be damaging and deceiving, for there is no true happy ending: “Una niña corriendo por la playa. . . . Un hombre una mujer que no pudieron despedirse en un andén. . . . Como esas películas que no te gustan y nunca te gustarán, pero que recuerdas, perpetúas en la memoria, dañinas, engañosas. Como esas pelis empalagosas de final feliz” (171).

According to the last stage direction, the Woman returns to her initial posture from the play’s beginning, sitting on a suitcase, and is here smoking a cigarette (“La mujer en escena se sienta en la maleta. Saca un cigarrillo, lo enciende y fuma” 171). As if having ‘unpacked’ her guilt and fear from before, the Woman is now able to rest again, and does so enjoying a smoke. In an Oedipal-like twist, the young girl on the screen now caresses the Man’s head as a mother would to a son (“La niña en la pantalla acaricia la cabeza del hombre que continúa sentado en el suelo” 171), thus not only fixing her feminine gaze on the Man but also making him her erotic love object. Not needing the Man anymore, his image slowly fades from view into black, “La imagen del hombre se va oscureciendo lentamente hasta el negro” (171), while the Woman no longer needs or desires to look again at the screen (“La mujer en escena no volverá a mirar la pantalla” 171), since she has successfully fractured the ‘fourth wall’ of the screen, thus freeing her non-normative sexual body (on the screen) from critical scrutiny by herself (hence, part of society), and allowing to surface that which has plagued her for so long. Although it is

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not clear at the end, the stage directions give no indication that the Woman is looking forward, thus not being captured by the ‘eye’ of the camera that initially filmed her. What is clear at the end, however, is the Woman’s desire to verbalize an imaginary decimation of the Man that would provide her with the ‘happy ending’ so often lacking in films: “La chica llega a su casa, encuentra una pistola y le dispara. . . . El hombre muere. Final feliz” (171). Yet, the degree to which this is an ‘imagined’ projection is debatable, since the Woman does, in a sense, make the Man disappear for good at the end of the play.

The Woman’s ‘killing’ of the Man at the end may be interpreted in many ways, such as her final act of revenge on her father/lover for how he has wronged and abused her, or for constantly making her the object of an unforgiving and cruel (patriarchal) gaze, yet I believe that the best explanation lies in the Woman’s desire to destroy that which she associates with society’s efforts to contain liminal or non-normative sexualities, especially for women like herself. At the end of the play, she appears to be the one in control of the images that flash forth on the screen, and she is the one who has decided what should fade into black (the figure of the Man), and what should remain (herself). She thus has succeeded in attracting the gaze to her, only to subvert it and re-direct it towards the very mechanism that has projected it on her: normative society itself.

Although the Woman has shown that she, at times, has fallen victim to the internalization of society’s corporeal-sexual expectations, and has at other times contained her own non-normative body either visually or verbally, throughout the play her body has demonstrated that it does not always follow these normative precepts (choosing instead to linger on the threshold of the normal), and has been able to be
liberated and free from unreasonable bodily restraints as well as from society’s cruel, objectifying gaze (that she has reversed). While the movie screen initially represented a means of containment of the sexually liminal, by the end of the play, it has served as “medio de reconstrucción y fuente terapeútica de identidades” (Lorenzo Zamorano, “Heteropias…” 460). As is typical in most plays, the final stage direction is one word, “Oscuro” (171), yet here it carries even more significance, and I argue that it is by no accident that it is the last word in the play, for the Woman has finally succeeded in preventing any more sexualities in the play to be contained since she has made sure that no more will be able to be visualized in a negative way.

As is typical with plays by Pallín, it is open for debate as to whether the sexualities at the threshold here were successfully contained or not. While some may argue that the Woman reflected more of the normative than she ruptured, others may point towards the fact that the Woman did succeed in finding a way to reverse the typical gaze of non-normative sexualities, from one that desires to scrutinize and then contain them, to one in which it turns away from the usual target of the gaze (women) and toward men. It is also possible to argue that she somewhat enjoyed both the liberating moments that the proximity to her former sexualized self brought her, as well as felt a relief toward dealing with her child abuse that was finally made visual. Perhaps the question Pallín wishes to pose with this play is not if these liminal sexualities were ever truly contained, but what message was relayed by the revelation of the apparatus that typically contains them.
In summation, the theatre of Yolanda Pallín aims to unsettle, to provoke, and to allow the reader to ponder the multiple differenced manifestations of sex and the sexual that she presents in her works. Although the topics and presentation of themes vary in Pallín’s plays, one common thread uniting all is its presentation of sex(uality) that is often ‘at the threshold,’ lying beyond the typical or traditional associations of what is accepted or ‘normal,’ and moving beyond these into the interstitial, where deeper and richer meaning is derived and developed. In the two plays analyzed in this chapter, both presented the reader/ spectator the opportunity to consider not only the problems associated with the traditional roles that are often foisted on individuals, but also the means by which some choose to resist these and seek expression and existence elsewhere.

In Pallín’s first play, *Los restos de la noche,* we have witnessed how Laura, unable to carry out society’s mandates that she be a ‘good wife and mother,’ sought solace and existence in the interspace, a psychic, liminal realm where she seeks expression as both ‘Man’ and ‘Woman’, thus rejecting typical norms of what ‘woman’ is; nonetheless, ultimately, the interspace, while allowing moments of freedom, provides only a momentary escape from social-sexual constraints, and Laura turns to suicide as a permanent release. In Pallín’s second play, *Memoria,* many more types of problems surface, in this case, with regard to society’s attempts to downplay or erase issues such as incest and child abuse, as well as scopophilia toward women and their often liminal behavior, frequently held up as that which should be viewed, yet castigated, vilified, and, most importantly, ‘contained.’ While the women in the play attempted to re-appropriate
the mechanisms controlling such attempts at containment, it is left unclear as to the degree to which they, in the end, succeed or fail.

As stated earlier, the plays of Yolanda Pallín examined in this chapter demonstrate the degree to which their characters attempt to negotiate a sexuality that is on or in the threshold, that, while somewhat successful, more times than not, proves non-permanent. However, irregardless of the ultimate outcome of whether or not such bodies have success or not concerning their sexualities on the threshold, Pallín’s plays strive to present the reader/spectator with the situation, leaving them to make the ultimate determination. To cite Pallín’s earlier quote, what is important in her theatre is not to offer up a definitive solution but rather to present a situation and encourage reflection, for, “Si un texto te produce una reflexión después de haber visto la obra, ya ha merecido la pena, aunque no tiene una solución…” (Interview with author, 2004).
Chapters 4 and 5:

Sexing Themselves: (Em)powered bodies in the theatre of Yolanda Dorado (Chapter 4) and Margarita Reiz (Chapter 5):

“It is the original thesis of [Foucault’s] *History* that power in our societies functions primarily not by repressing spontaneous sexual drives but by producing multiple sexualities, and that through the classification, distribution, and moral rating of those sexualities the individuals practicing them can be approved, treated, marginalized, sequestered, disciplined, or normalized” (Bersani, *Homos* 81)

“If the alternative to this aping of the dominant culture’s ideal of dominance is not the renunciation of power itself, [it is] the question of whether we can imagine relations of power structured differently” (Bersani, *Homos* 86)

“Power considered as a condition of the subject is necessarily not the same as power considered as what the subject is said to wield. The power that initiates the subject fails to remain
continuous with the power that is the subject’s agency” (Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* 12)

“Power not only ‘acts on’ a subject but . . . ‘enacts’ the subject into being. As a condition, power precedes the subject. Power loses its appearance of priority, however, when it is wielded by the subject, a situation that gives rise to the reverse perspective that power is the effect of the subject, and that power is what the subjects effect” (Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* 13)

“We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms; it ‘excludes’ it ‘censors,’ it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals.’ In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth” (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 194)

“. . . to the extent that desire is implicated in social norms, it is bound up with the question of power and with the problem of who qualifies as recognizably human and who does not”
(Butler, *Undoing Gender 3*)
Chapter 4:

Sexing Themselves: (Em)powered bodies:

Yolanda Dorado:

The introduction to this study provided a brief overview of the rise in the 1990s of alternative theatres to the contemporary scene in Madrid, and, concomitant with them, alternative authors. Yolanda Dorado serves as yet another example of a playwright who at times may be denominated ‘alternative’ in terms of style and theme but also indubitably makes very concrete, real connections among her characters and certainly between her plays and the audience (and thus also fits into the ‘neo-realist’ categorization of the dramatic generation that her theatre and the theatre of others such as Pedrero, Pallín, etc. are part of)\(^{196}\). The theatre of Dorado may, in fact, instantiate a marrying of the neo-realist theatre style in addition to the alternative approaches as well (for thematic as well as dramatic elements). Born in Córdoba in 1969, Yolanda Dorado’s first contact with dramaturgy occurred via her studies at the Escuela de Arte Dramático de Córdoba (Alvear et al, Monólogos de dos continentes 180). Having traveled to Madrid in 1992, she continued her theatrical studies at the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático.

\(^{196}\) This does not suggest that Yolanda Dorado is a commercial playwright; on the contrary, most of her plays premiere in alternative theatres like the Sala Cuarta Pared, and she is associated much more with the non-commercial scene.
(RESAD), where she received her degree in 1996 and during which she participated in workshops on dramatic writing along with Marco Antonio de la Parra, José Sanchís Sinisterra and José Luis Alonso de Santos (Ibid). Dorado appeared in the Madrilenian theatrical scene as author in the mid 1990s with her 1994 play *Por un jersey*, shortly followed by *Bienvenido al Klan* in 1996, both edited by the RESAD. In that same year, she adapted to the theatre Rosa Montero’s novel *La función delta*, that premiered during Madrid’s Fall Festival.

1995 marked an important year for Dorado for in that year she received many literary awards such as the “Certamen de cuento femenino” organized by the Asociación de Mujeres Progresistas, along with the “Certamen de relato corto” organized by the Ayuntamiento de Torrejón de Ardoz, and also the “Certamen de relato corto universitario” (Ibid). In that same year she was awarded a scholarship by the Comunidad de Madrid along with the Creación Teatral. Her more well-known works that also have garnered awards include 2003’s *La pecera*, and 1999’s *El secreto de las mujeres*, for which she won the “Segundo Premio Arte Joven” of the Comunidad de Madrid. Other works include the piece *Oxígeno* that formed part of the anthology *Voces contra la barbarie*, a collection of theatre about the March 11th Madrid terrorist attacks, and *Positivas*, for which she won the “Primer Premio del Certamen” de Teatro Breve Ciudad de Requena in 2003. Other written and premiered (yet unpublished) works include *Confesiones* and *Lo que callan las madres*, premiering at the Fall Festival in Madrid in 2006. Besides dramaturgy, Yolanda Dorado has directed creative writing workshops and also has collaborated in writing articles for the journals *Primer Acto* and *ADE Teatro*, as
well as managing the responsibility of the Department of Publications of the RESAD (http://escena.ya.com/taytantosweb/secreto.htm 2). Additionally, she has produced works of Categorization and Documentation for the ADE (Asociación de Directores de Escena de España) and has also given theatre classes in several public schools (Ibid).

In describing the themes and tendencies of a select group of contemporary playwrights (specifically Lluïsa Cunillé, Yolanda Pallín, Itziar Pascual, Margarita Sánchez, and Yolanda Dorado) included in a well-known anthology on contemporary narrative, poetry, and of course theatre (Ni Ariadnas ni Penélopes: Quince escritoras españolas para el siglo veintiuno [Editorial Castalia, 2002]), editor Carmen Estévez summarizes the style of this group of authors (mentioned above), a synopsis that may easily be applied to Dorado’s theatre alone. To quote Estévez, these playwrights hacen un teatro en el que la libertad de expresión, el lenguaje coloquial y el deseo de conectar con el público cobran especial importancia. La influencia del cine, la televisión, la poesía, sus conocimientos de dramaturgia tanto teóricos como técnicos, hacen que sus obras tengan la máxima confesión entre lo escrito y lo representado. Los personajes, extraídos de la vida cotidiana, se enfrentan a situaciones de las que tienen que salir por sí mismos. No hay en las obras de estas autoras una vocación una denuncia o una provocación política, sino un deseo de comunicar con el público y dejar que sea éste el que extraiga sus propias conclusiones. (15)

Yolanda Dorado’s works undoubtedly include many of the characteristics as cited by Estévez in her summary of the group of playwrights she describes, especially the use of
colloquial language, the presentation of topics to the audience without necessarily foisting political considerations, the influence of the poetic, the desire to communicate with the public on a deep level, and the necessity of the everyday, common life characters to be immersed in conflicts that they must resolve for themselves. Another member of the Bradomín Generation\textsuperscript{197}, Dorado presents a theatre that may easily be delineated as both concrete and abstract, neo-realist and alternative, playfully humorous yet strikingly serious all at the same time. Dorado’s characters, as stated before, are real people dealing with the stigma of diseases such as AIDS (the subject of her play \textit{Positivas}), or those who barely survived the March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2004 terrorist attacks in Madrid’s subway system (\textit{Oxígeno}). Her characters struggle with the angst of such pressures as the difficulty of interpersonal relationships while trying to survive in the job world (in her play \textit{La pecera}), the mysterious nature of women and men’s need to explore this (investigated in \textit{El secreto de las mujeres}), and the ardent desire yet concomitant confusion and lack of knowledge of young people who wish to engage in sexual relations (the topic of her monologue \textit{Hoy es el día}).

Nonetheless, despite the realism of her characters and settings, alternative elements do seep into her works. Her play \textit{Confesiones}, in which three women ‘confess’ to each other their first sexual experience, begins realistically and then projects into a more stream-of-consciousness exploration of one’s interior sexual psyche, or her piece \textit{Lo que callan las madres}, a tale that commences with the common scenario of a teenage daughter who desires to know about sex and her over-protective mother who is reticent to

\textsuperscript{197} See the Introduction for details on this term.
indulge her quest for knowledge, only later to project into the oneiric, where mother and daughter, divided throughout much of the play, finally re-connect and appear to reconcile on a dream-like level.

The topics in Yolanda Dorado’s theatre range from violence and murder (Por un jersey, Bienvenido al Klan, Oxígeno), to AIDS (Positivas), to the difficulties of interpersonal relationships (La pecera, El secreto de las mujeres, El sueño de África), to explicit discussions of sex and sexuality (Confesiones, Lo que callan las madres, Hoy es el día). Although they differ in content (described above) and form (many are dialogues, some are monologues, sometimes there are many stage directions, sometimes there are hardly any), all of her plays present memorable and relatable characters who reflect some aspect of all of us, and who engage in similar struggles and conflicts with sex, relationships, the work world, and the quest for identity and recognition. As we shall see, many of her works also examine the intricacies of power and power relations in which her characters inevitably become enmeshed.

Interestingly enough, however, power relations in her theatre have not been among the topics most analyzed by critics. In fact, very little critical attention in general has been given to the plays of Yolanda Dorado, most likely because she still is a rather new author, perhaps since she pertains to a relatively unknown and unanalyzed group of alternative playwrights198, and also, I feel, because she delves into many topics that still unsettle audiences even today. Of the pittance of critical inquiry into her works exist only a few articles and press releases. For example, her well-received play El secreto de las

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198 A group that includes, for example, Margarita Reiz, Ana Casas, Eva Hibernia, Inmaculada Alvear, Victoria Paniagua, Laila Ripoll, etc.
mujeres appeared only minimally in press releases and was referred to in those titles as “una comedia sobre la guerra de sexos” (Juan Fernández, La Verdad 23-8-2000\textsuperscript{199}) or “la absurda búsqueda del secreto de las mujeres” (M.C., Diario Siete Días de Lucena 20-3-1999 page 14\textsuperscript{200}). No in-depth analysis (to my knowledge) exists for that play, or for others such as Por un jersey, Bienvenido al Klan, Confesiones, Lo que callan las madres or Hoy es el día. The only ‘somewhat’ studied of her works is her 2003 play La pecera, analyzed, for example, for its pessimism (López Mozoo’s “La lucha por la vida: La pecera” from 2001), its form (Pérez Jiménez’s “Panorama formal-estilistico de la dramaturgia femenina actual” in Dramaturgias femeninas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: Espacio y tiempo, editor José Romera Castillo), or the spatial-temporal element of the work (Escalonilla López’s “Mecanismos y función del elemento espacio-temporal en La pecera, de Yolanda Dorado” in Dramaturgias femeninas en la segunda mitad del siglo XX: Espacio y tiempo). Other than a few critical investigations of Yolanda Dorado’s works, she still largely remains an untapped resource, with the issues in her works discussed less in formal critical analyses and more in informal open exchanges such as the audience-playwright debate focused on the topic “Personajes, ¿de qué quieren hablar?” succeeding her plays Confesiones and Lo que callan las madres during Madrid’s 2006 Fall Festival.

As this general study concentrates on various aspects of character (as seen in the works of Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín in the previous chapters), the very colorful

\textsuperscript{199} Cited in Fernández’s article “El grupo de teatro Ñaque estrena ‘El secreto de las mujeres,’ de Yolanda Dorado”\textsuperscript{200} Cited in M.C.’s article “‘El secreto de las Mujeres,’ última obra de la compañía ‘Teatro Ñaque’”
and recognizable characters of Yolanda Dorado’s theatre will remain again the focus within this chapter. As with Yolanda Pallín and Paloma Pedrero, Dorado’s characters reflect contemporary society as they seek answers to issues about love, identity, relationships, and most certainly sex and sexuality. They find themselves ensnared in internal struggles with topics such as maternity, the job world, coming of age, and growing old. They exist both in the ‘reality’ of contemporary society as well as an alternative, projected, imaginary realm that we shall later discuss. Much of Dorado’s theatre, I believe, presents characters who attempt to deal with conflict and angst in their lives, but who are all (usually) acutely aware of the power relations that encase them and often struggle against these relations or seek to undo and even redo the relations, thus shifting the power structurings in which they find themselves. As stated before, this chapter examining the works of Yolanda Dorado intends to continue the discussion of the periphery as it relates to sexuality and power. Her characters, as we shall see, are affected in some way by the ‘margin’ in that they are often peripheral figures, powerless in society, and aim to shift this situation so that it becomes more ‘empowering’ for themselves, or sometimes they are the ones in power and choose to marginalize others in order to maintain that power. In other instances, the power relations that affect the characters develop in unique and complex ways, provoking a re-consideration of how power usually impinges on such subjects, or what happens when power acts on such individuals. No matter the way in which power affects the characters, I submit that

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201 This does not mean that previous playwrights (Pedrero and Pallín) in this study do not present characters who struggle with power relations; this section attempts to consider and elucidate one particularly noteworthy characteristic of the characters in the works of both Yolanda Dorado and Margarita Reiz, and that is the high degree to which their characters recognize, are embedded in, or attempt to change or undo the power relations that affect them.
through ‘sexing themselves,’ (hence the title of this section, and to be explained more thoroughly in each play’s analysis), Dorado’s characters shift, confound, or unsettle their status (whether it be on the margin or not) of power through the lens of sex and sexuality. Viewing her characters with this particular lens, in my opinion, greatly enriches any and all readings of her plays.
4) Constitutive confessions: Confesiones

As Judith Butler states, the power relations or structurings not only ‘act on’ the subject but many times ‘enact’ subjects into being, *(The Psychic Life of Power)* 13, and this notion of ‘enacting into being’, in this chapter signified by the term ‘constitution’202, is the primary focus of the analysis in Dorado’s first play. The term ‘constitute’ in this essay will build off of the idea of piecing things (specifically verbal articulations, ‘confessions’) together to arrive at a clear conception of the issue that is revealed when these pieces are assembled, as we shall see in more detail later. Dorado’s unpublished work *Confesiones*, written in 2000 and premiered in 2006203, relates the lives of three unconnected women who happen to coincide in the waiting room of their gynecologist. One of the women has vaginal herpes, another has arrived to undergo an ovarian ultrasound, and the third is present for a post-abortion checkup. The play commences innocently enough as the women engage in polite exchanges about why they are present in the gynecologist’s office, yet the plot shifts as they begin to recall their first sexual experiences, the details of which are not necessarily pleasant204. As the women ‘confess’ their first-time past sexual unpleasantries to each other, they reveal their innermost thoughts and secrets about their relations, and their separate experiences begin almost to fuse into one fluid expression of repressed (and internalized) pain, unspoken desire, in addition to indirect assignation of blame.

202 More detailed explanation about the meaning of the word ‘constitution’ will follow.
203 Before its 2006 theatrical premiere in the Sala Cuarta Pared, the work was presented in the form of a dramatic reading in 2002.
204 Usually, people’s stories of their ‘first times’ are romantic and memorable, but Dorado’s characters choose to portray their ‘first times’ in a much different manner.
As they agree to ‘confess the unconfessable,’ the women’s confessions ultimately reveal how they have been controlled and manipulated by others around them (such as their boyfriends, first time sexual partners, or husbands), and eventually by the very sex acts themselves (the mechanisms of disempowerment). It also appears that, through their ‘confessions’ to each other, they have encountered a measure of strength and empowerment so long denied them, yet the play also rotates this issue and allows the reader/spectator the opportunity to question the degree to which this so-deemed ‘empowerment’ actually occurs or if the reverse (a disempowerment) is effected. Whatever the case, the three women do expound upon the ramifications and potential entrapments of sexual experiences, and, through their confessions, result in exposing unpleasant or forbidden topics such as spousal rape, abortion, and a tendency toward sexual violence, topics whose verbalization in public (especially for women) is often frowned upon and discouraged\textsuperscript{205}. Through their confessions, they are able to constitute or reveal a different identity (exactly whose identity is constituted is a fact to be revealed later), thus altering the power relations leading to sexual expression and also displaying the powerful repressive mechanisms that had silenced them for so long.

The title of this section, ‘constitutive confessions’, as partially explained already, speaks to the idea that the characters appear to ‘constitute’ for themselves a different identity that amplifies the titles given of them, indicated in this particular play as ‘woman with vaginal herpes,’ ‘woman for ovarian ultrasound,’ and ‘woman for post-

\textsuperscript{205} As we shall see, they do not blatantly aim to negativize their experiences but their verbalization of them leads to a complex web of power intricacies that ultimately shifts the reception of characters and the consideration of sex acts, as well as the power relations in the play.
abortion checkup.' Later, however, the play proves more complex than this, and the phrase ‘appears to’ is crucial.

These characters, as I hope to show, alter power relations (and also ‘sex themselves’ through what they articulate) through ‘confessing’ sexual tales whose onus had plagued them for so long, and hence expose the mechanisms of control that had forced them into silence. In confessing their innermost thoughts, fears, and painful memories of their ‘first times,’ these characters express the inexpressible, resulting in the formation of an identity, and together, again, appear to pose a resistance and a challenge to that which has until the present moment disempowered them; yet, as the plot slowly unravels, the play proves how appearances may be misleading.

Before entering into the text itself, one is forced to consider how the very title perfectly encapsulates the topic at hand: the notion of ‘confessions’, in the plural, since the play is comprised of the multiple ‘confessions’ of the three female medical patients, all of whom are stricken with a medical affliction that most likely has stigmatized them either in society or in their interpersonal relationships. An alternate title for the play is La primera vez, which, like the term ‘constitution,’ requires an expanded understanding due to the fact that the play does not just deal with the descriptions of the ‘first time’ each of the women engages in sexual activity, but also references the ‘first time’ that the women truly confess the reality of those times (as well as the reality of people involved with them in the sexual acts), de-sensationalizing their experiences and later exposing the first time these women discuss their sexual ‘fantasies’ (or so they think). The play also signifies the ‘first time’ that these characters, through their confessions, appear to possess

206 Later, however, the play proves more complex than this, and the phrase ‘appears to’ is crucial.
207 As we shall later see, at one point they agree to relate to each other that which they have never told anyone before.
a degree of power, thus undoing the sexual stigma that has been assigned them and therefore re-formulating a new identity that arises through the candid relations of their sexual past and present. However, as we shall see in the analysis of the play itself, those confessions that ‘constitute’ do not operate in the normal way but instead proffer an alternative or, one might argue, a ‘marginal’ reading of confession itself and what it accomplishes208.

The play opens in the gynecologist’s office waiting area where there are “Tres mujeres” (3), who are described only as “un herpes vaginal, una ecografía de ovarios y una revisión post-aborto” (3). Each of the women is self-absorbed and separately distracted in what she is doing: “La mujer herpes se mueve inquieta, la mujer eco no deja de beber agua, la mujer aborto mira una revista de bebés” (3), and none initially speak to each other. The stage directions describe a “silencio tenso” (3) that permeates the atmosphere, and in which each woman feels almost compelled to exchange niceties with the others (Mujer eco: “Hola… Mujer herpes: Buenas… Mujer aborto: Encantada. . . . Mujer herpes… ¿Ecografía?... Mujer eco: De ovarios, ¿y tú? Mujer herpes… Herpes. . . . Mujer aborto: Revisión. . . . Post-aborto Mujer herpes, mujer eco: ¡Vaya!” 3). The stage directions continue to describe how each appears completely focused on what she is doing (“Cada una en lo suyo. Picores. Agua. Revista” 3) as they wait for the gynecologist to attend to them. This initial ‘silence’ between these women who all have something in common (as we soon see) recalls what Michel Foucault wrote in his landmark text A

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208 In the traditional view of ‘confessions’, one’s deepest truth that is tied to one’s self surfaces through the verbalization of the confession, and the utterance of that essential ‘truth’ appears to reveal the core of the self of the individual, also endowing the confessing with a power as he/she articulates it; therefore, any notion of confession that deviates from such a model I shall treat as ‘marginal’ or ‘peripheral’ for the purposes of this study.
regarding the idea that if sex in general is repressed, the mere articulation of it represents a transgression to those who utter it, and especially if the one speaking of it stands outside of power relations (6). This seems to be the case with these women at the beginning of the play since they appear to have nothing substantial to say to each other and all are uncomfortable (or even fearful) at even initiating conversation. As if already disempowered to a certain degree because of their medical conditions related to some sexual disorder (all of which in society are denigrated with regard to women\textsuperscript{210}), the inceptive verbalizations of these women are short and only comprised of a few words, each separated and maintained isolated in that “silencio tenso” (3).

Thus, at first, as described in the stage directions, these women do appear reticent to discuss what they truly desire to and are infused with an uncomfortability and a fear to talk about their cases. Yet, the women slowly engage in a different and sexualized register of discussion that is initiated when the Woman with herpes asks if the gynecologist (assumed to be male) lowers their libido (“¿El ginecólogo no os baja la libido?” 3). At first neither of the other two understands what she means (“¿Eh?” 3) and the Woman getting the ultrasound even asks “¿Qué es la libido?” (3), to which the woman who posed the question, the one with herpes, herself also appears unsure (“El deseo, ¿no?” 3). Almost immediately, the three women begin to connect with each other

\textsuperscript{209} The subsequent quote discusses the relationship between sex and power in terms of repression in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century that Foucault described, yet part of his argument in his work was that that very claim holds true still today, and Dorado’s play serves as one such example.

\textsuperscript{210} Although the woman receiving an ultrasound may appear innocuous enough, the very fact that she has to undergo a procedure that often is used to diagnose aberrant reproductive disorders is sufficient to stigmatize her as much as the others.
on a much deeper level as they relate their own sexual pasts, a discussion that harkens back to Foucault’s repressive hypothesis\textsuperscript{211}, proving that mechanisms thought to ‘control’ or ‘repress’ sex and sexuality\textsuperscript{212} ironically led to its proliferation (“A censorship of sex? There was installed rather an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy” \textit{The History of Sexuality Volume I} 23). For Foucault, “these discourses on sex did not multiply apart from or against power, but in the very space and as the means for its exercise” (Ibid 32), and that is precisely what occurs with these women, who finally ‘break their silence’ in discussing sex and sexuality and slowly appear to empower themselves\textsuperscript{213}. As the questions flow from their mouths, they begin to combine their articulations, finishing each others’ statements: \textit{Mujer eco}: “¿Y de qué depende del deseo? \textit{Mujer aborto}: ¿Del día del mes? \textit{Mujer herpes}: ¿De si estás depilada? \textit{Mujer aborto}: ¿De que no lleves las bragas marrones de cuello alto que te sientan como un tiro?” (3). The real breakthrough with these women, however, occurs when each specifies what her idea of sex is: for the Woman with herpes, “el sexo es…mágico”, for the Woman post-abortion, “el sexo es…visceral”, but, the most interesting comment comes from the Woman having the ultrasound, for whom “El sexo ES control” (4), an utterance that will become increasingly more important at the end of the play as well.

As the discussion between the women continues, it is crucial again to recall Foucault’s text, in which he claims that “What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in

\textsuperscript{211} Defined as the belief that sex has always been repressed, and that liberation is the only way to be free from that repression
\textsuperscript{212} These ‘mechanisms’ for the three women in this play will soon be discussed.
\textsuperscript{213} Again, the degree to which this actually occurs will be dealt with later.
terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss…” (The History of Sexuality Volume I 7). Shortly following this discussion, the three women do, in fact, speak of sex as ‘repression’ as they divulge their first sexual experiences and later how these initial sexual experiences affected their sexual selves. As the women continue to talk in an almost stream-of-consciousness display, the Woman having an ultrasound claims that it is not actually the gynecologist who lowers one’s libido, but rather years or time gone by (“La libido no te la baja el ginecólogo, te la bajan los años”), and the Woman with herpes qualifies this statement, adding that the other thing that lowers their libido is “las malas experiencias” (4). As they finish the sentences of the other women, each woman begins to reminisce about a time before the “malas experiencias”, a time when all was possible: “cuando todo era posible. . . . y el deseo era una cosquilla en el estómago” (4), a reference to an almost surreal period when each possessed certain winsome notions about sex (before their ‘first time’), ideas that drastically changed when each woman experienced sex for the first time.

The women, however, verbalize that, despite their youthful illusions about what sex was, they would prefer not to re-live the ‘bad experiences’, a foreshadowing for the future revelations expressed later on: Mujer eco: “No volvería atrás a no ser que fuera… Mujer aborto: …Sabiendo lo que sé… Mujer herpes: …para no repetir… Mujer aborto: …las malas experiencias…” (4). As we shall see, as each woman ‘confesses’ the harsh reality of her first-time experience, she, again appears to construct for herself a distinct identity and create the semblance of an investment with power (i.e., giving the
appearance that they become empowered). Yet, the ‘confessions’ of these women regarding their first times result in something far more complex than a mere liberating, revelatory, self-constitutive exercise for them, and those ‘bad experiences’ they would like not ever to repeat surface in their confessions about their past sexual activities.

For Foucault, confession is specifically treated as part of the judicial-legal system and serves to reinforce (hetero)normative sexualities as well as transform sex into discourse (eventually creating a ‘scientia sexualis’), involving power since an authoritative figure usually requires or demands the confessions of citizens that can erroneously lead them to believe that they ‘are’ what they confess (The History of Sexuality Volume I 59 – 61). Although power can be both constraining and constructive, confession for him is problematic since it has become naturalized and expected throughout time, despite the coercive force it often exerts on subjects, and also because of the notion that it is seen as therapeutic in its revelatory praxis, when it really is only a cultural construction. For Foucault, then, confession, the divulging of the innermost, dirty secrets of one’s sexual self, is internalized and believed to be responsible for subjecthood, that is, what essentially makes us who we are and what provides us with ‘truth’.

Applying this viewpoint to Dorado’s play, one begins to see the unique (or one might even say, ‘marginal’) way that confession is treated, for, although a cursory glance could easily surmise in her play that the sexually inflected confessions of each of these

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214 In his text, Foucault criticizes the fact that subjects who confess are led to believe that confession serves as liberation and a way to arrive at truth; he argues that those who confess are truly subjected to those authoritative powers that demand confession from subjects and convince them that, through confession, they become thinking subjects aware of their own subjecthood (thus “subjects in both senses of the word”).
three women serve to ‘constitute’ for themselves their core, inner identity that gives them their sense of ‘subjecthood’ and that empowers them (since what they articulate has never before broken forth due to power constraints), I believe, conversely, that Dorado has purposefully presented such a subterfuge in her play (ascribing instead to a Foucauldian notion of confession), in order to demonstrate that there are many more complex, deeper workings of power than what at first seems to be the case. While it appears that confession for these three initially serves the more traditional conceptualization (explained earlier), I believe that Dorado inverts the usual associations of confession coupled with subject constitution, thus redoing the concept of confession into something other than the expected and usual truth-constituting, subject-forming articulations it provides.

One must consider Foucault’s view on the dangers of confession and its misinterpretation: “It is in the context of this continuous incitement to discourse and to truth that the real mechanisms of misunderstanding operated” (*History of Sexuality Volume I* 56), as well as the problematics (according to him) of how “sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous, precious or formidable” (Ibid, my emphasis), thus showing how using sex to establish truth is highly dangerous and problematic. For the characters of Dorado’s play, confession is treated more in the Foucauldian manner, and hence differently than the traditional idea of confession. It is viewed as such as something that does not and should not provide one
with a sense of ‘truth’ of who subjects are\textsuperscript{215}. I hence submit that, instead of these women’s confessions showing who they are, their confessions constitute\textsuperscript{216} the nature of something else, generally those who manipulated them (their partners in their ‘first times’) and what they are like, and specifically the mechanisms (defined herein as the social situations or structurings in which the sexual partners of these women exerted control or power over them) that structure sexual power relationships around these women; thus, their confessions are constitutive in a different and atypical way since the confessions delineate more the character and nature of those people and mechanisms that disempowered them instead of themselves\textsuperscript{217}. Thus, the confessions appear to be theirs, but succeed in revealing sins of others, not of them. In this sense, Dorado establishes a type of ruse that leads readers/ spectators down one path (that which bolsters the self-creating, truth-revealing power of confession), only later to ‘shed light’\textsuperscript{218} on the real selves that come to be constituted through confession, thus demonstrating the complex nature of the confessions in this drama. Confession, then, for the characters in this play,

\textsuperscript{215} It is crucial to address what may appear to be a contradiction in my argument: I argue that, confession for Foucault inveighs against something that establishes ‘truth’ for those who confess, and Dorado’s play may be analyzed in a way to support this viewpoint of confession. Yet, I also maintain that their confessions ‘constitute’ (i.e. reveal or construct the reality of) the mechanisms of control and the players in them that disempowered these women who confess, which one may argue is an establishment of ‘truth’ about those apparatuses of control. In order to reconcile this paradox, I submit that, for the purposes of this essay, revelations are not tantamount to ‘truth’ but rather only ‘reveal’ something, as if drawing back a curtain on the topic, while ‘truth’ signifies the inner, essential core of something or someone. I thus choose to argue that ‘constitutions’, in this essay, do not signify that which creates or establishes truth, but instead mean that which reveals the way by which those mechanisms operate.

\textsuperscript{216} Here, the notion of ‘constitute’ is not intended to signify ‘to create from nothing’ but rather to weave together already existing traces of information in order to reveal the deeper structures present; as stated earlier on, it can indicate ‘to enact into being,’ and, for this study, ‘enacting into being’ will be used to mean ‘to reveal for the first time’.

\textsuperscript{217} Again, while this appears to fall into the trap described by Foucault in his text (i.e. using sex(uality) to constitute/ reveal anything) [refer again to previous few notes], I feel that Dorado uses the basis of Foucault’s idea with regard to the actual confessing women, and hence develops her argument around Foucault’s point while also expanding this argument to suit the needs of her own play.

\textsuperscript{218} The notion of light becomes important in the upcoming confessions.
can be said to serve a dual function, that of not only constituting the nature of the ‘first’ ones who disempowered and de-legitimated or stigmatized these women, but also revealing the means by which sexuality itself affects the three patients (discussed later).

This ‘confessive constitution’ commences with the Woman who had an abortion and who describes her ‘first time’ with her boyfriend, a rather unpleasant, painful, and almost castigatory experience for her. Returning again to his theories in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses the crucial interlocking of disciplinary power and visibility: “Disciplinary power. . . is exercised through a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (187). In Dorado’s text, interestingly enough, the first character to ‘confess’ her sexual past opens her confession with a powerful visual symbol: the color red. I believe that the prevalence of a color in the confession of all three characters underscores perfectly Foucault’s point: in order for those who held power over the women to maintain that power, the ‘discipline’ (here a sexual domination) had to be visible, as well as those on whom it acted (the three women). The Woman who had an abortion describes her first time by means of this color metaphor: “Para mí el sexo tiene un color. . . El rojo” (5). She goes on to detail the horrific pain and displeasure of her first time, and the cruel treatment she received from her partner (although she does not appear to note the negativity of the experience as much as its effect is intended to impact the reader/spectator):

Estábamos nerviosos, él tampoco sabía. Cuando la metió noté algo raro…
Empecé a sangrar…pero no esa sangrecita leve de las virgenes, no, lo mío era un manantial, un río, un caudal de sangre que me bajaba por las piernas…una hemorragia en toda regla…Noté que el asiento empezaba a mojarse…no me atrevía a moverme…Entonces él se dio cuenta…se separó con un grito de horror…vio la tragedia abrió la puerta del coche y…me botó…Comprenderlo, le estaba manchando la tapicería del coche de su padre (5)

The comments from the other women (and from this woman as well) following her confession speak to the violent and denigrating manner of this first time. These women describe it as “obsesiva”, “castradora”, and, especially, “reveladora” (5, my emphasis), an interesting word choice since the ‘confession’ of this sexual experience (as stated before) contributes to and ‘reveals’ (hence, ‘constitutes’) the character and identity not of those women who confessed but rather of those who damaged them. The significance of the red color easily connotes blood but also may signify a stain, or a marking of their disempowered bodies, for, after hearing her description, the women all add that they desire to strive to remain ‘marked’ by this experience for the rest of their lives: “nos empeñamos….en permanecer marcadas…por esa experiencia…para toda la vida” (5, my emphasis), a seemingly odd comment yet not misplaced. I believe that these characters wish to wear the marks of this experience on their bodies not for themselves,
but for those who inflicted such pain on them, for these ‘marks’ are not a badge of their own shame but of those who made them bear it, and should always remain visible\textsuperscript{219}.

The next woman (Woman with herpes) also chooses a color to describe her first sexual experience, and this time it is yellow. As with the first story, this woman’s confession does not point to her own inner sexual character but rather those around her, specifically the counselor with whom she had sex for the first time in a summer camp.

And, yet again, the mechanisms of control prove to function in the same way as with the first woman: denigration followed by abuse, slightly more intense than the first woman\textsuperscript{220}. This woman’s color choice is yellow since “Me gusta hacerlo con la luz encendida” (5). Again, what appears to commence as an innocent tale takes a much different turn as she describes how her first time led to violence:

Cuerpos sudados de verano, cuerpos jóvenes…Lo hice con el monitor. No me dolió, él ya sabía. Luego me puso a cuatro patas…no es lo que estáis pensando…me dio un golpe en el culo, una tortita, pequeña, indiscreta.

Me gustan los hombres con las manos largas, sólo un poquito, lo justo, una tortita aquí, un bofetón allá…Nada. Y la palabra en el momento adecuado.

Ven aquí guarrita…a la luz del día, para verlo todo bien (5)

While the red of the first confession did not only signify the blood of the encounter but also a stain, not upon the woman telling the tale but rather the one who wronged her (although it is clear that each woman is also pathologized for her sexual deficiency), this

\textsuperscript{219} Again, Dorado succeeds through confession in constituting not the character or self of the three who confess but rather of those who exercised violence against them and who attempted to disempower them.

\textsuperscript{220} As each woman relates her sexual past, the level of abuse and violence escalates with each confession, providing a clearer idea of the apparatuses of control that operate on these women.
confession also is significant since it not only signals the controlling presence of the woman’s partner, but also reveals how certain aberrant sexual proclivities (in this case, violence that supersedes S/M)\textsuperscript{221} can be perceived (by the one who has them foisted on him/her) as natural or acceptable, consequently ‘illuminating’ the harmful and damaging mechanisms of sexuality meant to control and deceive these women. The ‘yellow’ in this confession, that of the “luz encendida,” may symbolically refer to the ‘casting light on’ the true nature of those mechanisms (in this case the camp counselor, another authoritative figure like the boyfriend in the first) that have rendered powerless these women, contributing to the growing constitution of the entire apparatus that has disempowered them.

Additionally, the notion of ‘punishment’ becomes crucial to interpret the confessions of these women (specifically seen in the second and third confessions): for Butler, “…the internalization of punishment is the very production of the self, and it is in this production that pleasure and freedom are curiously located” (The Psychic Life of Power 75), something she insinuates (at least in part) as being problematic. What this means for these three who confess is that, even when something as egregious as, in this case, sexual punishment or control occurs, these women, through confession, believe they develop a sense of self, that has made them seem to be aware of who they are internally (they thus accept, at least in part, the more traditional beliefs about what confession accomplishes). In ‘internalizing’ the punishment as the Woman with herpes does here, as

\textsuperscript{221} One may argue that even extreme violence or S/M related sexual practices are acceptable as long as they are consensual; in this case, the presentation does not relate the events in a flattering manner but rather reveals how some use violence to control and disempower others, and others can and do internalize this manipulation, a point Dorado appears to proffer as problematic.
Butler suggests, they delude themselves into feeling a ‘freedom’ or ‘pleasure’ from such experiences (recall that this second woman appears to enjoy the pain associated with her sexual experience), when really, this is a false sense of self (recall Foucault). For these women, as we shall see, there is no true ‘self’ for them that is created through their confessions. Instead, as mentioned before, what occurs here is a different or inverted outcome for confession, holding a ‘metaphorical’ mirror (i.e., the ‘light’) up to society’s authoritative figures, and constituting not those who confess but the ones who, in typical society, are usually the confessors.\footnote{In this play, the confessors would likely be hegemonic society.}

The final confession, that of the Woman having an ultrasound, requires some coercion from the other two women, since she initially is reticent to divulge her story (“Si es que no hay nada que contar, un rollo, con mi marido…” 6). Finally she agrees to tell her tale on one condition (“Lo cuento con una condición”): “Que nos atrevamos a contar algo inconfesable. . . . Algo que no os atreváis a contar a nadie, que sea perverso, o pecaminoso, o morboso…no sé…secreto” (6). This caveat relates to Butler’s theory about subjection and subordination. For Butler, “…within subjection [defined by her as the condition of being a subject through power] the price of existence is subordination”, meaning that, in order to be a “subject”, using her term, (thus ‘powered’ in some way), one pays the price of also being subordinated (The Psychic Life of Power 20). The subject for Butler, not only is often subordinated to some dominant form of power, but also looks outside of itself (perhaps toward sexual structurings) to validate its own existence:

“Bound to seek recognition of its own existence in categories, terms, and names that are
not of its own making, the subject seeks the sign of its own existence outside itself, in a discourse that is at once dominant and indifferent” (Ibid).

This statement proves true for these women who, again, ‘appear’ to define themselves through their sexual fantasies. For example, when the Woman having an ultrasound encourages the others to confess along with her that which is ‘inconfessable,’ Foucault would (again) argue that they believe that, through this confession, they are achieving subjecthood and arriving at some deep truth of who they really are, defined through their confessions, when, in fact, they just are participating in a cultural construct and contributing to their own disempowerment. I believe that these women have internalized their subordination at the hands of those who have controlled them wielding power (specifically, their sexual partners, who often make them believe they enjoy punishment), and thus, in true Foucauldian theory, have accepted this powerlessness or disempowerment, and thus defined themselves through the monikers and sexual taxonomies that society has foisted on them (‘Woman with herpes,’ ‘Woman having an ultrasound,’ ‘Woman following an abortion’).223

Hence, Dorado presents to the reader/ spectator the means to question the degree to which these women are truly ‘empowered’ or ‘disempowered’. On one hand, the women may have internalized their powerless sexual situations (see the earlier confession with regard to their apparent acceptance and nonchalance concerning the sexual abuse); yet, on the other hand, the power relations are complicated by these same characters’

223 This is evidenced in the first two confessions first by the Woman after an abortion who describes in a matter of fact manner the pain and bleeding of her first sexual experience, and second by the Woman with herpes who claims to enjoy being struck during sex.
confessions as they also shift those power relations by revealing the dirty truth of their abusive relationships, and appear to manipulate this position of subordination in society (already established since the beginning of the play) in order to achieve power as separate from the mechanism that opposes their utterance of the ‘unconfessable’ regarding sex and sexuality. In other words, Dorado has purposefully created characters who appear to have accepted their conditions and societal delineations, only to turn them on their head later and use those same positionings of disempowerment as an avenue from which to expound upon (and verbalize) what they have been prevented from uttering, thus appearing to empower themselves. However, the success of such uprooting and transplantation of power may be more complex than at first glance.

The confession by the Woman having an ultrasound begins as the other two began, in denominating a color to describe her first sexual experience: “Para mí el sexo empezó siendo blanco. El blanco de la tortura de un quirófano” (6). Like the others, she describes the pain of her first sexual experience:

La noche de bodas él no pudo…No entraba, no cabía, no se rompía, no había manera posible…Tuvimos que ir a Urgencias. Me rompieron el himen con un bisturí…Tantos años esperando ese momento…Me dolió. Al día siguiente mi marido se echó encima de mí y dijo tres palabras…TOMA-TOMA-TOMA…Yo, otras tres: SIGUE-SIGUE-SIGUE. Somos pocos habladores. Nunca he estado con otro hombre. Martes, jueves, y sábados. Luego me levanto, me ducho, beso a los niños, bebo agua y me duermo (6).
As with the prior confessions, this one, too, carries the significance of appearing to ascribe to the sexual subordination (signified, like the others, by its matter-of-fact and accepted depiction of abuse) in order to expose it through confession and thus achieve empowerment through its articulation. Yet, this confession differs from the others in that, following the painful and negative utterance (although the Woman may not necessarily describe it as negative, the reader/spectator recognizes it as such), the Woman having an ultrasound decides to divulge her deepest fantasies, that are depicted in a more positive manner, and delivered in such a way that the Woman indicates that such fantasies never would have become actualized without her first being subordinated, and also that she is gaining power through the utterance of those fantasies, again contributing to the possibility that she has recovered from the bad situation something liberating and ‘power’-full. Therefore, Dorado again seems to present the onlooker with sufficient fodder to contemplate the status of power for these characters, encouraging queries such as, ‘Does this verbalization of sexual fantasy (on the heels of a negative sexual confession) empower these women or does it solidify the already existing powerlessness of the three characters? Does the articulation truly signify a characterization of these women’s internal sexual selves or is it used to undermine the power status of the repressive structures in which these women are bound up? Or, do the confessions have anything truly to do with sex(uality) at all or is it a subrogation for something else?’ In order to consider these questions more deeply, one must look at the nature of the divulging of her fantasy.
The Woman having an ultrasound describes how the boredom of her sexual routine piqued her interest in sexual fantasy, imagining other men (other than her husband) as her sexual partners:

Pero…empecé a tener sueños…fantaseaba mientras lo hacíamos…y él era otro, otros, hombres sin rostro, hombres que me hablaban, hombres que me apretaban los pezones hasta que gritaba de dolor, y soñaba que me ataban entre varios, y que mi boca era un río lleno de agua, y que mi sexo era el mar expandiéndose….Mi secreto es que…me he dedicado a perfeccionar mis fantasías. Al volver de la compra paso por el sexshop. He comprado algunas cosas….Un día entré en una cabina para ver cómo lo hacían….Luego, llego a mi casa, mi marido me toca, yo fantaseo con el del sexshop y tan a gusto (7).

The conundrum of whether such a sexually revelatory passage either empowers or disempowers the speaker may again be examined via the theorizations of Judith Butler regarding power and its effect on the subject. As she writes, power that is exerted ‘on’ subjects eventually is power assumed ‘by’ those same subjects (“A power ‘exerted on’ a subject is nevertheless a power ‘assumed by’ the subject, an assumption that constitutes the instrument of that subject’s becoming.” The Psychic Life of Power 11), meaning that one form of power ultimately leads to another. With regard to the appropriation of power, Butler continues her argument and claims that “the act of appropriation may involve an alteration of power such that the power assumed or appropriated works against the power that made that assumption possible” (Ibid 13), and, to a certain degree, this appears to be
the case here: the silenced woman has finally ‘confessed’ the truth of her inner sexual desires and thus empowers herself, taking power away from the mechanisms that wielded it over her; yet, one also must consider another prong of Butler’s argument in co-articulation with the previous quote, this time about subjection: “…subjection is the paradoxical effect of a regime in power in which the very ‘conditions of existence,’ the possibility of continuing as a recognizable social being, requires the formation and maintenance of the subject in subordination” (Ibid 27), signifying that, even when subjects appear to possess power and be ‘subjects’ in the social sense of the word, they, in fact, continue to be subordinated. While the Woman having an ultrasound appears liberated, powerful, and free in her zeal for sex toys and her fantasies of making love to another man who is not her husband, in the end, she still remains with her abusive husband, a reality that the other women appear to recognize in their exchange following her ‘secret’: Mujer aborto: “¡Qué barbaridad! Mujer Eco: Aunque tenga que ser… Mujer herpes: …a través de la fantasía” (7). The final comment from the Woman with herpes, that this type of freedom may only occur by means of ‘fantasy’ emphasizes Dorado’s potential open-endedness of the possible interpretation of power for this character—she finally is able to experience a sexual freedom on her own terms, yet only through fantastic creation, not rooted in reality. The Woman’s enigmatic (in my estimation) revelation posits her on either end of the power see-saw, at first empowered while she utters that which she has, until now, been unable to utter, yet simultaneously only permitted to experience this ‘freedom’ by means of fantasy and not reality.

Next it is the turn of the Woman with herpes to reveal her secret:
Las monjas me pegaban con un crucifijo en las manos, el cura me pegaba en el culo, mi padre me pegaba en la cara, mi madre me pellizcaba los brazos, mi hermano me tiraba del pelo…PAUSA. Me gusta el sexo porque duele. Si no me dan no me duermo. Es muy difícil encontrar hombres dispuestos a… (7)

As before, the Woman with herpes in her secret initially appears to appropriate the powerlessness she has experienced and transform it into an empowering situation for her (she wants to show that she is in control of how she perceives sexual pain) by claiming that she enjoys rough sex and derives sexual pleasure from being hit (an obvious form of abuse), yet the comments succeeding her secret again point not toward the newfound purported power discovered by the Woman but rather the cycle of violence she has experienced in her life, especially when the Woman having an ultrasound breaks the fourth wall and turns toward the public: *Mujer Eco (mirando al público)*: “…nunca puedes saber quién hay sentado a tu lado…” (8). In doing so, she not only accentuates the impact of the story told by the woman, but also draws attention, in my estimation, not to the Woman who is revealing her secret but rather the ramifications of physical and sexual abuse throughout her life (another manifestation of the mechanisms of sexual control), and the fact that anyone can be not only victim but victimizer as well224.

In the last secret disclosure, the tone drastically changes as the Woman having an abortion describes her sexual fantasy, that turns out to be anything but a fantasy. She commences her sexual revelation by verbalizing how she desired to engage in intercourse

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224 Also signifying that we are all bound up in some sort of sexual power relation; in this case, the ‘victimizers’ could be anyone who forces another into ‘liking’ a sexual situation.
(with any willing party) only during her menstrual cycle: “Para mí el sexo existía cuatro días al mes. Si no tenía sangre no quería sexo. . . Vagaba por el despacho, y por la calle, y por la casa buscando una piel que me consolara, una boca que me quitara la desesperación” (8). As each secret sexual revelation occurs, the level of negativity associated with each woman’s experience also increases (although, as stated before, they themselves may not recognize it as such). The relation of each secret leads to yet another profoundly negative experience, and this is most certainly the case with this last revelation by the Woman who had an abortion, as she relates the intimate details of the circumstances that precipitated the event:

La última relación que tuve sangré como una cochina, me chorreaba por las piernas, manché la ropa, el suelo, la cama…Pensé que era imposible quedarme…ya sabéis…pero…Tuve una falta, así que me hice la prueba. He tenido que abortar, y esa sangre se ha llevado el deseo. . . y sólo pensar en hacerlo me pone los pelos de punta, me he quedado vacía…es triste, lo sé… (8)

What began as an uncontrollable desire almost for ravishment during her menstrual cycle becomes the pitiful tale of circumstances that led her to have to undergo an abortion. Once again, forces beyond her control have re-possited her in a position of powerlessness and stigmatization. Even more importantly, following her story of blood and abortion, she begins the most crucial discourse of the entire play, speaking rhetorically to the other women in the play, but, in my opinion, pointedly towards the reader/ spectator as well, asking:
¿Vosotras sabéis la energía que se pierde con el sexo? ¿Y el tiempo?
¿Qué me decís del tiempo? Tienes que conocer a alguien, que te guste, que seas compatible, en tu casa o en la mía, comprarle ropa sexy, depilarte continuamente, no puedes ponerte calcetines para dormir, ni comer cebolla en la cena, ni eructar, por no hablar de… en fin… ¡qué pereza! Ahora que no pienso en el sexo me siento liberada, como si me hubiera quitado un peso de encima (8, my emphasis)

I believe that the true power structurings in the play are exposed during this discourse:
the real power that controls these women comes from the sex acts themselves (also acting through the players with whom these women involve sexually); these three women never truly possess or wield very much power at all (although one or even they themselves may think they do), and what ultimately is proven is that sex has continued and continues to run their lives, bringing negative consequences to all of them (even imbuing their fantasies with a twisted sense of what is pleasurable). The comment by the Woman who had an abortion that, when she does not think of sex, she only then feels liberated reiterates Foucault’s thesis: that sexuality is not one’s true essence that defines one above all else, but only a social construction designed to keep people under control. After this commentary, the three women begin to bicker about their sexual situations, a scenario that Dorado again appears purposefully to have injected in order solely to underscore her previous thesis about sexuality as “control”: Mujer aborto: “Por lo menos no voy por ahí buscando que me zurren. Mujer herpes (rebotada): Oye, que lo mío es culpa de mi educación. Mujer aborto: Ah, ¿sí? Pobrecita, como las monjas le pegaban de pequeña….
Mujer aborto: ¿Te crees superior porque tienes marido? ¿Porque hay un hombre en tu cama todas las noches? ¿Y de qué te sirve? ¿EH? ¿De qué te sirve?‖ (9). Up until nearly the end of the play, sex serves as a catalyst for these women to engage in strife and discord as they essentially argue about who is under more control because of sex (the woman who has to have many sexual partners, the one who likes to be hit during sex, or the woman who needs a husband in her bed), a need that ultimately does not ‘serve’ them at all.

Just when the women are about to go to blows about ‘sex,’ they regain their composure, again returning somewhat to the social niceties of the beginning of the play, and each one delivers one final personal judgment regarding sex. The first two comments, in my estimation, reveal how those two women choose to (or are forced to) remain powerless, under the control of ‘sex’ itself. For the Woman having an ultrasound, apparently accepting what she believes to be the liberatory notions of sex (and perhaps confession), she claims that “El sexo libera tensiones, que lo sepas”, while the Woman with herpes likewise chimes in that “El sexo te ayuda a conocer gente”. The only woman (post-abortion) who appears truly to have grasped the situation, again breaks the fourth wall and turns toward the public, exclaiming:

El sexo te complica la vida. . . . ¿Cuánto tiempo dedican ustedes al día en pensar en el sexo? . . . . Hombres casados: ¿Cuántas veces estás en la oficina, aburridos y fantaseáis con la compañera que hoy lleva minifalda, o la jefa, o la limpiadora, la recepcionista…? Mujeres casadas: ¿Cuántas veces vais en el metro deseando que ocurra algo, un roce, una mirada, un
The final comment in this intense and invaluable commentary serves to drive home what I believe to be Dorado’s main thesis that is complexly threaded throughout the entire play: Sex is not necessarily positive, even when one appears to possess power (the women divulging their secrets) over others (namely those who controlled or abused them) in the utterance of its many secrets (the confessions). The multiple confessions of these women, as already stated, do not signify or reveal anything deeply profound or telling about their own subjecthood or character, but rather serve to hold a mirror up to the mechanisms of sexual power that become constituted verbally through their ‘confessions’, an action that appears empowering yet that ultimately shows that these women are, unfortunately, never truly able to break away from them. Controlled and manipulated by sexual acts, practices, and those who enact them, these characters in the

225 Interestingly enough, the reader/spectator never has the chance to learn of the true nature or real characterization of these women since their discourse is so bound up in sex.
last part wish to express their sexual fantasies and release their ‘libido’ (something they
did not understand at the play’s beginning), yet, their articulation of these fantasies only
serves further to repress that libido and trap it again in the mechanisms of power and the
cycle of abuse and control.

As Butler states, “…the libido is not absolutely negated through repression, but
rather becomes the instrument of its own subjection” (The Psychic Life of Power 78),
applicable to the case herein, in which the libido serves as synecdoche for the entire body
of the women, and indicative of how they become, due to power imbalances, instruments
of their own subjection, suggesting in them both a passivity (the state of their being
repressed and disempowered) as well as an activity (participating in that very same
process of the stripping away of power against them). In the last lines of the play, the
women who have, until now, ‘confessed,’ become, I believe, a type of confessor, as they
again break the fourth wall and turn toward the audience, encouraging them to renounce
sex (concomitantly destroying the power it has over everyone’s lives) and seek out
something better (expressed by the Woman who had an abortion):

Ahora lo único que hay que saber...es cuáles son las cosas
importantes. Si hay entre el público algún caballero que esté de
acuerdo conmigo, que haya renunciado al sexo, que busque una
relación más...pura...voy a estar aquí...primero entro a la
revisión, y luego esperaré un rato... digo yo que entre tanta
gente, alguno habrá que me comprenda, ¿no? (10)
This incitement to the audience is to renounce sex and confess, perhaps if not aloud, then to themselves, the true dangers and ensnaring illusions of sexuality. In essence, these characters ‘sex themselves’ (evidenced in their verbal tales of sexual confessions) in order to make salient the point that they never truly succeed in wrestling away from sex the power it held over them. At the very end of the play, the three women leave as disconnected (and discontented) as when they arrived, still stigmatized, and again reinforcing the titles with which they entered the play. Nonetheless, they did ‘confess’ a tale, not really about themselves, but instead about sex and power, those who wield it, and its long-reaching effects over them. These women successfully inverted the notion that confession builds the character and subjectifies those engaging in its practice, ultimately leading to empowerment; instead, they angle the mirror differently in order to refract the ‘light’ (recall the colors of their confessions) onto the very same apparatuses that strive to remain hidden.

One might question what Dorado’s point would be in creating the forum in which these women bring to light the sexual pain and abuse they have endured (even when they are unaware of or have internalized it), only later to prove that the act of confessing does not accomplish the believed-to-be effect of confession (the creation of the self), nor does it allow the women to experience power; on the contrary, it only serves to reveal (‘constitute’) existing power structures that, at least in the case of these three women, still operate to their disadvantage and render them powerless yet again. One may also inquire as to the unusual and atypical (i.e. ‘marginal’) manner in which confession is presented, in true Foucauldian style, not that which founds for us an inner core but rather that which
is presented as yet another mechanism of control. This short, direct play appears almost simplistic in its plot delivery: these women confess the unconfessable, free themselves from the stigma of their pasts as they (initially) wax romantic about their fantasies and first times, and thus empower themselves, turning the tide against the sexual partners who wronged and manipulated them as they expose the sexual abuse they endured—or so it seems. Nonetheless, Dorado artfully crafts a play as complex as it appears simplistic, and, in this play, appearances do prove to be deceiving. By means of a marginal or non-normative presentation of confession\textsuperscript{226} that does not constitute one’s own self but rather displays the situation and circumstances around those confessing, *Confesiones* aims at demonstrating how one may not always realize the apparatuses of sexual control until one is fully enmeshed in them, and then it may be far too late to effectuate a power reversal.

What, then, in essence, results from these women ‘sexing themselves’ via the confessions of their trysts and fantasies? The point may be that, in this case, ‘sexing themselves’ through confessions about their pasts does not bring fortuitous results, for they do not gain a measure of power, but rather end up acting as instruments in their own subordination as they are trapped within an apparatus of sex and control from which they cannot escape. It could be deemed that the three ‘confessions’ appeared to allow the women a kind of cathartic experience, a release from the stain of stigmatization caused by the manipulative mechanisms of control and those who operated those mechanisms (the color red), to the illumination of those apparatuses and the revelation of how these women have internalized the violence at the hands of their partners (the color yellow),

\textsuperscript{226} ‘Marginal’ in the sense that it lies outside of typical or usual conceptualizations of confession and the power that accompanies it
but, ultimately, they express nothing but a desire (yet inability) to be free from those same mechanisms, as the last disclosure points to a certain wish for cleansing and ‘purification’ (the color white), evidenced in the final speaking part of the one woman who is searching for a more ‘pure’ relationship in life unfettered by sex, a throwback to a time before those sexual ‘bad experiences’ when desire was nothing more than a “cosquilla en el estómago” (4), since, in the end, these women (a microcosm of society in general) still remain within the sexual modes of control that render them powerless, and they will never be able to ‘cleanse themselves’ of the stigma of sex.

For many, the haunting question as to whether these women ever possess any true power still remains. In the last woman’s divulgence of her sexual secret when she turns toward the audience in her final plea to rid themselves of sex, it could be said that she simultaneously empowers and disempowers herself, announcing that she now comprehends the tentacles of sexual power into which she has been drawn, but also is cognizant that she remains within that very trap, herself even unsure as to whether there is anyone in the audience who truly understands her and realizes the situation in which all of us are found (“alguino habrá que me comprenda, ¿no?” 10). As Butler states, “The power imposed upon one is the power that animates one’s emergence, and there appears to be no escaping this ambivalence” (The Psychic Life of Power 198), and this may be the case for the characters in this play. Perhaps Dorado wishes to leave to the reader/spectator the final decision as to the ramifications of power on the characters in Confesiones, and that her point is not that some possess power while others do not, but
that power infiltrates every aspect of our lives, and that, even when one appears to ‘have’ or ‘lack’ power, what really matters is that which is ‘constituted’ in the process.
4 B) Acting ‘out’: Role rejection and role embracement in *Lo que callan las madres*

In her 1997 text *Read My Lips*, sex and gender theorist Riki Wilchins explores the problems associated with social-sexual classifications or categorizations and the expectations that follow them for the often un-legitimated or non-validated groups, especially when such bodies do not wish to espouse those powerful labels that define and/or are foisted on them. She poses the pointed question, “What are labels, anyway, but whole-body condoms to protect us from making intimate contact with each other?” (56), and later develops her hypothesis to augment the problematics of such social labels, arguing that ‘sex’ “is a cultural command that all bodies understand and for which they recognize themselves in a specific way, an identification of our bodies that we are forced to carry around and produce on demand” (Ibid). Another particularly striking comment in Wilchins’s text is directed towards the notion of ‘sex,’ not to be seen as a static noun but rather as an active verb, a command to individuals to adhere to traditional or expected sexual roles and behaviors: “Maybe sex isn’t a noun at all but a verb, as in ‘sex yourself’”, indicative of the reality that, for many groups, there really is no choice in how their sexuality is categorized or manifested—they have no option other than to ‘sex themselves’ (Ibid 57) according to the specific promulgation of society’s mandates.

Although Wilchins’s text concentrates almost exclusively on intersexuals, her argument easily may carry over into other groups whose social labels dictate to them how they are expected to act socially and, more importantly for this study, sexually. The issue

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227 Usually this means that women are expected to be ‘women’ in the traditional sense (married, with children), ‘girls’ or ‘boys’ are supposed to act in a specific manner befitting traditional or normative expectations for them, etc., with the same proving true for all social labels.
at stake for Wilchins, and, ultimately, what Dorado’s play foregrounds, is the notion that one can be forced into ‘acting out’ a sexual role that he/she does not truly wish to embody or enact—one may have to ‘sex oneself’ a certain way in order to be accepted or legitimated, but at what cost, and what are the ramifications of not accepting those roles? One would imagine that the matter of power becomes deeply involved in the process of ‘acting’ sex roles, as the characters in Dorado’s play are forced to embody one set of sex roles (thus being disempowered), only later to reject these and embrace other sex roles (which may indicate empowerment); yet the question of whether they gain any power in the play will be more deeply analyzed. The importance of the word ‘out’ in the phrase ‘acting out’ is crucial since the primary focus in this study is how the characters struggle to act ‘out’side of the roles society has designated for them, while simultaneously they are forced to perform another ‘act’ as they behave according to prescribed norms ‘inside’ or within accepted or foisted taxonomies or definitions, thus performing a double ‘action,’ both inside and to get ‘outside’, while also revealing their frustrations and irritations as they ‘act out’ these feelings on stage. One may also wonder as to the ‘marginality’ of the play (the dominating idea of this entire study)—does it lie in the expression of power (as with the previously analyzed play), or in the embodiments of the characters’ behavior and actions as they ‘role play’ sexual acts or behaviors that are foisted on them and which they do not embrace? Or, does the marginality of the work involve the possibility that the characters will never truly exist ‘inside’ their forced roles or ‘outside’ them either? Just what is the result of acting ‘out’ of their roles and where does it take these characters? All of these complex issues will be dealt with in the
upcoming examination, which ultimately hopes to prove that the characters engage in different types of power relations as they ‘act out’ their sexualities, rejecting some roles foisted on them while embracing others that they construct for themselves.

I have chosen to juxtapose the analysis of this play by Dorado with the previously analyzed piece Confesiones as an attempt to highlight the means by which Dorado again accomplishes a complex and layered analysis of sex(uality) through a very simplistic presentation, allowing for multiple considerations as to the repercussions of acts like confession (for example) as they are linked with power issues, while also permitting the reader/spectator the use of a different lens by which he/she may contemplate sexuality. Although the latter can serve as something that creates or ‘constitutes’ certain bodies as evidenced in the first play, it can also be a divisive and exclusionary force that compels bodies either to play a role they do not espouse, or to seek alternative spaces of expression that are often ‘outside’ what is accepted, as we shall see in this upcoming analysis. Yet, as is usual with Dorado, it is not so simple to proclaim that one play ‘constructs’ certain situations involving power and bodies, and another ‘destructs’ them, and therefore, my most sincere hope for this section on Yolanda Dorado is that the reader/spectator will both understand and appreciate that ‘all is not what it seems’ in her theatre, for many times the most simplistic-appearing presentation in terms of theme often results in the most complexly-construed examinations of the intersectionality of power and sexuality.
Lo que callan las madres, another unpublished work written in 2004 and premiered in 2006\textsuperscript{228}, explores the parallel situations of three women: a young teenager, her mother, and her aunt, all of whom appear to fit perfectly typical delineations of their characters. Yet, as we shall see, all ‘stifle’ (as per the title) their true feelings and desires, which turn out to be far different than the socio-sexual roles they have had to ‘act out’ all their lives. One of the three main characters is the young girl Rocío, a sexually curious thirteen-year old who desires to learn about everything from contraception and orgasms, and hopes to visualize sex in the flesh when she visits a nude beach, something that her liberal, friendly, modern aunt Marta is more than happy to oblige. Another character is Chus, Rocío’s over-protective, worried, slightly jealous and highly ‘motherly’ mother, who feels her daughter is growing up far too fast and who wishes to spend time with her daughter before she becomes a young adult. Yet, as the story progresses, the reader/spectator is made aware that these roles are only a façade, and that all of the characters have been made to ‘act’ in a manner that is very contrary to their inner desires, and which often contradicts entirely their role as ‘Mother’, ‘Young Girl’, or even ‘Woman’\textsuperscript{229}.

The play Lo que callan las madres begins with Rocío, described as “una espigada y risueña adolescente” (2), eager to read about sexual topics including “ogino, temperatura, lavados vaginales, coitus interruptus, [and] saltar” (2) for a course on sexuality she is taking in school, a course requiring an illustrated textbook entitled “El

\textsuperscript{228} This work was written in response to a project for the Instituto de la Mujer on the theme “Mujer, familia, y creación”, and, as with Confesiones, originally appeared as a dramatic reading in 2004 before its Sala Cuarta Pared 2006 premiere during Madrid’s Fall Festival.

\textsuperscript{229} The use of the capital letters to describe these roles emphasizes the universally understood and highest degree of each role; that is to say, the ‘Mother’ that out-mothers mothers, the ‘Young Girl,’ or ‘Woman’ that are also the most perfect and extreme representatives of such titles.
sex a los 15” (2). Introduced during the piece’s opening moments alongside Rocío is her knowledgeable (and more than willing to share this knowledge) maternal aunt Marta, who acts as a type of sexual docent to Rocío, and who is happy to take her to a “playa nudista” as well as explain to her sexual sensations such as an orgasm, that she openly defines to her teenage niece as “una descarga eléctrica” (3). Also falling in line with what is usually expected of her role is Rocío’s mother (and Marta’s sister) Chus, angry with Marta for offering to take Rocío to the nude beach without her consent, and resentful that Marta has improperly crossed boundaries for which she, the mother, should be responsible (“Si mi hija quiere ir a una playa nudista ya la llevaré yo, si quiero, y para ir a Cádiz con ella me consultas antes” [4]), a clear point of contention and competition between the two, and against which Marta inveighs: “Eres una envidiosa. Pero Rocío me quiere, soy su tía y eso no lo vas a poder cambiar” (5). Rocío continues to fortify stereotypical roles when she qualifies the type of relationship she feels toward both Marta and Chus, exclaiming “Por qué tú eres mi madre, pero la tía es como una amiga... La tía me comprende, es muy divertida, me está ayudando mucho con el curso de sexualidad” (6), to which Chus angrily replies “Eso es precisamente lo que no quería oír” (6). All appears normal and typical at the beginning of the drama, with each character clearly defined in her usual role, yet this quickly changes as the plot progresses.

According to Rorty, “The disempowered have their own hidden power: since power and powerlessness are always a function of desire... the powerless can... detach themselves from their experienced powerlessness by transforming their desires” (from

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230 In this case, the young girl who finds her mother too straight-laced and boring, and her aunt hip and entertaining
“Power and Powers: A Dialogue between Buff and Rebuff” in Wartenberg’s *Rethinking Power* 9). The focus for Dorado is not to concentrate so much on the ‘powerlessness’ of these characters but what they choose to do about their unpleasant situations—how, citing Rorty, they ‘detach’ from a non-felicitous scenario and ‘transform’ their desire. This ‘transformation’ of desires displayed in this play is accomplished mainly through reflective monologues or moments when the characters manifest disdain and sadness toward their current roles and project their true, desired roles\(^{231}\). This rejection of both the role and the powerlessness\(^{232}\) concomitant with that role thus commences early in the play, in the fourth scene, when Chus begins to monologue her true feelings about her role as ‘mother’ and how she wishes to change it, in order to not ‘callar’ anymore her desire (and need) to act ‘outside’ of her current position: “¿Sólo puedo ser una madre? . . . . He sido de acero para criar a una hija sola y ahora que puedo fundirme, relajarme me encuentro con su resistencia. . . . ¿Tengo que seguir callando? . . . Las madres lo callamos todo…pero yo ya no puedo más” (8). Her insistence on being forced to stifle everything not only underscores her having to role play as strong, resilient (and ‘motherly’) mother but also proves her point that the true self or role she urgently wishes to embrace (explained later) is forced to seek an alternative space outside of her usual and typical life.

This ‘outside’ space metaphorically (and, as we shall see later, realistically) is the ‘playa nudista’ referenced at the beginning of the play, a place where they will not have

\(^{231}\) As stated earlier, the role power plays in this will be examined more closely later, especially the degree to which these characters are ‘empowered’ or ‘powerless’.

\(^{232}\) Powerlessness in the sense that their being forced to perform a role in society they wish not to prevents them from doing what they prefer to do, thus robbing them of the power of choice and the comfort of a role they desire to inhabit
to wear ‘clothing’ (another metaphor for the cloaking covering their true ['nude'] selves), and an arena removed from the strict adherence to norms and rules regarding how a typical ‘mother’, ‘aunt’, or ‘teenage girl’ should act, as Marta describes, the “sitio perfecto” (10), where Marta says that she may see things clearer, ‘from the outside’ (“Sólo lo veo desde fuera” 10), from which all of the ridiculousness they are now forced to experience will end: “Cuando vayamos a la playa se te quita toda la tontería” (10).

Just as Chus expressed in a monologue her anxiety over the traditional role of ‘mother’ thrust upon her, Marta also bemoans her lack of discourse, her feeling that she too has been handed a role that she simply must ‘act’ in order to survive, yet one that she wishes to reject:

Soy una mujer sin discurso. Sólo tengo mi voz para expresarme. . . .

No doy lecciones de moral. Simplemente actúo. . . . Las mujeres no hacemos día a día, carga tras carga. Actúo como una madre pero no tengo la menor intención de serlo. Cuando me canso de mi papel de mujer vuelvo a mi soledad. Es una ventaja. Tengo que serlo. Si no consideraría que mi vida es una gran putada (12, my emphases).

Dispossessed of an authentic discourse, Marta is left with only a voice that cries out in rebellion due to a body that ‘acts’, in this case, playing a role she desires to reject, the role of ‘woman’, and, as we see in the next scene, as ‘mother.’

Scene Seven reveals an intimate scene between Marta and her lesbian partner Ana, in which Ana expresses her needful desire to have a baby with Marta, who secretly resists. This scene is a highly crucial one in the play because it reveals that, even in an
atypical or non-normative pairing like a lesbian couple\textsuperscript{233}, there still exist certain roles (for both sides) that some feel forced into and that one must ‘act’ in order to survive in society, such as parenthood\textsuperscript{234}. While Ana wishes to have a child (“Podríamos intentar la adopción y si vemos que es muy difícil nos vamos a una clínica y ¡hala! Me insemino y a esperar nueve meses” 13), Marta inadvertently ‘acts’ one role (that of the partner desirous of a family yet doubtful that a family such as theirs will function in society) in order to mask the truth of another role she wishes to embrace (the ‘not’ mother): “Nos pondrán muchas trabas, no nos consideran familia. . . . Prefiero esperar” (13). Marta additionally comments about not ‘seeing clearly’ the notion of them having a child (“Porque no lo veo claro” 13), which harkens back to her earlier commentary on how things will be much clearer on the nudist beach, where the ‘inside’ will be seen more clearly from the vantage point of the ‘outside.’ Thus, Marta appears to be bereft of power as she is not able to choose her own preferred roles but instead must ‘act’ in order to survive in society, yet there is more complexity and more power issues at stake in her situation as well.

Just like Marta, Ana, surprisingly, as we find out, also ‘plays a role’. For her, the role of ‘mother’ is not a want but a need, surpassing typical associations of the role by veering towards desperation and obsession, and described by her as something that overpowers her and commands attention: “No es deseo es instinto y es tan enorme que amenaza con devorarme” (14). Interestingly enough, Dorado here shows the other side of

\textsuperscript{233} ‘Atypical’ or ‘non-normative’ only keeping in mind heteronormative society’s norms and standards for pairings

\textsuperscript{234} The idea that even in a non-traditional coupling, stereotypical norms or expectations still can creep in; for some, this ‘heterosexualizing’ of the lesbian couple is a problem; I believe that Dorado wishes to show how stereotypes can and do infiltrate every pairing, even homosexual ones, and, within such a coupling, societal expectations for certain outcomes will weigh on those in the pairing.
the proverbial coin in demonstrating that, in delving deeper than the surface when it comes to those in a non-traditional relationship of one kind or another (Marta & Ana in this case), there can be many complex power issues at work, and also, even when one person appears somewhat to fit a traditional mold (Ana, since she is the true ‘woman’ in the sense that she wants a child), he/she may also be acting to a certain degree and may be under a force more powerful than his/her own free will may allow. This is manifested in a poetic monologue with Ana, who describes how her desperate need for a child becomes more and more instinctual and mythical than most typical women’s need, thereby distancing her as well from traditional ‘woman’, which she acts to mask that of woman-goddess, the true role she identifies with: “Cuando Kupala se instala en tu mente y el instinto te vence ya no hay nada ni nadie que pueda derrotarlo” (15). Her mention of Kupala, defined as “la diosa de la fertilidad” (15), proves its clear significance later on yet momentarily adds another dimension to this increasingly more poetic play, that of the mythical and the surreal, an atmosphere where there are “voces [recall Marta’s earlier monologue], grabaciones, fotos de niños jugando, charlando” (16), an atmosphere that transcends reality and claims a separate sphere where the characters’ exist ‘out’-side of the typical, and where traditional society for some (like Ana) serve as a realm where they also have no control on many different levels. Thus, this scene demonstrates how, even when one is ‘out’-side of the norm, once there, one is not automatically guaranteed power, for the very role of ‘mother’ for characters like Ana both forces them to feign

235 Here, Dorado appears to suggest that, while it is easy to assume that a lesbian coupling would not possess any power due to the fact that it is contrary to the heterosexual couple (the ‘norm’ in society), within that very same coupling there can be layers upon layers of power issues at work.
social comfort and adjustment within designated role characteristics, while also failing to fulfill them when they seek to express themselves outside of that role as well.

The intricate web of complex power structurings in Dorado’s play is made salient in yet another monologue with Marta. Up until now, the issue of ‘sexing oneself’ in a particular way in order to fit into and survive in social situations has appeared to strip away power from the characters, and their realization (and declaration) of their true needs would conversely appear to empower those same characters, who have acted themselves ‘out’ of their previous roles (also de-centering themselves and accepting a more marginal or non-typical self-definition) and are now embracing those roles more favorable to them. Yet, as the plot progresses, and as we have seen thus far, Dorado complicates such a clear bifurcation of the power considerations in this play. Following Ana’s revelation earlier, Scene Eleven instantiates her true feelings when Marta openly announces that she has never wanted children (“No recuerdo ni un instante de mi vida en el que haya deseado tener un hijo” 17), and furthermore questions her ‘role’ as woman, something she deems as less than normal (“¿Soy una mujer normal?” 17), not necessarily in a pathologizing sense, but more a questioning of the significations attached to the ‘normal’ or typical view of ‘woman’, that she may view more as ‘Woman,’ an unrealistic and impossible construct for every female. Nonetheless, her additional comments serve to question the degree to which she truly possesses any power at all through such a reflection, for something that is inextricable from Marta’s feelings about not wanting children is the discovery for her in her youth that she was adopted, and now appears to associate this feeling of unwantedness with herself not desiring to have children: “Mi madre de verdad,
la auténtica me había tirado al cubo de la basura nada más nacer. Naces y a la basura. Así de fácil. No quiero tener hijos. ¿Alguien puede reprochármelo?” (17); “Estuve años sintiéndome una intrusa en mi propia familia. No le deseo esa vivencia a nadie” (19).

Like Ana, Marta also discovers that the promise of the ‘outside’ is not as attractive as she thought, for it also can serve to disempower those characters as well. Although Dorado’s point may be to concentrate more fully on the other characters in the play (namely Chus and Rocío), I submit that it is no accident that these two characters (Marta and Ana) do not again emerge after this scene. Perhaps the implication is that, just as they are not totally functional ‘inside’ their performed roles in society, the ‘outside’ likewise does not provide them with any real power or roles they wish to embrace, and they thus cease to exist from that scene onward. Hence, neither space (inside or outside) proves positive for Ana or Marta, and the idea that one ‘empowers’ while another ‘disempowers’ is a notion that, as with Confesiones, Dorado in this play also turns on its head.

After planting that seed for rumination as to whether the ‘outside’ of the typical truly offers one the ability to possess any measure of power, Dorado situates a crucial scene in which Rocío also rejects the hypersexualized role she currently occupies in order to articulate her true preference, not to be a ‘woman’: “Muy bien, me defino: Tengo trece años, hoy soy mujer y me odio. . . . ¿Esto era? Sangre resbalando por las piernas, mamá que te da un paquete de compresas con los ojos humedecidos y encima no vas a clase de gimnasia que es lo único que te interesa del colegio” (20). She enumerates the qualities that she knows the role of ‘woman’ will bring to her, and against which she inveighs:

The culminating moments of the entire play occur from Scenes Fourteen onward, beginning with the crucial shedding by Rocío of the role of ‘girl becoming woman’ that has been thrust on her (and which she has ‘acted’ quite well), and the escape ‘outward’ into a realm that is a psycho-social projection of the place where she wishes to remain and the role she desires to maintain, that of a child. In this scene, a new character emerges, the half-witch, half-fairy Virginia, a thirty-year old woman (not too old, not too young, with one foot in this world and one foot in a dream-like, child-like world) who appears with a magical halo for Rocío, and dressed in a white gown. After Rocío declares to Virginia that which she does not want to do or become in her life (“No quiero estudiar, ni terminar el bachillerato, no quiero ir a la universidad, ni tener novio y casarme, ni ser abogada o médico o empresaria, ni tener un hijo a los 35 para no arruinar mi carrera, no quiero una casa en la playa y el niño en el colegio privado-bilingüe-con piscina” 22), Virginia, a powerful, magical figure, offers her life (like something out of a fairy tale) to Rocío: “Me quedo con tu vida. Tu vida, te la cambio” (22), thus transferring her power and role to Rocío, who is now child-like yet not a child, unblemished by the world and the impossible roles she rejects.236

236 Even the name ‘Virginia’ may be significant since it possibly relates to the notion of ‘virginity,’ something that Rocío wishes for herself as she does not want to get married and have children, preferring instead to remain in perpetual childhood.
In dramatic fashion, Virginia gives Rocío a notebook entirely filled with a script, so that Rocío does not have to, in adult-like fashion, ‘write’ her own future, while Virginia takes for herself Rocío’s blank notebook that Chus presented to her at the beginning of the play (“¿Te has dado cuenta de una cosa? Está vacío. Sólo has escrito una hoja. La vida en blanco, todo por ocurrir” 22), that she later transfers to a character who can be none other than Chus, now referred to as simply ‘The Mother’ 237, and who, in similar fashion, desires to escape her role and “Empezar de nuevo” (27), just as Rocío told her mother she wishes to “ver el mundo, a vivir mi vida” (24), claiming she does not need anyone (“No necesito a nadie” 24), yet truly meaning that she does not need the roles that society will undoubtedly foist upon her: La Madre: “La adolescencia es difícil, lo sé, pero pasará, las cosas volverán a ser como antes” Rocío: …No quiero que las cosas sean como antes” (24). Purposefully inserted in the ‘Mother’s’ discourse is a monologue (situated before the encounter with Virginia) emphasizing the role ‘mothers’ typically play, when Chus contemplates her daughter’s growing up, asking “¿Y ahora qué? ¿Cómo voy a poder dormir? ¿Cómo voy a llenar este vacío? ¿Por qué voy a levantarme mañana? ¿Qué sentido tiene ahora vivir?” (26). Interestingly enough, this monologue, in my estimation, serves to drive home one last time the extent to which a role can consume one’s existence so that she (in this case) has no life beyond her role, even questioning her reason for living now that her daughter is growing up and will soon leave. However, the last two scenes demonstrate how she, too, may not have to ‘act’ her role anymore, but

237 Stated earlier was the comment that Chus does not wish to embrace the role of ‘mother’ in the traditional sense, yet here she is given the title ‘Mother’; what Dorado seems to suggest is that Chus desires to be a ‘mother’ yet on her own terms, and the surreal sequences where she reconciles with Rocío, the ‘Girl,’ accomplishes just that.
instead may etch her own identity ‘outside’ of the norm; but, yet again, Dorado presents the possibility that such a place may not fulfill all it appears to promise (seen later).

Scenes twenty-seven and twenty-eight realize the metaphorical, now real, beach that signifies a place purportedly free from the forced normalization of socio-sexual roles that have plagued the characters up until now. Virginia hands Chus the empty notebook [Scene 27] (the ‘Mother’ says to her that she does not know what she is now going to do since she has never been able to ‘write’ her own future: “No sé lo que voy a hacer a partir de ahora” 27) so that she may fill it with whatever she wants (that is to say, without having a ‘role’ already designated). She reads the poem written in it about the writer possessing only ‘half’ of the beach (“…y aunque yo tenga la mitad de su cielo, la mitad de su aire, la mitad de sus olas, la mitad de su arena…” 27), and referring to a “playa con dos llaves: Tú y yo” (27). Such comments both indicate the impossibility of achieving their desired roles in the present reality, and the desire to project into a realm where they may be ‘free’, yet the usage of the word ‘half’ itself is significant since it may suggest that she will only ever exist in partiality, on the margin, acting inside her traditional roles yet yearning to be outside of them, however where that outside does not necessarily fulfill them either.

Scene 28 occurs on the metaphorical beach, which is now a ‘real’ beach, described indirectly in the stage directions as “una atmósfera…Ruido del mar, gaviotas. Olor a sal” (28). The ‘Mother’ (Chus), free to let her hair down and remove her clothing, is greeted by a character referred to as ‘The Girl,’ the projected role of Rocío who desperately wished not to become a ‘woman’ (or ‘Woman’), and described here as “Una
niña. . . [que] no tendrá más de siete años” (28). The Mother tells the Girl that she (the Girl) will have “una vida intensa, habrá alegría pero también dolor”, and then instructs her not to heed her, but rather to enjoy each moment, something she herself has been unable to do (“No me hagas caso. Disfruta cada momento” 28). The Girl also tells her that she needs to remember her (“…necesitas recordarme” 28), and commands her never to forget her when she arrives at the ‘beach with two keys’ (“No me olvides” 29).

The ‘beach with two keys’ not only represents an ‘outside’ area not blemished by roles but also where the characters are free to choose whatever role they prefer, and additionally a place where there are only two keys to be able to enter—one for Rocío, the eternal ‘girl’ or ‘child’, and one for Chus. In the latter case, Chus is ‘Mother,’ but, instead of this label channeling her into yet another role, it renders her anonymous, thus removing her from the funneling of expectations associated with the role she held before, and allowing her figuratively to remove the metaphorical ‘clothing’ that bound her to her role (recall that Marta wanted to take Rocío to a nudist beach) and weighed her down. Here, she may be free and unfettered in her frolicking with the young girl who simulates the projected desire of Rocío. Yet, all this changes in the last scene of the play.

Scene 29 opens with the stage directions describing how “El ambiente de magia desaparece”, and, for Chus (‘The Mother,’), it is as if she has just awoken from a profound dream, now returning to ‘reality’: “Como si despertara de un profundo letargo la Madre vuelve a la realidad” (30). Rocío, now referred to as Rocío, is also there, like before, on the ‘balancín’, the see-saw, clearly representative of the dialectic of wanting to reach her desired free state but being forced to occupy a role status she chooses to reject,
yet forever caught in the up and down motion simulating movement yet never really accomplishing anything, never truly transporting those on it anywhere. The stage directions indicate that the beach that signified the realm of possibility and freedom to choose one’s roles in life was nothing but a dream, and that perhaps there really is no way to reach such a realm, for such a realm does not exist—there may be no ‘outside’ of traditional roles, except in one’s own imagination.

The Mother (Chus) relates to Roció her dream of Virginia, the notebook, and the beach with the girl and the poem she recited, yet Roció, now assuming her traditional role, only believes it was a ‘dream’, still clutching the empty notebook she possessed before Virginia switched with her. The Mother, described as “ensimismada por un momento” becomes energized (“dominada por una extraña energía” 30) and excitedly exclaims “¡Tengo que encontrar esa playa!” (30), wishing to take Roció with her (“Vámonos, vámonos ahora mismo. Tú y yo” 30). She finally articulates to her daughter her choice to reject the specific role only of ‘mother’ and embrace more the broader role of ‘woman’: “Este es tu viaje, el que querías hacer para entender el mundo, y el mio, el que tengo que hacer para encontrarme. Roció además de tu madre soy una mujer, tengo mis propios deseos necesito que lo sepas” (30), suggesting that they both go south, yet not to the nudist beach but to another area: “La playa que busco no tiene nombre, ni está cerca de una ciudad ni tiene un acceso fácil…” (30). Yet, this beach that they both will attempt to travel to she already knows, for she has been there before: “He estado allí, recuerdo cada roca, cada grano de arena, cada ola…y además tengo una llave” (31). The play ends with the stage directions indicating that Chus has left to journey to the beach.
with Rocío, and the last item in view in the scene is the notebook, lying open on the see-
saw, forgotten (“El cuaderno queda abierto boca abajo en el balanceando, olvidado” 31),
except for the phrase that Rocío had written in her original notebook: “Quise contar las
cosas que un día de niña, olvidé” (31).

What, then, has been the result of the acting ‘out’ of their usual roles for these
characters? Returning to this question and those specifically posed in regard to the power
or powerlessness of these characters, what has been accomplished by such rejection of
mainstream or traditional roles and embracement of more non-normative, or, one might
even say, ‘marginal’ roles? What sense of ‘power’ have these characters gained (or lost)
through openly rejecting their current roles in favor of embracing those that lie ‘outside’
(or ‘on the margin’) of the typical? As is usual with Dorado’s plays, there is no
straightforward answer to such queries. While it may appear that there is some sense of
merit and freedom in rejecting those roles that restrict one’s character in life’s situations
(as seen with all of the personae), Dorado truly succeeds in complicating the notion of
‘inside/ outside’ in proving that, even when one appears to ‘escape’ the constraining roles
that the ‘inside’ dictates, there ultimately is no real ‘outside’ that offers a safe haven from
such societally-mandated roles—those characters may have no other choice than to ‘sex
themselves’ in a particular way that may be completely at odds with the roles they wish
to espouse, since those preferred roles are impossible. Perhaps the reason that Marta and
Ana fail to appear highlights Dorado’s thesis—that many times those who are forced to
‘act’ within accepted parameters while they attempt to locate that ever-promising
‘outside’ fail because that ‘outside’ may never truly exist.

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And what of Chus and Rocío? Although they succeed in crossing over into that ‘outer’ or marginalized area where they are free to endorse their own particular preferences for the roles they will perform in life, at the end, such an area turns out to be nothing but a dream, an illusion, something that they too have ‘acted’. In reference to the title of this section ‘Acting “out”’, it has already been demonstrated that these characters initially felt the need to ‘act’ within their prescribed roles, yet the end of this play also proves that they have ‘acted’ the ‘outside’ realm as well, and that the true significance of the title, ‘That which Mothers Keep to Themselves’\textsuperscript{238}, does not just relate to their inability to embrace the roles they essentially desire, but also is associated with their having to keep quiet the truth about the ‘outside’, and the fact that many of these women will only be (or will be forced to be) ‘Mothers’. Some may argue that Chus, now accepting the broader definition of ‘Mother’ that her character goes by, does believe that she, along with Rocío, may succeed in locating that ‘outside’ where Rocío does not have to become a ‘Woman’, and where Chus may be the ‘woman’ and ‘mother’ she chooses to. However, in my estimation, Chus and Rocío may never discover that beach, for it may never have existed. The last visual image of the play is highly significant because it appears to encapsulate Dorado’s point of consideration for the reader/spectator: the prospect of effectively incorporating those ‘outside’ roles (evidenced in the open notebook) may forever exist for those characters only on a metaphorical see-saw, sliding between what keeps weighing them down (the role they must act), and attempting to rise up to where they wish to be (the role they desire to embrace), yet never reaching it.

\textsuperscript{238} My translation
Interestingly enough, I find the see-saw itself suggestive of the interrelatedness of both the inside and outside, expressed best by Diana Fuss in her text *Inside/ Out*, who describes how being ‘out’ really means being ‘in,’ inside what is speakable, intelligible, recognizable (“Inside/ Out” 4); in other words, the ‘outside’ is really a part of the inside.

In conclusion, the theatre of Yolanda Dorado is varied in its theme and presentation, yet one element that dominates all of her plays is that of complexity, that all truly is not as it usually appears. In the first play *Confesiones*, Dorado turned the typical notion of sexual confession upside down to prove how it does not ‘constitute’ one’s self but serves a larger, deeper purpose, without necessarily ‘empowering’ anyone. She undoes typical associations of how power works on or through subjects thus presenting power issues in a more non-traditional or ‘marginal’ sense. In *Lo que callan las madres*, Dorado again appears to show how women are traditionally disempowered by the socio-sexual roles they are forced to embody, driven to the margins in which lies the promise of an ‘outside’ space evoking a freedom for the roles they wish to embrace, yet again ultimately proves that such a space does not bring them freedom but that forever traps them in a see-saw dialectic, maintaining them within their current role while allowing them to reach for a role they prefer and desire, yet that always will remain unattainable.

All of her characters do ‘sex themselves’ in a particular way, yet the repercussions of such actions do not necessarily signify an empowering experience. In the two plays analyzed here, her characters are often marginalized due to their social position or role, but the real sense of marginalization in my estimation deals with the means by which Dorado presents issues of power. Articulated by the author herself in a personal interview
conducted with her prior to the representations of these plays, when asked if her characters are created in order to accentuate their marginality, or purposefully to break social norms, she replied “mi objetivo no es romper con las normas y expectativas sociales, mi objetivo es . . . generar una respuesta al público . . . hacer pensar a la gente . . . que la obra genere una discussion, una base . . .” (Interview with author, 2006). The theatre of Yolanda Dorado does not aim to force issues of power as they intersect with sexuality, nor to politicize a particular viewpoint but rather, as she herself states, to allow us to reflect upon things that all of us have felt or experienced in life with regard to those issues, to prove that: “La sexualidad se utiliza para enfrentar a los personajes y es un conflicto que siempre funciona puesto que es un conflicto universal y en que todo el mundo puede sentir realmente identificado, y la estructura del poder—todos la hemos sentido. . . .” (Interview with autor, 2006).
Chapter 5

Sexing Themselves: (Em)powered bodies:

Margarita Reiz

Just as Yolanda Dorado offers to the contemporary theatre scene exciting and provocative plays that foreground issues of sex and sexuality (and that often intersect with power relations), so too has Madrilenian playwright, director, and scholar Margarita Reiz\textsuperscript{239} brought to the current theatrical Spanish scene plays that always spark a familiarity with and sympathy for contemporary life. Her works sometimes delve deep into the individual psychology of characters while other times highlight wider social issues such as the strictures of gender relations and definitions, or socio-historical, even mythical, presentations of topics such as woman’s representation throughout time or the ravages of war and violence on a global scale. While her general style does not tend toward the alternative, this is not to say that no alternative or abstract elements present themselves in her works, for at times they do appear and are evidenced primarily in the types of characterizations\textsuperscript{240}, the selection of themes\textsuperscript{241} in her plays, as well as the dramatic style\textsuperscript{242}. Overall, Reiz’s plays capture the multiplicity of relatable human emotions and feelings that all persons have felt at one

\textsuperscript{239} A pseudonym for Margarita González
\textsuperscript{2} For example, in one of her plays, all of the characters are sheep.
\textsuperscript{3} Such as a re-working of Lorca’s \textit{La casa de Bernarda Alba} or a new means of presenting the ‘mujer brava’ of the Golden Age
\textsuperscript{242} In some of her plays dance, for example, is incorporated as an essential element.
moment or another in their lives, and they successfully deliver these emotions, whether that delivery is concrete or abstract. The powerful characters of Margarita Reiz leave an indelible imprint on anyone who reads or views her plays, and they, once again, will be the focus of the upcoming discussions in this chapter.

Born in Moralzarzal (Madrid) in 1956, Margarita Reiz received her degree in Scenic Direction and Dramaturgy from the RESAD (Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático) in Madrid in 1996 (Author’s resumé). Although her career as author began later in her life, her theatrical activities over the years have permitted her to be immersed in a myriad of various facets of theatre, such as participant in literary workshops on topics like narrative with Clara Obligado and Luis Landero, dialogued literature with José Luis Alonso de Santos, dramaturgical creativity with Marco Antonio de la Parra, contemporary theatre with Carla Matteini, and theatrical writing with José Sanchis Sinisterra. She additionally has participated in the literary seminar ‘Jornadas Shakespeare y España: 1940 – 1993’ through the University of Kent at Canterbury, and even directed the Escuela/ Taller de Teatro of the Concejalía de Cultura del Ayuntamiento de Moralzaral from 1979 to 1991, creating three theatre groups that performed in various cultural centers children’s plays as well as theatrical adaptations of poetic works under the general title ¿Qué contaremos a nuestros hijos? in 1993. In addition to acting in the capacity of coordinator of theatrical groups and participating in workshops and seminars, Margarita Reiz has also served as chief editor for the theatre journal Primer Acto from 1997 to 1999, now forming part of the Consejo de Redacción for Primer Acto, as well as contributing on articles for that journal in addition to the journals Revista de la Asociación de Directores de Escena, Escaramuza, and La Ratonera, to name a few. As

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243 Obtained from website www.adeteatro.com/curricula/margaritareiz.htm
244 Specifically, texts by Fo, Arrabal, Buero Vallejo, and Nieva
director and playwright, Reiz has formed part of the Compañía Karikatos sin Pausa since 1995 and has directed works in the Compañía de Teatro Oral Bucaranga (Ibid).

Margarita Reiz has also been part of the pedagogical arena as she served as university professor at the Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático de Torrelodones (Madrid) from 1997 to 2007, where she taught classes on the history of 20th century theatre, Golden Age theatre, theory of scenic direction, Shakespeare, and history of theatrical architecture. She recently finished her doctoral degree through the Universidad Carlos III de Getafe in Madrid, completing her thesis titled La mujer en el teatro español del Siglo XVII. Reiz has additionally served as founding member of the Asociación de Mujeres en las Artes Escénicas de Madrid (AMAEM) “Marías Guerreras.” As part of this organization she has contributed to the co-authored plays Tras las tocas, Dímelo hilando, He dejado mi grito por aquí, ¿lo habéis visto?, and Piezas de bolsillo, premiered in theatres throughout Madrid. She also has represented many of her own plays such as Matar, Todo irá bien, Impresiones, El día de las explicaciones, and El día de la culpa, the last of which premiered in November 2006 during Madrid’s Fall Festival. The breadth of Reiz’s involvement in theatre has extended from positions such as documentalist, literary adviser and directorial assistant in the scenic arena, as participant in conferences and composer of essays in the area of theatrical investigation, and as university professor and researcher in the pedagogical realm.

245 This group has represented the following: Madre Lola by Chatono Contreras, Hambre ciega by Margarita Reiz, and Konfabulación by Margarita Reiz.
246 Specifically La orilla rica by Encarna de las Heras
247 “Dímelo hilando” is the title of a collective group of performances.
248 Many of which are edited by the RESAD (Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático), the AAT (Asociación de Autores de Teatro), the University of Cádiz, Fundación Autor, and Castalia, and include titles such as “Pinceladas sociales y políticas de la mujer en el teatro español” (in De la vanguardia a la memoria: III Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América), “Taller de reescritura mítica: ‘Las mujeres perversas’” (in I Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América), and “El asociacionismo de mujeres en las artes escénicas: una necesidad” (in Primer Acto 302 (2004): 58 – 61).
Margarita Reiz has written more than twenty theatrical works, many of which have been published and/or premiered either as whole plays or dramatic readings\(^{249}\). Her first work appeared in 1994 in a collection of one-act plays edited by the RESAD (*Piezas breves y bocetos*), titled *Pequeñas contrariedades*, followed shortly after by 1995’s *Nox Tenebris\(^{250}\)*, and again in 1996 with her plays *¡Siempre igual!* and *Hambre ciega*, premiering that same year. With the advent of the twenty-first century, Margarita Reiz experienced a burst of creativity, writing the majority of her works since the new millennium. These titles include *Zarpazos de gato* (2001), *Konfabulación, Otro tiempo para Bernarda y Adela, Impresiones*, and *Soledad en los bancos del parque* (2002), *Adela y Bernarda* and *El día de las explicaciones* (2004), *La culpa, Los cuernos de doña Friolera, Todo irá bien, Ellas también pueden matar, Matar, El puente de los mentirosos, Nostalgia del mar, María la negra, Juan Luis, Marta*\(^{251}\) (2005), 2006’s *El día de la culpa*, and her newest plays for which she received a scholarship to fund her writing and publication of the work, *Arena en los pies* (2007) and *Nada es lo que parece* (2011)\(^{252}\).

\(^{249}\) Her published plays include the following: *Pequeñas contrariedades, Nox tenebris* (a collective work), *¡Siempre igual!, Hambre ciega, Konfabulación, Impresiones, Soledad en el banco de un parque, Otro tiempo para Bernarda y Adela, Tras las tocas* (a collaborative play including her short work *Bernarda y Adela*), *La culpa, Los cuernos de doña Friolera, Todo irá bien, El día de las explicaciones, Ellas también pueden matar, Matar, El puente de los mentirosos, Nostalgia del mar, María la negra, Juan Luis, Marta*\(^{251}\) (2005), 2006’s *El día de la culpa*, and her newest plays for which she received a scholarship to fund her writing and publication of the work, *Arena en los pies* (2007) and *Nada es lo que parece* (2011)\(^{252}\).

\(^{250}\) Collectively authored by a group of playwrights known as ‘Proyecto Antígona’ (Margarita Reiz, Itziar Pascual, Eva Hibernia, Carmen Dólera, Yolanda Dorado)

\(^{251}\) The three short monologues *María la negra, Marta* and *Juan Luis* are all part of the collection of essays on AIDS titled *¡Grita SIDA!*

\(^{252}\) Reiz’s own words summarize best how *Nada es lo que parece* is a re-elaboration/expansion of a previous work, *Hasta que la noche nos engañe:*
With such a wide array of styles and themes, it remains very difficult to summarize her body of theatrical work, yet, as with all of Margarita Reiz’s plays, an adequate means to describe her corpus inevitably returns to the strength of her characters and the often-frustrated, often desperate need expressed by all of them to establish genuine, authentic human connections amidst many obstacles that attempt to thwart those very same unions. Reiz’s characters, for example, experience the anguish generated by the disconnect between mother and daughter after years of embitterment and pain (El día de las explicaciones), or the all-encompassing hurt and anger of a family divided by divorce (Pequeñas contrariedades). Her characters reflect both the unhappiness of married life (¡Siempre igual!) in addition to the sadness of single life glimpsed in the betrayal of a woman whose best friend stole her husband (Zarpazos de gato). Yet, as stated before, Margarita Reiz does not just incorporate contemporary individual concerns on a micro level but also on a more global, macro level as well,253 where she problematizes and exposes the widespread corruptions that ultimately dehumanize and disintegrate human beings (El rebaño254), like the world-wide natural pollution and society’s apathy to improve the situation (Konfabulación), the horrors of terrorism that affected so many during the March 11th Madrid metro attacks (Nostalgia del mar), and the lives of those individuals everywhere afflicted by the AIDS virus (the three

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253 “Efectivamente Nada es lo que parece, es una ampliación, realizada por encargo, de Hasta que la noche nos engañe, que fue a su vez otro encargo diferente. El primero surgió para estreno comercial, junto con otras piezas breves, que todas ellas hablaban de la primera vez o iniciación en el sexo de alguien, se realizarán en diferentes centros de Madrid en 1998/99 y se publicó en 2008 en la Revista Liquid. La nueva versión empezó a fraguarse como monólogo breve para representar el Día del teatro, en el maratón de Monólogos que realiza cada año la Asociación de Autores y que se lleva a cabo en el Teatro Rojas del Circulo de Bellas Artes..., actualmente - y después de seguir aumentando de tamaño en progresivas revisiones - quedó como [la versión actual] y está pendiente de recibir un premio de Mujeres Internacional y de publicarse en 2011 dentro del cuatro volumen que publicará la AMAEM Marías Guerreras.”

254 Yet this comes at no cost to the omnipresent need for establishing authentic connections interpersonally. El rebaño was the original title for the two works that followed: Crónica de una revolución, the longer version and La vida incierta, the shorter version.
short monologues Juan Luis, Marta, and María la Negra that form part of the program ¡Grita SIDA!). Of course, one of the most crucial themes in the theatre of Margarita Reiz is that of sex and sexuality, a topic that she presents through many prisms, such as that of bellicose violence directed towards war prisoners in Todo irá bien, the inevitable and desperate attraction between two lone souls in a deserted, post-war city in Hambre ciega, the freedom and sexual liberation achieved by a group of women who come together for a bachelorette party in Hasta que la noche nos engañe, or the honor-driven, murderous retaliation of a vengeful woman in Matar. No matter what the vehicle or means that her characters negotiate the desire for communication and contact with another, whether it be in the form of sheep (El rebaño) or the babble of a woman deemed crazy (Impresiones), her characters always present to the reader/spectator food for thought, not necessarily to judge or arrive at conclusions about the characters’ actions or choices, but rather to ponder them, to question what forces in life may have led them to such actions, a process that ultimately accomplishes what I believe to be Reiz’s hope in all of her theatre—that those readers/spectators may experience a provocation, an unsettling, and, most importantly, a reflection on their own lives as well.

To quote her own words, Margarita Reiz’s desire for her theatre is: “seguir subiendo a un escenario para interpretar personajes y decidir aquello que deben decir esos personajes, despertar sentimientos [y] pasiones. . . en un momento único de encuentro con el público” (“La escritura: un sueño inconsciente que se impuso en mi vida” in ADE Teatro 116 julio/septiembre (2007) page 86), and her works appear to accomplish precisely that: the awakening of emotions and passions in the characters and concomitantly, the audience, in such a way that audiences or readers easily identify with them. The theatre of Margarita Reiz appears to desire more to provoke thought and consideration than foist political views,
although, as we have seen, many of her works present the problems associated with political issues such as environmental concerns (*Konfabulación*), the ravages of the AIDS disease (the three monologues cited earlier), the rights to paternity (*El puente de los mentirosos*), the reality that even figures such as nuns have intimate thoughts (*Tras las tocas*), and the abuses of power of those holding high governmental offices while committing atrocities (*El rebaño*). Margarita Reiz’s characters are persons searching for something, often meeting with failure or frustration, yet always focusing more on the journey itself than the end.

While her characters all generally appear to seek out and desire a way to possess genuine relationships in life in terms of theme, the forms of her plays differ greatly. Many are monologues (¡*Siempre igual!*; *Impresiones*, *Juan Luis*, *Marta*, *María la Negra*), some are dialogues with universally titled characters (such as ‘Young Woman’ or ‘Older Woman’, or ‘Soldier’ and ‘Prisoner’) [*El día de las explicaciones*, *La culpa*, *Soledad en el banco de un parque*], [*Todo irá bien*], while still others are dialogues with no expressed characters’ names (*Los cuernos de doña Friolera*). Some plays contain many characters (*Tras las tocas*, *Arena en los pies*), and others contain few (*Otro tiempo para Bernarda y Adela*, *El día de la culpa*). Several of her plays possess easily recognizable, concretely delineated characters who engage in neo-realist, contemporary, colloquial dialogues or monologues that are short in length (*Hambre ciega*, *El puente de los mentirosos*, *El día de la culpa*), although in several other plays the characters are allegorical, given titles such as ‘The Sun’ or ‘Night’ (*Konfabulación*), and who articulate long, quasi-poetic dialogue or monologue (*Arena en los pies*, *Nostalgia del mar*, the collective work *He dejado mi grito por aquí, ¿lo habéis visto?*).

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255 *Soledad en el banco de un parque* is another version of *La culpa*.
256 This work also appears in slightly different forms as the plays *Matar* and *Ellas también pueden matar*. 251
While the apparent bifurcation of the style in the plays of Margarita Reiz\textsuperscript{257} has sometimes provided fodder for criticism, she has been successful in her articulation of how she both negotiates and reconciles the highly variable styles and themes in her own work. Perhaps Margarita Reiz herself can best explain her affinity and inspiration for choosing such a wide array of elements in her works:

En cualquier caso es cierto que conscientemente me gusta mezclar, usar el contraste como estilo propio. Pero especialmente es al dirigir cuando busco equilibrios difíciles: símbolos y signos de otros mundos, de otras realidades posibles, de otros tiempos, de verdades deformadas, inventadas o interpretables, junto a presencias cotidianas, muy reales, casi costumbristas, o al menos generalizadas, muy corrientes de puro repetidas. Es como si quisiera hacer visible lo invisible, creíble lo increíble, verdadero lo incomprensible, al ponerle cerca algo tan “normal”... Me gusta usar esos aparentes equívocos en escena, porque creo que enriquecen el discurso creativo y conceptual y—especialmente—obligan al espectador a estar atento, a formar parte de lo no representativo de los espectáculos. Es decir, que dentro de la historia que queremos contar y de que la contemos más o menos como queremos contarla se nos filtran ideas, frases, momentos, que no hemos elegido de forma consciente, sino que se nos escapan porque en el fondo—sin saberlo—queremos que salgan.

(Interview with author, 2006)\textsuperscript{258}

As with the theatre of Yolanda Dorado, a crucial and oft-presented element in the plays by Margarita Reiz is power and power relations, especially as they intersect with sex

\textsuperscript{257} “Bifurcation” in the sense that her plays are written usually either in a neo-realist, colloquial vein or a highly abstract manner
\textsuperscript{258} The interview with Margarita Reiz took place in Madrid in 2006.
and sexuality. Many of her plays grapple with power issues in terms of the traditional battle of the sexes (Pequeñas contrariedades, ¡Siempre igual!), the global or universal abuses of power and breaches of justice in the government and the military (Konfabulación, Todo irá bien, El rebaño), power issues within the family (Otro tiempo para Bernarda y Adela, La culpa), and between couples (Arena en los pies), and in specific sexual scenarios. Yet, as with Dorado, neither the topic of power (as co-articulated through sex[uality]), nor very many other topics in the theatre of Margarita Reiz, has/ have been extensively researched.

The very few press releases that deal with her work usually discuss them as a microcosm within the larger mechanism that is the Marías Guerreras, such as the limited press releases on the collective work Tras las tocas (Guía de Madrid ABC 17-05-2002, “Hermanitas de la calidad” and El País 13 -06-2002 “Las Marías Guerreras o las nuevas batalladoras escénicas”) or the SGAE (Sociedad General de Autores y Editores) announcement regarding the publication of the Once voces contra la barbarie, of which Reiz’s work Nostalgia del mar forms part (http://www.sgae.es/search/search-es.jsp?idioma=es&select=es&texto=Margarita+Reiz 3/1/08).

Also in short supply are critical discussions of her works, although she, along with all of the other playwrights discussed thus far in this study, is included in Juan Antonio Hormigón’s Autoras en la historia del teatro español (1975 – 2000), Volumen III. The few articles about her plays primarily analyze the collective works that she has contributed to (listed earlier), especially highlighting the feminist overtones of such plays (such as Jennifer Zachman’s article “Colgando el hábito: la reinvención dramática de las protagonistas

259 She is listed under Margarita González Gómez, and the entry includes a brief biography in addition to a listing of a few of her works (Qué contaremos a nuestros hijos?, Pequeñas contrariedades, Hambre ciega, Siempre igual!, El rebaño, Nox tenebris) pp. 393 – 397.
femeninas en *Tras las tocas*: Una armonía de teoría, práctica y performance feministas*"\(^{260}\)
and another article by Zachman, “Gritos de justicia/ Cabaret comprometido: El feminismo contemporáneo de *He dejado mi grito por aquí, ¿lo habéis visto?*\(^{261}\); nonetheless, there are a few articles that discuss her individual plays, specifically Carmen Herrero’s article on feminist voice, titled “Polifonía pacifista/ feminista en *Todo irá bien*”\(^{262}\) and Laurie L. Urraro’s article on the current theatrical productions in Madrid written by female playwrights\(^{263}\), including Margarita Reiz’s 2006 representation of *El día de la culpa*, titled “Madrid: Ciclo Mujeres = Creación: Los trabajos teatrales de las Marías Guerreras”\(^{264}\). As mentioned before, Margarita Reiz herself has penned many articles about her own works such as “Taller de reescritura mítica: ‘Las mujeres perversas’” on the play *Tras las tocas*\(^{265}\), “La escritura: un sueño inconsciente que se impuso en mi vida”\(^{266}\), and “Un cuaderno todavía abierto, *Todo irá bien*”\(^{267}\), yet in general there largely remains a critical dearth regarding her plays. As with Yolanda Dorado, instead of figuring into in-depth analyses on the style or theme of her literature, much of her work is discussed in informal exchanges, such as that following her 2006 Fall Festival premiere of *El día de la culpa*, titled “Bailar teatro.”
Although she has been writing since the mid 1990s, her works in general are widely unknown and even less researched, and if not for her extensive immersion in several other aspects of

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\(^{260}\) Located in *I Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América* 121 – 138
\(^{261}\) Located in *Mujeres en seis actos: II Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América* pp. 167 – 182
\(^{262}\) Found in *De la vanguardia a la memoria: III Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América* pp. 240 – 255
\(^{263}\) Specifically those by female playwrights since the Fall Festival 2006 in Madrid ran a cycle highlighting new plays by women authors (the Marías Guerreras), titled ‘Mujeres = Creación’
\(^{264}\) In *Primer Acto: Cuadernos de investigación teatral* No. 318 (2007): 126 – 131
\(^{265}\) Within *I Ciclo de las Marías Guerreras en Casa de América* pp. 277 – 285
\(^{266}\) In *ADE Teatro: Revista de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España* 116 (2007): 86 – 87
\(^{267}\) Found in *ADE Teatro* 110 (2006): 176 – 179
the theatrical world besides dramaturgy, she would continue to remain relatively unknown in the larger circle of contemporary Madrilenian theatre today.

Therefore, this particular chapter aims to fix a critical eye on one of the most interesting and, in my estimation, most crucial elements of the theatre of Margarita Reiz: the manner in which sexual scenarios in her plays are infused with elements of power that act on or through her characters. As with the theatre of Yolanda Dorado, and in accordance with the general theme of this entire project, the means by which the intersectionality of power/power relations and sex(uality) mesh and affect Margarita Reiz’s characters may be qualified as ‘marginal’ or ‘peripheral’ in the sense that the ways in which the characters react to, through, with, against, or around power and power relations usually are presented in ways that confound or un-do the normal, accepted, traditional schemas that one conceives of regarding power relations. Her characters sometimes become ‘empowered’ or at least believe themselves to possess power, when really other characters orchestrate the situation in such a way to make them feel empowered, while the converse proves to be true; or, the empowerment that purportedly occurs through spaces of liberation (and sexualization) proves more complex than that which presents itself at first glance. As with the plays of Yolanda Dorado, I again submit that the characters of Margarita Reiz experience structurings of power in highly complex ways, and that, once again, these are expressed by the myriad of modes in which those same characters ‘sex themselves.’
5 A) Hungering for power and powerful hunger: Consuming/consummating the liminal in **Hambre ciega**

The intersectionality of sexuality and power has been treated in a myriad of texts over time, and one of the chief theorists to address such issues has been and continues to be Judith Butler. In her 2004 text *Undoing Gender*, Butler expounds upon the degree to which gender is animated by desire and how, like desire, gender wants and needs recognition in order to survive and be recognizable. Nonetheless, the availability of that ‘recognition,’ for Butler, can be problematic, as she explains:

> But if the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that ‘undo’ the person by conferring recognition, or ‘undo’ the person by withholding recognition, then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially produced. This means that to the extent that desire is implicated in social norms, it is bound up with the question of power and with the problem of who qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not (2).

In other words, for Butler, one’s recognizability is often bound up in power structures that can result in the ‘undoing’ of one’s personhood. Thus arises the problem for Butler (and, as we shall see, for Reiz) of who legitimately is recognized as ‘human’ (and thus part of society) and who is not.

The desire for personhood (and the recognition of one as ‘human’) is further problematized by Foucault, who, in his text *Discipline and Punish* extrapolates upon the inimical ramifications of how being sexed in society carries with it a strict set of social norms.

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268 For Butler, gender is, to a certain degree, inflected by and bound up in sex(uality); for more information, refer to her text *Gender Trouble.*
regulations. For Foucault, “a subject is formed and then invested with a sexuality by a regime of power” (Butler *The Psychic Life of Power* 103), signifying that, in order for sexuality to occur on any level, there first must occur an application of power strictures in order for those ‘acceptable’ bodies to exist. To quote Foucault, “Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies” (*Discipline and Punish* 138). Hence, the question posed by Butler and addressed by Foucault remains: to what degree is one’s personhood risked by becoming a ‘docile body’? For those who refuse corporeal docility, what becomes of them? Where do they exist? What do bodies truly ‘desire’—recognition? Personhood? Power? Is there, essentially, an ‘undoing’ of one’s personhood, or did one never have that ‘personhood’ conferred on him/her? Does one become a liminal figure in rejecting certain modes of recognition, and, can one survive as a ‘liminal figure’? A true consideration of potential answers to some of these questions may be located in a detailed analysis of Margarita Reiz’s play *Hambre ciega*.

Reiz’s 1996 play\(^{269}\) *Hambre ciega* takes place in a quasi-apocalyptic, post-war collapsed city outskirt that metaphorizes the cast-aside, downtrodden figures that society often casts a ‘blind eye’ toward (partially referencing the title of the piece). This play revolves around only two main characters, the school-girl Eva, and the deserter soldier known initially as ‘Soldier,’ until he later comes to be called by his real name, Pablo. By means of a series of exchanges and intimate revelations, in addition to transformations, the characters make known that they possess both a powerful hunger and a hunger for power, both of which they negotiate and locate in the liminal space of the outer city. The analysis of this play by Reiz will aim to demonstrate how the characters not only hunger for the

\(^{269}\) Written and premiered in the same year, 1996
(apparent) power that the liminal space of the abandoned, ruined city provides them, where they may be unfettered, sexualized free beings able to consummate their relationship as they ‘sex themselves’, but also that they hunger for power in order to ‘consume’ it, and each other. The desire of these characters appears to be for desire itself, yet the analysis will also ask to what degree their hunger is ‘blinded’, or how they themselves are blinded to the reality of their predicament. The analysis will question what are the ramifications of this ‘blind hunger’ that compels these characters toward sexuality, and the forms that their resultant desire in the liminal space take: into what is it transformed, and, does this end result differ at all from the original form, or is it merely a re-deployment of the same structures of control? Is their hunger truly ‘blind’ or does it achieve any measure of power for these characters? Do they, in essence, succeed in ‘seeing’ anything, and, if so, what?

The play opens with a purposeful visual contradiction: the happy laughter of children riding along on their bicycles amidst the rubble of an abandoned city: “Dos niños de nueve y diez años recorren el espacio escénico vacío con sus bicicletas, riendo. . . . Sus risas se oyen por encima de un cóctel de ruidos. Los que corresponden a una gran ciudad colapsada, absurda y loca” (201). Potentially desirous of uniting two contradictions (in this case, the innocence and vitality of children and the death of a post-war city), Reiz appears to have fashioned a unique and unusual space in which characters may experience a different reality (and perhaps ontology270) for themselves. One may even argue that such a space is considered ‘marginal’ in that it not only lies on the fringes of society (here, the outskirts of a collapsed city in ruins) but also that the characters inhabiting it undergo a sort of transformation into something else (as we shall see). The ‘transitional’ state of the space, as

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270 Indicative of the potential that these characters may ‘be’ someone else in such a space.
we shall see soon, can bring concomitant with it a sense of danger, as Douglas describes:

“Danger lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others” (*Purity and Danger* 97). Reiz slowly develops the transitional and ‘dangerous’ space of the city that the characters occupy, and that changes them as well.

Immediately after the children ride around on bicycles in Scene One, they disappear, and the reader/ spectator is left only with the harsh reality of a city in ruins, leaving no apparent space for humanity (“Oímos las risas de los niños nada más, mientras éstos se pierden en la oscuridad” 201), only the garish sounds of war described in Scene Two (“Estallido de bombas. Ráfagas de metralleta” 201). The cacophonous sounds constitute a type of bellicose, antithetical lullaby\(^{271}\): “…manifestaciones, discursos, noticias, conversaciones, sirenas, bocinas, arengas de pobres. . . . Un día de guerra al atardecer. Es invierno. El sol se pone, tiñendo el cielo de sangre. Se oye el viento. Disparos y estallidos” (201). In Scene Three, the cold, inhuman landscape\(^{272}\) (“Paisaje desolado. Al fondo una ciudad en ruinas” 201) gives way to a solitary human figure: the unkemptly-dressed schoolgirl Eva emerges, described as “una muchacha de dieciséis años. . . . Vestida con un uniforme escolar raquítico y unos calcetines blancos, sin zapatos. . . . canta una melancólica canción de cuna. Tiene miedo, hambre y frío” (201, my emphases). Her tenuous entrance and the child-like aspect of her character who emerges humming a lullaby (making her appear much younger than even her sixteen years) begin to lend credence to the notion that the city, although visually unattractive and non-propitious to human existence, may afford Eva a

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\(^{271}\) The notion of a ‘lullaby’ becomes even more important when Eva enters humming a sad, melancholic ‘canción de cuna’.

\(^{272}\) Further emphasizing the notion of the space as both marginal and dangerous
space for her to act differently—a liminal space where she may find a new way to define herself and perhaps a chance to ‘exist’, or find ‘recognition’ and, as we shall see, ‘personhood’. Citing the stage directions, “...Eva, va y viene. ... Lleva una mochila a la espalda y dos banderas rotas: una gris, la otra verde. ... Adopta *pose de inocencia, coloca temblorosa los mechones desgreñados de su pelo.* Levanta una u otra bandera. Duda.

Después, al comprobar que no pasa nada, cede la tensión y queda como una muñeca rota, con la sonrisa helada en los labios. Tira las banderas al suelo y las pisotea con rabia” (201, my emphases). No longer afraid of being persecuted for cleaving to one political party over the other (potentially the two factions that have engaged in war), Eva feels free to destroy both flags, smiling while she does so, and such an action paves the way for a new bodily (and later, sexual) freedom that Eva will experience.

The sordid description of the environment marks a sort of surreal space, almost as if Eva, ironically named after the first woman created, were entering a type of garden of Eden, only, in this case, the space appears to be no paradise but a locus of ‘fear,’ ‘hunger,’ and ‘cold’, citing the stage directions, in addition to filth and disorder. Such descriptive terms of the space in the play instantiate Douglas’s theories on pollution, danger, and the marginal. In her text *Purity and Danger*, Douglas theorizes about dirt representing disorder (“As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder” 2), as well as danger, that lies in the margins, where it locates a source of power there as well. Citing again and expanding the earlier quote, Douglas argues that “Danger lies in transitional states. ... To have been in the margins is to have been in

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273 The connection between forging a new self and youth lies in the following: the presentation of Eva as a young, innocent girl signifies that she has entered the space as a sort of ‘tabula rasa’, and the new, marginal state will afford her a new self, as if there she will grow and mature and develop her own constitution.

274 Similar to a child forging a way for herself, starting from scratch and developing her persona

275 Keep in mind the earlier references to theoretical underpinnings that will be explored in this chapter.

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contact with danger, to have been at a source of power. . . . There is. . . power in the inarticulate area, margins, confused lines, and beyond the external boundaries” (97, 98, 99). Therefore, occupation of a liminal state (in this case, the rubble-strewn, post-war city outskirts) brings one into disorder and pollution, but this can and does generate power for those that inhabit it as well (as we shall see later on).

Returning to the text itself, immediately after the description of the city, Eva speaks for the first time, and her words underscore the dominating sensation that envelops her, that of hunger: “Tendré que buscar otro lugar para vivir si no quiero morirme de hambre” (201). The importance of hunger at this point in the text is to underscore the fact that Eva seeks sustenance for an appetite that must be satisfied \(^{276}\), and to serve as a force that compels her toward certain actions and behaviors, and even manners of being (as we shall soon see).

Seeking to satiate her hunger, Eva extracts from her bag “un mendrugo de pan verdoso”, that she eats slowly in order to conserve it, consuming it “con exquisita pulcritud como si se tratase de los manjares más deliciosos” (202), once again signaling the emphasis on physical hunger \(^{277}\).

As briefly referenced earlier, the initial characterization \(^{278}\) of both Eva and the Soldier delineate Foucault’s theorizations about ‘docile bodies.’ In his text *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault describes how “The body. . . is caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions” (11) and how “. . . the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (26). Societal institutions such as the military and the educational system instantiate two examples of those mechanisms designed to keep

\(^{276}\) How this is accomplished will occur later.

\(^{277}\) Later on we shall see how this physical, intestinal hunger translates to a corporeal-sexual hunger.

\(^{278}\) That is to say, the presentation of the characters as a ‘soldier’ and a ‘schoolgirl’
individuals under control. Both characters discuss how they have somewhat been forced into specific roles, without truly knowing why\textsuperscript{279}. Eva elaborates on how she has been affected by the war, stating that she had to leave seven years prior because her father, a diplomat, was transferred: “Tuve que marcharme hace siete años porque a mi padre le trasladaron. Era diplomático. La guerra, por circunstancias absurdas, me devolvió aquí hace aproximadamente un año” (205). Likewise, the Soldier echoes the sentiments of Eva in stating that not by his own design did he become a soldier, but instead felt compelled to do so: \textit{Eva:} “¿Por qué te hiciste soldado? \textit{Soldier:} La verdad es que no lo sé. Supongo que creí que así acabaría todo antes. Me alisté voluntario a los dos años de comenzar la guerra. Me estaba volviendo loco de esperar y ver morir gente alrededor” (209 – 210). In addition to the ‘docile body’ role apparently being foisted upon them\textsuperscript{280}, the initial characterizations of Eva and the Soldier sex them in a certain way: the Soldier (although he deviates from his role as the play develops) is sexed as hyper masculine, with the typical instruments of war with him (pistol, sleeping bag, military bag) and the expected ire that a wartorn soldier would exhibit (for example, in his threats to Eva, such as “Al menor movimiento te vuelo la cabeza. Hoy por hoy un muerto más no va a revolverme el estómago” 202). Eva, likewise is sexed as ultra feminine in her innocence and femininity: “Adopta pose de inocencia, coloca temblorosa los mechones desgreñados de su pelo” (201) and her own statements to the Soldier, such as “Soy inofensiva” (203).

According to Foucault, discipline is a technique that organizes spaces (“Discipline organizes an analytical space,” \textit{Discipline and Punish} 143), yet the obvious inception of a

\textsuperscript{279} Even though Eva states that she took the schoolgirl outfit from a girl who had died, one must presuppose that she, an adolescent girl, also was in school and most likely wore a similar outfit.

\textsuperscript{280} And consequently the reason for which they have come to this space
departure from disciplinary mechanisms for these two characters demonstrates that, according to Foucault, they would be considered less than ‘persons’. Quoting his text again, “Discipline ‘makes’ individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise” (170). Therefore, rejecting the ‘docile bodies’ that they have been forced into, relegated to that which is less than ‘human,’ and, borrowing Butler’s terminology, ‘unrecognizable’, these characters, bereft of society’s definition of ‘humanity’ (as well as utility) are left to create their own selves in the marginal space of the city. Furthermore, although their roles as ‘schoolgirl’ or ‘soldier’ technically would delineate them as those ‘docile bodies’ that Foucault describes, it is clear that they do not wish nor are able to abide by such categorizations, thus resisting these, and the disciplinary mechanisms that have attempted to maintain them as docile.

Again returning to Foucault’s theory in *Discipline and Punish*, visibility becomes a crucial component of discipline:

Disciplinary power. . . is exercised through a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection (188).

The presence of these characters in the space that they occupy throughout the play, and its location on the margins of the city, as well as a dark space (“La noche ha ido llegando, llenándolo todo de oscuridad” 210) removes from them the ability to be ‘visible,’ and, therefore, to fall under disciplinary mechanisms, which, for someone like Foucault, would be
a good thing. Nonetheless, what is left over for them when there are no disciplinary mechanisms to regulate them does not necessarily signify that they have escaped from power structurings, nor does it indicate that they are, in some sense, able to thrive in an environment that fosters their newly forged ontologies.

As Eva and the Soldier dialogue, both begin the process of stripping away the outer identities of the other. For Eva, it begins when she directs her commentary to the bicycle that he has been dragging with him, and that she deems “inservible”, describing how, like the soldier’s uniform, it also has no use for him: “Eres el soldado más extraño que he visto hasta ahora. Además, a mí también me gusta esa bicicleta inservible, con esa bocina de colores. Aunque sigo sin encontrarle una relación contigo, o con tu uniforme” (204). Eva’s description of the unusable bicycle also serves to indicate the lack of purpose of the ‘soldier’ (ironically given no name and identified only by his profession), perhaps a slap at the needlessness of war, but most certainly a comment directed toward how society declares a certain utility of some professions or stations (like that of schoolgirl or soldier), when really they serve no purpose. The bicycle additionally appears to mark a movement of the plot toward an unleashing in the characters of certain feelings and emotions, and an indubitable change in them, revealing their ‘true colors,’ evidenced in the ‘bocina de colores’ that Eva references as she dialogues with the Soldier.

Just as Eva engages him, the Soldier likewise turns his commentary toward Eva, stating that her schoolgirl uniform is nothing but a ‘disguise’ (“¿Puede saberse por qué llevas un disfraz de colegiala?” 204), receiving affirmation from Eva that she is not really a

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281 That is to say, for Foucault, it would be good not to have to fall under disciplinary mechanisms, thus ‘forced’ into visibility.
282 As we shall soon see, this becomes a metaphor for stripping away the layers of the socially appropriate and arriving at the instinctual and the libidinal.
schoolgirl but rather took the uniform from a dead girl, even admitting that it has helped her access food easier (“Se lo quité a una niña que ya no lo necesitaba. . . . A veces me ha ayudado a comer” 204). As they, in essence, discard their illusory shells of ‘schoolgirl’ and ‘soldier,’ both reiterate the urgency of their hunger: *Eva:* “Sólo tengo hambre”; *Soldado:* “Yo tengo mucha hambre, como tú, eso es lo que tengo” and “Quiero comida. Después me iré” (204, 205), an impulse that causes them to fight physically and ferociously (“Pelean agresivamente con las manos, con las uñas y los dientes” 204). As we later shall see, the ‘hunger’ that comes to dominate them will propel them toward a myriad of visceral and libidinal responses and actions.

Interestingly enough, the fight over the scarce quantity of food that Eva had in her knapsack appears to compel them toward more honesty between the two characters that become salient as the plot progresses. They begin to personalize their histories, actions that, in the plot, are signaled by the continual honking of the multi-colored bicycle horn, marking the inception of a freedom and liberalism of action and feeling that the two enjoy together (“Eva sigue tocando la bicicleta y hace sonar la bocina” 206). The Soldier exclaims “¡Vaya, llegó la hora de las confidencias!” (206), while Eva queries “Si eres un soldado, ¿cómo es que no estás en el frente?. . . . ¿Desertaste?” (206). Meanwhile, the Soldier, rifling through Eva’s knapsack, discovers her personal photos from when she was a child: “¡Madre mía, hasta las fotos de cuando eras un bebé! ¡Qué chorrada! La vida ha cambiado mucho desde entonces preciosa, ¿no lo has notado?” (206), to which Eva retorts “¿De qué te burlas tú? Viajas con los recuerdos a cuestas como yo. O vas a decirme que esta mierda de bicicleta te es de mucha utilidad” (206). As both Eva and the Soldier begin to ‘recognize’ each other (borrowing Butler’s terminology), their interactions toward each other reveal what appears to
be a sense of power that each one possesses. In this case, the power exhibited by each one relates to a confidence of self and a growing knowledge of the other. Eva proceeds to divulge personal information about the Soldier, claiming to know where he lived as a child (“¿En el callejón del Toro…? and ¿Tú vivías en el pasaje del Toro número uno, en los bajos?” 207), eliciting a surprised response from the Soldier (“Viví allí, sí. No sé como te has enterado, pero no creas que vas a engañarme con esas historias” 207). Engaged with and intrigued by Eva’s apparent knowledge of his past, the Soldier asks her “¿De qué me conoces? Yo, por más que te miro, no sé quien eres” (208). Eva’s shocking response in which she, imitating the sounds of children, quotes an exchange between two boys named Pablo and Iván (“—¿A las cuatro en la plaza Mayor? –Sí, Pablo, hasta luego. –Hasta luego, Iván” 208), garners a divulgence from the Soldier about his childhood best friend, Iván, with whom he lost contact due to the war: “Iván fue mi mejor amigo cuando era un niño, pero tuvo que irse porque a su padre le mandaron al extranjero. Nos escribimos durante un tiempo. Luego llegó la guerra” (208). Immediately thereafter occurs the most crucial (and personal) anagnorisis of the play: Eva’s revelation that she, in fact, used to be Iván, the friend of the Soldier, now identified by his real name, ‘Pablo’: “Soy Eva. Fui tu amigo Iván durante un verano maravilloso. Hace tanto tiempo que me hace daño recordarlo. Juntos, recorriamos ‘El Capricho’ muchas tardes, sudando sobre nuestras bicicletas” (208).

Almost immediately following Eva’s revelation, ‘Pablo’ demonstrates the beginnings of a growing desire, as we shall soon see, a ‘hunger’ for Eva, evidenced in his apparent mesmerism of her and his concern for her warmth (“Pablo no puede dejar de mirar a Eva, de arriba a abajo. . . . Él recoge del suelo su saco de dormir y se lo tiende” 209), stating “Toma, no tienes con que abrigarte por la noche” (209). As if to physically metaphorize the growing
‘hunger’ between the two, Eva shares the pittance of moldy bread that she earlier on had ferociously defended: “[Eva] extrae el trozo de pan verde que guardó al principio y se lo tira”, stating “Con esto engañarás al estómago un poco. Mañana buscaremos más, ¿de acuerdo?” (209). The use of the word ‘engaño’ is interesting since Eva uses it to refer to deceiving the stomach by feeding it a little, yet the significance of such a term will bear weight as the play progresses with regard to what or who is deceived, and how. The relevance of the usage of the name Pablo from here onward in the text (thereby no longer using the title and docile body role ‘Soldier’) removes him from the societal apparatus to which he was previously forced to cleave, and appears to transfer to him a sense of power in that he is now in charge of his own self and destiny.

At this point in the text, the Soldier, more interested now than ever before, and on the heels of her recent divulgence, now known by his real name ‘Pablo’, devours not only the scrap of bread that Eva offers him but also, in doing so, begins to consume Eva herself, metaphorically speaking. Quoting the stage directions, “Pablo devora el mendrugo de pan sin perder de vista, embobado, los movimientos de Eva” (209), as if he is attempting to gain access to Eva through visually, and later, sexually ‘consuming’ her as well. The consumption of Eva involves Pablo’s gravitation towards her as a liminal figure, something he is attracted

283 According to Butler, the name as patronym bears and institutes the law, producing a subject based on prohibition and laws, while channeling those subjects into specific (and acceptable) social-sexual positionalities. For Butler, the name is “a site of (dissimulated) phantasmatic transfer of patrilineal authority [and] . . . performs the very inversion and appropriation that it masks” (Bodies That Matter 154, 156). Expanding Butler’s argument, the ‘name’ creates individuals (or, as she states, ‘subjects’) who continue the persistence of patriarchal (normative and hegemonic) authority, without subjects necessarily even knowing that such authority and power over them has occurred (for that reason, it is, borrowing Butler’s term, ‘phantasmatic’). At this point in the play, Reiz’s character has discarded such a moniker and now is referred to by his real name Pablo, thereby appearing to have broken such a transfer of authority over him. Nonetheless, as we shall later see, the degree to which such shedding of patriarchal and normative authority has actually occurred will be addressed.
to and, on some level, desires to join with, commenting to Eva (posterior to her announcement), “¡Eres guapisima!” (209), and readily desiring to wait for the night to pass, spending it with her: Eva: “¿Qué vamos a hacer ahora? Pablo: No podemos hacer nada. Sólo esperar. Eva: ¿Juntos? Pablo: Si tú quieres…” (210). For Nagel (in his article “Sexual Perversion”), sexual attraction “involves a desire that one’s partner be aroused by the recognition of one’s desire that he or she be aroused” (275). In other words, one form of desire ultimately leads to and is fueled by another, and the desire of both (here, both wanting to be close to each other and share the experience of the night together) quickly moves toward the sexual.

Scene Four is dominated by images of vision, beginning with the stage directions’ description of a large moon whose light fills the scene, reminiscent of a lunar surface and significant of the liminal space of the abandoned city outskirts, away from the organizing and probing systems. Now alone with each other, the scene changes and so do the descriptions of both Pablo and Eva. Quoting the stage directions, “Una luna inmensa inunda la escena. Se oyen aullidos inquietantes en la noche. Eva y Pablo duermen abrazados. La respiración de ella es irregular, gime y se agita intranquila” (210). The importance of this light ‘inundating’ the scene not only indicates that something unnatural or abnormal is occurring (in this case, the joining and consuming of each other’s bodies) but also reveals that these figures are now able to exhibit a sense of power on their own, exemplified by the liveliness of the scene, that almost appears to have taken on a life of its own, and the freedom of both individuals to enjoy each other’s bodies. The presence of the moon signifies that their eyes have been metaphorically ‘opened’ to the newly illuminated situation in which they now realize their
(apparent) power in order to act how they wish without regulatory mechanisms preventing them from doing so.

Another significant visual metaphor in Scene Four lies in the presence of other characters in the play, specifically the figure in white tunic, who runs toward Eva and Pablo lifting its arms up before it is struck down by lightning (―Por el fondo avanza una figura con túnica blanca, corriendo hacia ellos como a cámara lenta, al llegar a su altura levanta los brazos al cielo y cae fulminada. Se arrastra por el suelo hasta desaparecer por el otro lado‖ 210). Immediately after these stage directions nine girls emerge onto the scene (simply titled Girl one through nine), who sing a lullaby284 replete with visual and colorful imagery, perhaps in reference to the first introduction to Eva, and her child-like, innocent nature in contrast to the war-torn city around her. Of special importance mentioned in the girls’ lullaby are images of the “verde luna”, “ojos dormidos,” “caballos desbocados”, and “sol ciego” (210 – 211). The figure in white connects with the reference in the lullaby to the “pechos de tul” and most likely represents the newly acquired power of the individuals who are now freely able to express their sexuality, yet there appears to be some ominous foreshadowing especially with regard to vision and visuality in these images: the moon that brought to the scene a new light is now described as ‘green’ in the lullaby, the color of immaturity (indicative that their celebration of sexual freedom may be all too premature285).

Additionally, while there are images of sexual liberation such as the “caballos desbocados” (211), these are trumped by the other metaphors of blindness and inability to see, combined with images of death and rigidity, such as the “ojos dormidos”, “sol ciego”, “niños muertos”,

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284 Recall the lullaby hummed by Eva at the very beginning of the play.
285 This also connects to the multi-colored horn on the bicycle that appeared earlier in the play, a sign of the youthfulness of Pablo (even though, at the time, he was meant to be seen in his soldier role).
“campo yerto” (210, 211, my emphases), that forebode a potential future failure of such a present triumph.

The scene ends with the stage directions describing how Eva and Pablo physically and sexually consummate their relationship. Their two bodies almost appear to merge into one as they embrace each other and lie closely together, wishing to be a part of each other.\(^{286}\) The consummation is marked by the auditory effects of the lightning that sends the girls (serving as a sort of Greek chorus) scattering in fear, and dark clouds that eclipse the moon, blocking out all light while they unite:

Eva se despierta sobresaltada. Se incorpora mirando a todas partes. Al ver a Pablo a su lado se tranquiliza. Le acaricia la frente. Le besa en los labios.

Desnuda el pecho del joven, después el suyo; se tiende a su lado abrazándole.

Él gime complacido. Ella se introduce dentro de la manta. Pablo jadea de placer. La luna se esconde tras una nube (211).

Despite the sweet sensuality of the scene as these two figures come together\(^{287}\) there persists a more animalistic, libidinal (even ‘hungry’) side of these figures that is best expressed in darkness as the moon disappears\(^{288}\) while they sexually unite, and the return shortly thereafter of the “aullidos inquietantes” heard earlier (211). The bestial references such as describing the sexual reactions as ‘panting’ (“Pablo jadea de placer” 211) and the disquieting howls (“aullidos inquietantes”) not only allude to the animalistic side of sexuality

\(^{286}\) Another example of how they ‘consume’ each other

\(^{287}\) Recall that Eva at this point remains a liminal figure, a woman who once was a man, a schoolgirl who is really not, while Pablo is a soldier also in appearance only (a ‘not soldier’), thus rendering both of these figures, in a sense, ‘liminal’ in that what was previously present in the remnants of their ‘docile body’ selves they have now discarded in favor of embracing the more unfettered sexualized selves each now expresses.

\(^{288}\) The notion of darkness will later be explored with regard to the degree to which these characters are ‘blinded’ by their hunger.
exhibited by Eva and Pablo but also indicate that their sexuality possesses a frightening dimension, one might even say a ‘disgusting’ dimension. According to William Ian Miller, that which is ‘disgusting’ is simultaneously attractive and repellant, lurid and sensational, yet violent and horrific, involved with sex as that which may violate norms yet that one still wants to look at (The Anatomy of Disgust x). Quoting Miller once more, “sexual desire depends on the idea of a prohibited domain of the disgusting” (137), which in this case would be the isolated space of the city that Eva and Pablo have taken refuge in, away from the normative and the hegemonic, which would find the liminality of their attraction and bodies (especially that of Eva) repulsive. Yet, the sexuality generated between these characters is used to reveal and mark the area of the boundary itself. The concatenation of light and darkness, representing that which is repulsive and simultaneously attractive, again instantiates Miller’s theory on disgust, for “Disgust helps define boundaries between us and them and me and you. . . Disgust, along with desire, locates the bounds of the other, either as something to be avoided, repelled or attacked, or, in other settings, as something to be emulated, imitated, or married” (50). Thus, their bodies do not merely show the liminal in their sexual preferences, but they themselves ‘become’ the boundary. Their bodies transform into the realm of separation between what is accepted and unaccepted. While the rest of the city outskirts are clouded in darkness, illuminating only their bodies, they, in essence, have become the limen, with the conflict of what is accepted and unaccepted, attractive and disgusting, normative and non-normative playing out on their bodies themselves. What in the moment, at least for the two characters, appears to be a triumph as these former ‘docile bodies’ now are at last able to be who they really are, the next scene brings with it yet again a
sense of foreboding, as the stage directions describe the uneasy slumber of Pablo (“[Pablo], convulso, reprime su desasosiego en duermevela” 211).

The end of the subsequent scene is again marked by a strong sense of unease that transmits to both characters. Affected by the auditory cacophonies of “ráfagas de metralleta” and “una bomba” (212), Pablo, once again uneasy from the scene around him, “salta en el lecho. . . sudando” (212), feverish and with an aching leg (“Está febril y le duele la pierna herida” 212), continuously (and, perhaps, ‘feverishly’) ‘hungry’ for another union with her, tries once more to initiate a sexual exchange with Eva, who now rejects him: “[Pablo] acaricia los pechos de la joven e intenta descubrirlos. Ella le rechaza sin despertarse, se gira y sigue durmiendo” (212). At the end of the scene, as if to reiterate the point of the loss of personhood of these two characters, another cloud obfuscates the scene and their desire (imaged by the moon), but, at this point, it seems to mask the obvious sexual infractions of these two figures (“Otra nube apaga la luna” 212), who will soon find themselves deeply embedded within the same system from which they believed to have escaped.

Scene Six commences with the entrance of a beggar, dragging with him a bicycle, yet, in contrast to the “desvencijada” bicycle used by Pablo much earlier in the play, this one is described as trailering with it an iron\textsuperscript{289} cart full of newspapers: “A lo lejos del camino se acerca pedaleando un mendigo, montado sobre una extraña bicicleta, que remolca un carro pequeño de hierro lleno de periódicos y octavillas” (212). The beggar throws the papers at the slumbering couple, rousing them awake with cries that the war is over and that they need to return to the city, a locus of order and organization: “¡La guerra ha terminado! ¡Arriba! Hay mucho que hacer ahora. La patria nos necesita a todos. ¡Volved a la ciudad, la guerra ha

\textsuperscript{289} Perhaps a metaphor for the inflexible, hardened regime that regulates one’s sexuality and role in society
When questioned by Eva further, the Mendigo announces that his ‘orders’ (again emphasizing the systematic, normative regime) are for everyone to return to the city, and that he knows nothing other than the orders he has articulated: “No sé nada más que lo que he dicho. Las órdenes son volver a la ciudad. . . . Yo sólo cumplo órdenes” (212).

Additionally, the beggar begins to parrot the dogmatic view of the normative when he mentions the impending danger that such a space, the outskirts of the city, provides for all those who remain there, claiming, “Quizá sea peligroso permanecer en lugares aislados en momentos de confusión como éste. . . . Se distribuye la información lo más rápidamente posible, pero aun así hay gente desinformada” (212).

Incredulous to the rallying efforts by the government for all to return home and be of service to them (“Amigos: la guerra ha terminado. Podéis volver a vuestras casas y reanudar sin miedo vuestras vidas. . . . Necesitamos la ayuda y la alegría de vuestro corazón para este nuevo y último sacrificio. Todo será por el bien común. . . . Nuestro gobierno ha firmado una paz ventajosa para todos” 213), Eva, before so comfortable with her sexualized self and with Pablo, now appears shaken, disillusioned, and angry that the government has left them with nothing: “Y ahora..., ¡no sé de qué me hablan! Esto no es nada de lo que yo soñé. . . . ¿Qué quieren? ¡Qué más necesitan de mí? ¡Yo no soy nadie! ¡Mi vida no vale nada!” (214). As if physically metaphorizing the actions of the government toward figures such as Eva, she begins to tear apart the government announcements of the war ending, angrily mimicking what they have done to her, or rather, how they have ‘undone’ her (“Eva comienza a recoger octavillas y a romperlas. . . . Eva lanza las octavillas al cielo y mira como toman tierra, riendo. Recoge a puñados del suelo los panfletos y los manda al aire, sin parar de hablar”.

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290 Indicating as well that he is a docile body, with no name other than his title/role
214). Recall that, according to Butler, gender, like sexuality (and desire), craves recognition; however, “if the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that ‘undo’ the person by conferring recognition. . . . [there is created] the problem of who qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not” (Undoing Gender 2, 3). Hence, in order for Eva (and Pablo for that matter) to have been recognized, the ultimate price they have paid was the undoing (and un-recognizing) of their selves, leaving them with nothing but a persistent physical hunger that is now unable to be satiated.

Eva, now recognizing her hunger and emptiness, as if the Biblical Eve who has been made aware of her sin and nakedness, ‘wakes up’ to the reality of the situation (specifically, her lack of food, shelter, and weariness) and begins rhetorically to comment on her hunger and weariness, stating, “¿Por qué no hablan de comida? ¡Han pasado cien años! ¡Soy cien años más vieja! . . . ¿Dónde está mi casa? ¿Por qué tengo que irme de aquí? ¡Esta es mi única casa!” (214). Immediately following these comments, Eva interestingly cuts a lock of hair very short with scissors she had in her knapsack (“Saca las tijeras del interior. Corta un mechón de cabello muy corto” 214), remarking shortly afterward “Bien, no pasa nada, todo va a salir bien. Debemos volver. No sé por qué me he alterado tanto, al fin y al cabo la guerra ha terminado y todo va a arreglarse enseguida para nosotros” (214, my emphasis). While her words may certainly be directed towards the needlessness of her becoming riled and upset due to the pamphlets announcing the war’s end, it is highly pertinent that she would use such words while cutting off her hair, as if the term may be translated as ‘altering’, with Eva perhaps doing so to make herself look more like the boy she used to be291. As if reacting to

291 The significance here is that she appears to desire to want to make herself look less like the girl she is now, and more like the boy she used to be, that is to say, following the natural order of things, thereby not challenging the normative.
her transgression against the norm, she admits that she regrets having changed herself (see the quoted section above), emphasizing such words by continuing to cut more of her hair and toss it into the air, demonstrating her frustration with the change and maybe even her disgust with having had long hair (“Eva corta otro mechón y lo tira al aire” 215).

Roused by Eva, Pablo awakens to a pain in his leg and a fever, that relate to the notion of desire and hunger, in this case, that are prohibited and punished (“El gesto brusco de levantarse le recuerda el profundo dolor que le produce su pierna herida. Tiene mucha fiebre” 215). Again quoting Butler, when desire is prohibited, it, in fact, turns back upon itself, and the desire to desire eventually becomes foreclosed, with the end result that desiring recognition (and consequently gaining social existence) eventually leads to one’s own subordination (The Psychic Life of Power 78, 81). Throughout the play, Pablo and Eva have demonstrated that they possess a strong desire not only for each other, but to be able to desire, and ultimately, to be recognized as the individuals they are. Little are they aware that, in desiring and believing that they are recognized as the liminal individuals they wish to be, the system around them has actually solidified all the more their own subordination and un-personhood. Their desire, in fact, leads them to their own demise, made clear in the long penultimate scene of the play.

292 As we have seen thus far in Reiz’s play, a big part of the need of both Eva and Pablo was a space where they could ‘desire’; therefore, it is pertinent to say that their desire was, at least in part, for desire itself.

293 Quoting Butler, “The desire to desire is a willingness to desire precisely what would foreclose desire, if only for the possibility of continuing to desire. This desire for desire is exploited in the process of social regulation, for if the terms by which we gain social recognition for ourselves are those by which we are regulated ‘and’ gain social existence, then to affirm one’s existence is to capitulate to one’s subordination” (The Psychic Life of Power 78); “The prohibition against the desire is that desire as it turns back upon itself. . .” (Ibid 81).

294 Shown, for example, in Eva’s self-mutilation through cutting her hair, and Pablo’s grave wound to his leg, rendering him useless as a soldier, and man; in addition, the persistent hunger each continues to feel represents the fact that there will never be a true satisfaction in who they are, for the system around them has prevented them from being so.
The hunger for each other that brought Eva and Pablo a sense of power earlier now brings only pain and discord, as Pablo comments that it is the hunger that is making Eva delirious enough to cut off her beautiful hair (“Debe de ser el hambre, que te hace delirar” 215), and causing Pablo to become angry with her, eventuating a physical struggle between the two for the scissors Eva uses to chop her locks (“En el forcejeo, Pablo se hace daño. Se encoge sujetando su pierna dolorida” 215). After discussing with Pablo how the war is over, both discuss the needlessness of the war, a literal slam at the conflict but also a figurative dig at the ‘wounds’ caused to the personhood of liminal individuals such as Eva and Pablo, the latter of which now has “metralla” within (signifying the forcing into himself of that which is inhuman, cold, artificial), that has caused him fever, and is now “ardiendo” (216). The food both now crave is not only for sustenance but also metaphorically represents the need to regain some of the recognition that they previously (believed to have) possessed (“Lo único que me preocupa es. . . . ponerme ropa de abrigo y encontrar comida para los dos” 216). After Eva’s divulgence that the war has ended, she admits that her dominating emotion now becomes one of fear (“No sé por qué, pero me ha entrado mucho miedo” 217) as she and Pablo discuss the strong possibility that they will have no choice but to return to the city (“Tendremos que ir a la ciudad…” 217), the realm of the ordered and a place that is intolerant to their bodies and identities. Previously ‘blinded’ to the harsh reality that now surely awaits them as they must return, Pablo, like Eva beforehand, realizes the situation while he also divulges his fear of returning since he has been a deserter (“No puedo volver. . . . Me están buscando” 217), and also since he committed an even graver crime, that of killing his captain, whom he witnessed rape a woman (“Maté a mi capitán. . . . Tuve que hacerlo. Violó a una chica…” 218, 219). The environment that had, up to this point, fostered and nurtured these
figures, quickly begins to fall apart as both characters come to terms with the harsh reality of the events that have precipitated around them, and that have begun the process of exposing that they never truly had any power, or recognition, and leaving them no choice but to return to the normative realm.

As if continuing her pattern of returning to the thinking and acting as if she were already back in the normative realm, Eva, who physically began earlier her process of changing her body back to what it once was (the cutting of her long hair), verbally deludes herself into believing that all will be well for them in the city:

Supongo que lo mejor será ir a la ciudad. Estarán organizando los víveres y tendremos comida para todos. ¡Vamos a ponernos como vacas! Pienso estar comiendo horas y horas sin parar. Y seguramente dormiremos en camas. . . . ¡Con sábanas y mantas! ¡Muchas mantas! . . . Todo se arreglará, ten confianza. . . . También habrán organizado un servicio de atención a los heridos, ¡Yo me voy, contigo o sin ti! Estarías loco si no te vinieras. . . . La fiebre te está afectando (218).

Eva’s hunger for consumption no longer includes Pablo, as she openly rejects him (and his liminal body) with her persistent desire to return to the city: “¡No quiero líos de otros! Bastante tengo con los míos. . . . ¿Cómo quieres que piense en ayudarte? Déjame en paz y entiéndetelas tú solo con el ejército” (218). Pablo, reacting to Eva’s rage, attempts to draw her back into his realm where they have enjoyed power and freedom, telling her “Hace un momento querías volver a ser una niña. ¿Por qué no lo intentas de verdad? ¡Soy tu amigo Pablo! ¿Recuerdas?” (218), thereafter commenting harshly (yet honestly), “Ya veo lo que han hecho contigo” (219), thus directly referencing the resultant change in Eva who feels she
must re-enter the normative world. Pablo, disgusted with such systems as the military (as he tells the story of his educated, friendly captain who, in a drunken rage, raped a woman\textsuperscript{295}), makes clear that he wants no more of such a system, and even Eva, who, up to this point, has argued clearly for their return to the city, in a moment of incredible honesty, divulges a horrific tale of how her father, most likely an enemy of the government, abandoned her family, and her mother was thereafter brutalized by a group of men, which ultimately led to Eva’s brutalization as well:

Mi padre desapareció antes de que todo comenzara. A las dos semanas de incertidumbre dos hombres aparecieron en casa, arrastraron a mi madre hasta una habitación… Vi como apuntaban a la cabeza de mi madre con una pistola, comencé a dar patadas y puñetazos a la puerta, gritando. ¡Todos hacíamos lo mismo, pero aquella maldita puerta no se abrió! Nos sacaron de allí y fuimos separados. Cada uno a un lugar diferente. No he vuelto a saber nada de ellos. De mí se hizo cargo un general al que le gusté. Creí entonces que nada peor podía pasarme (220).

On the heels of her emotional revelation, in one final embrace to be a part of each other, the two figures join together again, desiring to consume each other, to occupy the same space, as stated by the stage directions: “Ahora están abrazados muy fuerte los dos, parecen más pequeños. . . . Se aprietan más el uno contra el otro, como queriendo ocupar el menor espacio posible” (220). Nonetheless, Eva almost immediately returns to her prior reasoning

\textsuperscript{295} “[El capitán] siempre bebía sin parar. De la mañana a la noche estaba borracho. En los pocos momentos de serenidad que tenía era un hombre educado, culto, hasta amable, pero terriblemente triste. . . . Cuando estaba ebrio era como un loco, agresivo y cruel. Nunca creí que fuera capaz de una cosa así” (219 – 220).
as she encourages Pablo to leave the liminal space of the city outskirts with her, returning to
the city and to the normative: “Pablo tenemos que irnos. . . . Todo nos irá bien allí. Este
camino va a convertirse en paso obligado para todo tipo de gente. . . . Nos haremos pasar por
un matrimonio, nadie te reconocerá” (220, my emphasis). Eva’s commentary underscores the
literal ‘route’ or ‘path’ back to the city for those inhabiting the space that she and Pablo are
currently in, but also the route or means to return to the hegemonic and the accepted, that has
become for everyone (including for them), an ‘obligated’ one. The change of venue to reside
in the city will also foreclose any future possibility of Pablo (and Eva as well, although she
does not openly state it at this point) to remain the figure he was in the space where both have
appeared (at least temporarily) to find recognition; as Eva states, ‘No one will recognize him’
in the city. Additionally, Eva’s insistence that they pass as yet another staple of normativity, a
married couple, continues to emphasize this point, as does her insistence that, in the city, for
the both of them, “Todo va a salir bien” (221).

The final dialogue between the two contains yet another series of metaphors, when Eva
reiterates that her only desire toward Pablo is “bajarte la fiebre y curar esa herida” (221), in
other words, rid him of the ‘fever’, that signifies his desire for her, for the liminal, for the
freedom and the power that the two of them can share together, and cure the ‘wound’ that
represents the unbridled need for recognition by Pablo for his own self, and for Eva as well,
as both sexual object (with whom he desires consummation) and complement to him, whom
he desires to take into himself and consume. Eva’s final verbal utterance to Pablo appears to
be an encouragement to him not to falter, for, according to her, there is nothing she desires
less than to see him disappear from her sight: “No hay nada que desee menos en este
momento que perderte de vista…” (221). The irony of such a statement is striking since,
although Eva claims to not want to lose Pablo from sight (both literally, that is to say, to see him leave her, and figuratively, to see his type of identity disappear), the power of such a statement relates to the dominating principle of the entire play—that a ‘blindness’ has occurred both for the characters who believed they acquired a sense of power in being able to view themselves for the non-docile, liminal bodies they attained while in the unique space of the outskirts of the city, while also the inability to see each other for the individual each is.

The penultimate scene ends with a long series of stage directions, indicating that both Eva and Pablo slowly gather their items and leave the collapsed city outskirts, with Pablo dragging not only his leg but also his bicycle, a visual reminder of the last remnants of his liminal, non-normative self. While they walk toward the city, Eva, already re-anchored in the mindset of the normative, helps Pablo rid himself of the items he was carrying (“Eva le ha liberado de algunas de las cosas menos útiles” 221), as if assisting him in ridding himself of the belief that both could exist there and thrive in the selves and the power they had fostered. In one final attempt to convince Pablo to leave behind all that they had in the space they occupied, she tries to make him leave behind the bicycle, which he initially resists (“Eva intenta convencerle de que suelte la bicicleta, pero él se niega testarudamente” 221), only later to have no recourse but to leave it behind due to the pain and difficulty in walking as both leave the city outskirts behind: “Pablo tiene que soltar la bicicleta porque no puede más, Eva le anima a ello” (221). Pablo, reluctant to relinquish his bicycle, along with Eva, casts one final backward glance as Eva leads him away toward the city, and the bicycle, the symbol of the non-normative sexualities that both created in such a unique space, and the concomitant (appearance of) power with it, is left behind, broken and destroyed: “[Eva y

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296 Recall the multi-colored horn on the bicycle.
Pablo siguen avanzando mientras vuelven varias veces la cabeza atrás. La bicicleta rueda hacia abajo, hasta el patio de butacas. Por fin vemos como desaparecen en el horizonte. La bicicleta se ha destrozado al caer” (221). The final scene, Scene Seven, consists of only one line of stage directions, announcing the arrival of a triumphant army and the end of the war (“El sonido de un ejército se acerca vencedor, con trompetas, tambores y salvas, invade la escena, mientras baja el telón” 221), thus solidifying the triumph of the normative in both castigating these sexualized figures, driving them out of their liminal space, vanquishing their desire and undoing their need for the type of hunger they sought in the space.

In conclusion, Margarita Reiz has penned a tale of two individuals who possess a strong desire. Attracted to the liminal space of the abandoned outskirts of the city, Eva and Pablo appear to have located a space where they may discard the docile bodies society has foisted on them, where they may express their true hunger and sexuality for each other’s non-normative bodies, and, most importantly, where they may be recognized as persons. Through their presence in such a space, they appear to have escaped the regulatory eye of normative society, and developed their own sense of power. However, Reiz’s play proves that such desire, such ‘hunger’ for all of these things exhibited by her characters, truly is misplaced, for Pablo and Eva never attained any real sense of power, nor did they acquire personhood. In the end, the normative triumphs, and they have no recourse but to return to the city, thus solidifying their role as docile bodies once again. The desire, the ‘hunger’ (quoting again title) of these characters has undergone a transformation, and in the end, their hunger has, unknowingly, desired their own subordination once again. Their desire to consume and consummate the liminal has ultimately led them back to their own subjection. To quote Butler, “The doubling back of desire that culminates in reflexivity produces however, another
order of desire: the desire for that very circuit, for reflexivity and, ultimately, for subjection” (The Psychic Life of Power 22). Reiz demonstrates, in Hambre ciega, that her characters can and do experience a sense of power, and a freedom of sexuality, yet, ultimately, the price they pay is subjection, and lack of recognition. Their ‘hunger’ always was, and always will be ‘blinded.’
Gender theorist Kate Bornstein writes of identities: “We’re always performing identities, but when we ‘consciously’ perform one, and people ‘acknowledge’ our performance, it’s theater” (Gender Outlaw 147). Intricately linked with sexual and gender identity, the notion of performance thus involves both performer, who performs an identity, and the audience/spectators, who must believe that identity for a successful performance. One of those ‘identities’ that is often performed revolves around the stereotypical, normative display of womanliness. Nonetheless, a problem arises when, to quote Lynda Hart, “the female body on stage appears to be ‘the thing itself’. . . afforded not only no distance between sign and referent but, indeed, taken for the referent” (From “Introduction” p. 5 in Hart and Phelan, eds. Acting Out: Feminist Performances 1 – 11). In other words, for this examination, difficulties arise when an elision exists between the realness of the performance of ‘female’, or ‘womanliness,’ and the actual performer behind that performance—one thus assumes that the performance is tantamount to the performer, yet, this is not always the case.

Therefore, for many, as Riviere so aptly states, “Womanliness therefore could be assumed and worn as a mask…” (“Womanliness as Masquerade” 38), indicating, for her specific argument, that women wishing to be more ‘masculine’ (again, stereotypically speaking) often don the mask of that which is ultra feminine in order to avoid social-sexual castigation. Yet, her argument may be extended to encompass those performances of hyper-femininity/womanliness, with what lies beneath the mask as something entirely

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297 This will be explained later.
298 Take, for example, a career woman who enters a male-dominated field, yet wishes to protect her femininity through augmenting it in order to stand apart from the men she competes with, fearing retribution for being ‘too masculine’.
different from masculinity\textsuperscript{299}. Consequently, one must question, ‘What really lies behind the mask of womanliness or femaleness?’ ‘Must one’s own performing self, in addition to the spectators, also be convinced of the performance?’ ‘What occurs for the performer when the self one performs appears to be at complete odds with the performer behind that self?’ ‘How does one acknowledge or resolve the discrepancy between the two?’

And what of power? Is one empowered or disempowered when the performance is discrepant with the performer’s sexualized self? How does the desire behind the performance connect to the efficacy (or lack thereof) of the performance itself? How, in fact, does power function in such a scenario? Does power function as a pendulum for the performer, swinging between powerful and powerless during the performance? Or does power work differently through the performance to accomplish something else? If one assumes that one loses power in such a circumstance, what is the outcome? According to Rorty, it is not always negative, for, “The disempowered have their own hidden power: since power and powerlessness are always a function of desire. . . the powerless can. . . detach themselves from their experienced powerlessness by transforming their desires” (“Power and Powers: A Dialogue between Buff and Rebuff” (pp. 1 – 13) p. 3 in Wartenberg, ed.: \textit{Rethinking Power}). Conversely, one may gain power through such a type of performance, since, for example, as Butler would argue, a re-inscription of the very processes of power occurs in performing a gender/sexuality against the normative grain. To quote Butler\textsuperscript{300}, certain sexualities are processes “that [reinscribe] the power domains that [they resist], that it is constituted in part from the very heterosexual matrix that it seeks to displace, and that its specificity is to be established. . . in the very

\textsuperscript{299} What this is will be explored later.
\textsuperscript{300} Butler specifically argues as to how lesbian sexualities are able to reinscribe power domains as explored in her article “Imitation and Gender Subordination”.
modality and effects of that reinscription” (From “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 17). This chapter will explore how power or powers affect(s) both the performance and the performers involved.

We shall also investigate how power intersects with the notion of the truth and, specifically, how what one perceives as ‘real’ or ‘true’ with regard to performance often is problematized since, as mentioned earlier, what one takes to be ‘true’ in the performance often is discrepant with the truth or reality of the performer who is performing. In other words, as we shall see in the play analyzed in this chapter, the performance of a specific type of female self\(^\text{301}\) can and does contradict another ‘truth,’ another ‘self’ that lies behind that performance.

In addition, all of the factors mentioned (power, the notion of truth, and the performance of certain identities) will be examined as they are co-articulated through the idea of the marginal, creating questions such as, ‘Where does the marginal lie—in the performance itself, with the performer, or somewhere else?’ ‘Does the actual performance (that, as we shall see, involves vectors of power) of the normative ultimately reveal the marginal?’ and, ‘Is the desire that is divulged (that may be marginal, as we shall see), ultimately normalized through the performance?’ In Reiz’s last play, we glimpsed how she utilized the marginal space of the collapsed city outskirts as a locus that appeared to afford the characters freedom and power, yet, ultimately, they were forced to leave the space along with the power and freedom of sexuality that went with it. In Nada es lo que parece, an additional element that will be examined involves deception. One may ask, ‘Where does the notion of deception fit in the analysis’? According to Lerner, “pretending conveys the

\(^{301}\) In this case, the ultra/hyper feminine
possibility—and sometimes even the wish—to fool not only others but also oneself” (The Dance of Deception 120), therefore, it is pertinent to ask, ‘What end does such a display of deception serve?’, ‘How is truth made apparent through modes of deception?’, and ‘Can methods of deception actually constitute the truth?’ Many queries such as these will be addressed in a detailed analysis of Reiz’s play.

Reiz’s play, a re-working and expansion of her previous work Hasta que la noche nos engañe, involves a seemingly innocent and typical gathering of a group of female friends who have come together to celebrate the upcoming marriage of one of the women. However, as indicated in the title, ‘nothing is what it seems.’ Using the theatre as a platform from which she will assertively ‘speak the truth,’ one of the women (Marilú), appearing to fall in with normative values and voices, simultaneously denigrates the self-deception and imaginative idealizations of another woman (Elisa), while she elevates and romanticizes the ‘normal’ girl-hood activities that both she and Eli shared. In attempting to ‘set the record straight’ about her friend’s fantastic ventures, Marilú succeeds in revealing about herself those marginal and non-normative feelings and desires of homoeroticism and lesbianism that she experienced with her friend (and that, in her opinion, society would never accept).

In criticizing what she claims is the ‘truth’ of all of her friends, that is to say, that all have played roles in life and deceived their spouses, friends, society in general and especially themselves, she ultimately admits that, like they, she, too, has deceived herself. Her role-playing recreations of the innocent, child-like activities she enjoyed with Elisa result in the revelation of the truth of her innermost homoerotic and somewhat aberrant desires. While the

302 Again, refer to previous note for information about publication and premiere dates for this work and Hasta que la noche nos engañe.
303 Exactly what this means for this character in this text, and how she ascribes to these values will be examined later.
initial purpose of her theatrical performance was to stand apart from her friends whom she believes have fallen victim to self-deceit, Marilú, in performing what appears to be power and control over her own self, realizes that she too is self-deceived, and has ignored her own marginal sexual pulsions. Marilú, along with the other characters in Reiz’s play, have sexed themselves in a certain way in order to fit in with society’s sexual mandates, but it will prove unsuccessful for them, for the realization of their true attractions must ultimately be made evident.

Using theories of performance (and how it often intersects with the marginal), as described by Butler, Riviere and others, especially with regard to the performativity of gender and sexuality, the notion of masquerade, in addition to theories of power by Foucault regarding bodies within social networks and their linkage to truth, I aim to prove with the analysis of Reiz’s play Nada es lo que parece that a performance of power occurs, yet accomplishes exactly the opposite of its initial intention: instead of placing the performance under the theatrical gaze, the characters in Reiz’s work ultimately, through deception, shift the focus to themselves, the performers; and the realization and revelation of their true (and marginal) desires and sexualities are made salient. To quote again the title, Reiz’s play involves a performance of power that appears sexed in a certain way; however, as we shall see, ‘nothing is what it seems.’

In Juan Mayorga’s article “Ni una palabra más” (appearing in César Oliva’s El teatro español ante el siglo XXI pp. 285 – 288), while describing the function of theatre, Mayorga states, “De eso se trata: de decir la verdad. De hacer visible la realidad. De hacerla visible, porque la realidad no es evidente. De desvelarla, porque está enmascarada” (287). The notion

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304 The term ‘performance of power’ will be described later.
of truth as expressed through the theatrical is complexly developed in Reiz’s play by the female characters in it, especially the means by which, much like Mayorga describes, the ‘reality’ of the situation is not immediately made apparent but is rather ‘masked’, in this case, by various methods of deception. The characters in the play, all of whom are women except for one male ‘monologista’ who has very few speaking lines, establish a milieu in which the theatrical permits the characters to perform, an action that initially appears to situate the main character, Marilú, in a firm position of power (and truth) over the other characters and the monologist, which will ultimately be undone in order to reveal the characters’ true sexual proclivities.

The play opens with an emphasis on the theatrical, where a group of spectators listen as a ‘monologista’ continues his speech (joined mid-way through) about the real and the true (“…Parece imposible pero en realidad no lo es” 3), only for him to be interrupted. María de la Luz (who is identified throughout the play as ‘Marilú’), initially a spectator to the “pila de monólogos” (3) that takes place, decides to oust the monologist since she is tired of his, in her opinion, flawed attempts to voice the truth about the other ‘players’ in the performance (the other female characters who will perform later): Monologista: “Créanme Uds. que estoy diciendo la verdad, toda la verdad, y nada más que la verdad….‖ Marilú: “¡ahora me toca a mí! . . . No hace falta para nada que nos demuestre nada” (3). Marilú, ensuring that the monologist is denied his opportunity to speak (“El monologista intenta decir algo, protestar, pero María de la Luz no le deja ni meter baza y le empuja hacia el fondo, ayudándole persuasivamente a hacer mutis” 3), makes salient that her intention is to give an exact account to the audience of the happenings that evening (“yo me quedo aquí y doy cuenta exacta de todo lo que ha pasado” 4), yet, a point that must be considered from this moment
on in the text regarding the ‘true’ or the ‘real’ is explored by Butler, who, in her text, *Undoing Gender*, questions the limits of ‘truth’ with regard to gender and sexuality, querying, “What constitutes the limit of the thinkable, the narratable, the intelligible? What constitutes the limit of what can be thought as true?” (156). Such theorizations posit for the characters in Reiz’s play, especially Marilú, the necessity of examining what ‘truth’ or ‘reality’ signify for their own bodies, and, as we shall see later, what means of power instigates them to admit or deny their own personal sexual ‘truths’ or ‘realities.’

Emerging as a character in a theatrical display305, and described as approaching the public “con aparente desparpajo. Tiene aspecto de ser un poco ‘pija’” (3), Marilú makes reference to the ‘script’, that she explains legitimates her ousting the monologist and taking his place (“Son necesidades del guión, por favor, no insista” 3, my emphasis); yet, importance lies in such an action since it establishes not only the fact that society assigns certain roles to individuals, but also clarifies the theatrical roles of each ‘player’ in this performance thus far: the erroneous, misinformation-laden monologist who must be removed for uttering non-truths, and Marilú, the righteous self-proclaimer of the truth who, disgusted with the previous display of such lack of truth, has assumed the main role of clarifier of the nonsense that has occurred up until this point, and declarer of the truthful and the real, distanciing herself from the monologist and clearly establishing her superiority over his superfluousness: “. . . parece ser que ahora venía un descanso y que ese señor tendría que haber dicho todavía algo más, pero yo he decidido que no puedo esperar, que no aguanto ni un minuto más” (5).

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305 In this case, and as we shall see, she is here an ultra-feminine figure who directs the action of the performance, and is also the main player in it, as well as the possessor of power over herself and others (explained later) and purveyor of truth, the latter of which she feels necessary to transmit to the audience.
According to the stage directions, “Se recompone y adopta una actitud de conferenciante muy pedante” (5), as she criticizes what has occurred in the theatrical show thus far, hence stating indirectly what the function of theatre should not be through describing its converse: “. . . seguir escuchando sentadita desgracias ajenas, [porque] era ya insufrible para mí” and, “Además, en esto del teatro, al público nos sientan en esa especie de sillón de torturas a escuchar cosas que no nos importa y que encima, a veces, ni siquiera las entendemos. . . Lo siento, pero yo llevo ya como hora y media ahí sentada y me han parecido tres horas, del ‘puritito’ aburrimiento que he pasado” (5, 6). In addition to her keen attention given to the negative function of theatre (and, hence, why she is replacing the monologist in his role), Marilú also performs her own identity with regard to her gender: that of a stereotypically ultra-feminine, ultra-proper woman, yet endowed with power in the ability to transmit truth and to clarify the events of the evening, as well as over her own body and sexuality (to be explained shortly)306.

To cite Riki Wilchins’s theory in Read my Lips, regarding the notion of one being ‘sexed’ in a certain way as relates to one’s role in society, she states: “Sex is a cultural command that all bodies understand and recognize themselves in a specific way, an identification of our bodies that we are forced to carry around and produce on demand. To participate in society, we must be sexed” (56). For Wilchins, being oneself means “agreeing to feel and look and act your sex, to participate in society as a meaningful member within the matrix of expectations that go along with your sex” (Read my Lips 134). Thus, for Marilú,

306 Stereotypical characterizations of women usually delineate them as powerless and unable to transmit knowledge or truth to others (this is usually the male’s role); nonetheless, Reiz has created a character who is both feminine in terms of her appearance but also endowed with the unique ability to expose and correct the falsehoods of others in order to deliver declarations of the truth, a crucial element to the development of Reiz’s plot.
her performance of femininity and the concomitant propriety going along with it not only situate her in an accepted and appropriate locus in society but also appear to endow her with a sense of power that, at this point in the text, involves control over her self, and is intimately linked to (and thus enables) her articulation and expression of truth. Yet, one must consider how truth may also be bound up in restraint. Quoting Foucault in *Power/Knowledge*, “Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power” (131). In other words, the expression of truth, which Marilú proffers to the spectators, appears to be imbued with power (power over others, over herself and her sexuality), yet, ultimately, it forms due to modes of restraint.

According to the stage directions, in the description of Marilú, an emphasis lies with the feminine aspects of her character, stating “Colocándose el pelo, la ropa, el sujetador, los pechos” (6), and the properness (even snobbishness) with which she conducts herself, underscoring that she is, in fact, playing a typical female ‘role’ before an audience: “Enseguida [Marilú] se vuelve decidida y muy seria comienza de nuevo a hablar demasiado trascendente. Aunque al rato vuelve a sus poses cursis” (6). In line with Erving Goffman’s theories on performance as explored in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, the self is constituted as a performed entity—it is not the performer that matters, but rather the performance, which at this point in the text is the case here with Marilú in her quest for the truth and the real; however, as we shall later see, the discrepancy between the performer and the performance as they are juxtaposed proves that there exists a lacuna between the self that

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307 This is demonstrated by her expressions of superiority over others (chiefly the monologist), the control over her body and sexuality, evidenced through her cleavage to normative (and therefore non-aberrant) expressions of the body and the sexual, in addition to her assertions that she will be the only one capable of transmitting the truth and the real to the audience, and the propriety with which she conducts herself; of course, as we shall later see, Reiz turns all of this on its head.

308 To be shown shortly
is performed and the actual performer behind that self, realizing that, in this play, the performer does, in fact, supersede the importance of the performing self.

To quote Goffman’s text, “A correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation—this self—is a product of a scene that comes off, and is not a cause of it” (The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life 24). What this means for María de la Luz at this point in the play is that she performs a self, acquires power in doing so (as we shall see), and the audience connects that self to the performer, when really the self that is performed has nothing to do with the performer behind it. As we shall later see, the ‘self’ that Marilú projects to the audience, one highly invested in setting the record straight and divulging the truth to the spectators present, is found in direct conflict with her internal desires and truths—the ‘character’ she performs becomes discrepant with her ‘true’ self.

Returning to the text, after introducing herself to the spectators, Marilú explains the reason behind her presence there today, resulting from an invitation from her friend Elisa, who has written a monologue that she desired for her friends to hear: “El caso es que Eli me ha traído aquí, porque según me dijo ella había escrito un bonito monólogo sobre no sé qué asunto trascendental de la vida y me invitaba a venir. En realidad ha invitado a venir a todas sus amigas del instituto y la universidad. . . .” (6–7). Although the reason for Marilú’s appearance has to do with responding to her friend’s invitation, she uses the opportunity to wax nostalgic about the feelings of friendship and love she feels for Elisa, adulating their relationship, especially the childhood, girlish activities they engaged in:

Ciertamente siempre lo hemos pasado de maravilla juntas. . . . Lo que más me gustaba, cuando nos empezaron a crecer las tetas, era enseñarte cómo me quedaban los
sujetadores, precisamente por eso, porque abrías mucho los ojos y me llenabas de cumplidos agradables sobre el tamaño, la consistencia e incluso la textual de mis pechos…¡Y ni les cuento ya si le enseñaba los conjuntos de ropa interior o los picardías! (7)

Marilú’s ebullience for her girlhood activities with Elisa is abated by her insistence that such interactions were, using her own terminology, “normal”, and not tainted by what many would consider a marginal sexual proclivity, lesbianism\(^{309}\), addressing the spectators directly, and stating, “Pero no se asuste, esto que les cuento es normal no se crean… todas las chicas lo hacemos a cierta edad y no somos lesbianas. Incluso las fiestas de pijamas, en la adolescencia más temprana, se aprovechan para enseñarnos unas a otras las transformaciones en nuestros cuerpos según vamos pasando de ‘niña a mujer’” (8). At this point in the text, the ‘truth’ for Marilú involves emphasizing to the audience the normalcy of the activities she engaged in, thereby ensuring her involvement was merely age-appropriate and nothing else.

Nonetheless, in reminiscing about these times with her other female friends, Marilú begins to manifest a sense of longing for the intimacy and connection with her childhood friend that extends beyond the ‘normal’ feelings and experiences, evidenced in the repeated stage directions such as “Pequeña pausa ensoñadora, suspiro… Se le escapa otro suspiro ensoñador” (7, 8), even commenting how, currently, she will masturbate in thinking about such previous days, becoming angry with herself in the process for her (supposedly momentary) escape from the normative, and insisting again on the normalcy of such actions:

\(^{309}\) The way Reiz presents the performance of Marilú’s preferred sexuality at this point in the text is within the frame of the heteronormative; that is to say, she uses the theatrical purposefully to set up the hegemonic expectation that all women should be feminine, straight (and thus not lesbian or masculine), only to undo this later.
“Aun hoy cuando estoy aburrida en casa y si no tengo nada mejor que hacer también me masturbo como entonces. (Enfadándose)” [8, my emphasis].

In an attempt to de-sex (or, better said, de-marginalize) herself before the spectators (and perhaps her own conscience), Marilú insists again that her sexual activities with Elisa were completely normal for young girls, although she criticizes Elisa for exaggerating their importance and, ultimately, deceiving those around her and herself with regard to the experiences she and Marilú shared: “Pero nada más, ¡vale!, insisto, eso no quiere decir nada, es un juego de lo más normal del mundo entre chicas…Yo no lo veo como tú, Eli, qué quieres que te diga…Creo, Eli, has dimensionado mucho nuestras aventuras” (8).

Returning to the idea of the performing self, according to Amelia Jones, recognition of the body as ‘performative’ not only “has this capacity of eliciting charged engagements and so of politicizing our comprehension of bodies/ selves. . . because it specifically marks body/ self as contingent on body/ other [but also] exposes the investments behind every attribution of meaning and/or identity” (“Acting Unnatural: Interpreting Body Art” 13). In other words, the performing body not only relies on other bodies for it to function properly and thus deliver a believable performance (in this play, not only the audience but also the other characters, especially Elisa)\(^\text{310}\), but also, in that process, additionally divulges, borrowing Jones’s terminology, the ‘investments’ behind those performative acts, investments that show the constitution of Marilú’s true sexual self.

\(^{310}\) As we have seen already, the necessity of establishing certain ‘roles’ to be performed before an audience as well as the need (in this play) to transmit the truth to all who view the performance so that they believe the performance as ‘real’ and ‘true’; in addition, part of the proper functioning will also involve the elucidation of one’s sexuality.
One of the means by which Marilú thus reveals the nature of her self (and also achieves power) occurs via the exposures whereby she attempts to shift the performative focus to others, thereby acquiring more power as she denigrates and dissects the falsities of others. In what serves as a criticism of the sexual advice foisted on her by certain individuals in the past, Marilú appears to place others under a scope, but actually demonstrates more of her own self in doing so. Marilú divulges that, in her youth, there was inculcated in her a sense of the need to ‘deceive’ others, namely men, into believing certain truths about the supposed sexual experience and/or prowess of young ladies such as herself. Marilú ridicules the insistence of her mother on playing such roles, sarcastically poking fun at one of the inane pronouncements of her mother, that female sexuality depended on the opinion of others: “¡Menudo tostón me daba la ‘carca’ de mi madre, parecía que la dichosa telita no me pertenecía a mí sino al mundo! Pero siempre lo que realmente importaba era lo que pensaran los demás…. porque también me dio consejitos y trucos sexuales para satisfacer a mi novio” (15). Such comments by Marilú not only underscore the non-necessity of having to deceive others (in this case, men) solely for the purpose of pleasing them, but also establish a sense of empowerment, for women, as she argues the need for one’s own privacy and ownership when it comes to one’s sexuality (that one is able to control oneself), that is not to be a ‘thing’ possessed by others.

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311 That is to say, the performer behind the performance
312 That is to say, what she reveals or ‘exposes’ about others around her
313 In reference to the hymen
314 While one might argue that such commentary sexualizes her in her open talk of the hymen, Reiz’s character seems not to be arguing for a wild, reckless abandon when it comes to her sexuality (thereby still maintaining herself within the ‘normal’); instead, Marilú seems to favor more (at this point in the text) the notion that a woman’s sexuality should be respected as her own, not ‘owned’ collectively by those who partake in it; such commentary is presented in a critical vein as she clearly takes umbrage with those who feel that they have a right to women’s sexuality, thus denying those women their own ownership of it, in
In claiming the ability to stand apart from such, according to her, obviously ridiculous advice from her officious mother, Marilú again thus posits herself in the place power as she, at this point, stands as purveyor and transmitter of truth and the real, endowing her with the means to judge others and place them under a microscope, making visual their shortcomings (in this case, lying for appearances and attempting to lay claim to others’ sexuality), revealing their deceptions, and thus placing herself in a superior position to them. Where they transgress and deceive others and themselves, she remains the example of normalcy, truth, and the real. Thus, the specific type of power that Marilú performs at this point in the text involves perceived knowledge about or over others, the elucidation of their deception, and how this all connects to truth. Citing Grosz (in her summarization of Foucault), “…power deploys discourses, particularly knowledges, on and over bodies, establishing knowledges as the representatives of truth of those bodies and their pleasures” (Volatile Bodies 148). Marilú hence accomplishes what would seem to be a type of growing empowerment as she serves as agent of the truth and representative of the right in her possession of knowledge about others’ deception and untruths that she continually reveals, something on which she appears to pride herself as she differs from them. Nonetheless, small utterances of truths that divulge the underlying sexual desires of Marilú inevitably redirect the focus back to her, and her sexuality.

In criticizing the perceived needlessness to have to _fake_ the truth to be more attractive to men (citing the necessity of an intact hymen for women to be seen as desirable), she

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315 That is to say, being ‘real’ with herself and revealing what is true (and not true) to others.
316 As we have already seen with her need to clarify and correct Eli’s statements about the nature of their relationship, as well as criticism of others’ beliefs or articulations about female sexuality.
317 Through exposing the untruths of others and establishing that she is the only one who can transmit the ‘real’ truth.
surprisingly erupts with an apparent assertion of her own truth— the right to one’s ‘own’ sexuality and its conduit of expression: “¡Abajo la tiranía del himen intacto! . . . ¡Que se enteren de una vez que cuando la cosa marcha también nos corremos de gusto! (Tapándose la boca como escandalizada)” (15), surprising even herself with her honesty that women also enjoy ejaculation, upholding this truthful revelation, as she then goes on to extol the importance of one’s own sexuality: “Hablo del descubrimiento del propio cuerpo, de nuestra sexualidad, del placer, del amor, de todas esas cuestiones tan fundamentales y determinantes en la vida” (16), speaking of the necessity for women also to enjoy sexuality as much as men, to such a degree that, in order to help her friend Elisa come out of her asexual shell, Marilú divulges that she and her other friends contracted a male prostitute in order to de-virginize her: “…Eli aparcó su virginidad hace escasamente cinco años. . . gracias a que le alquilamos un muchachote guapo y experto en tratar a chicas. . . en los placeres de la carne…, masculina, me refiero (Pequeño silencio)” (16).

Marilú’s overt sexual referencing about renting a prostitute for her friend, as well as insinuations that all the friends had enjoyed lesbian experiences with other women (or each other) appears initially to shock and embarrass her, as she cups her hand over her mouth and then attempts to return to the initial role she played (that is to say, proper, ‘feminine’ woman), as well as regain the decorum of the situation, citing the stage directions, “Pequeña pausa, respira hondo y retoma muy seria” (16). Although she then continues to speak, apparently for the sake of her intended spectator Eli, (and inevitably the audience in general), but mostly for her own benefit as she appears to break away from her own role as the proper, 

318 Notice how she makes reference to the ‘joys of the flesh’, when discussing her friend Eli, then immediately clarifies that Eli was instructed to enjoy only a ‘masculine’ flesh, as if to cover up the possibility that she may enjoy a feminine flesh as well.
strictly heterosexual, woman who, much like the advice her mother gave her, strove to maintain a certain image (or role).

As Marilú begins to shed the exterior of properness and the typical feminine, passive stereotypes many associate with women, she purposefully alludes to one of the figures in proper and feminine iconography, Penelope. Associated in Greek mythology as the faithful wife who waited many years for Ulysses to return from his voyage, Marilú utilizes the figure of Penelope indirectly to make a statement about that role for women, merely stating, “en realidad es que Penélope no existe. . . . en realidad no existe Penélope. Nos la hemos inventado” (17), indicating first that women are far more sexualized than the docile presentation of Penelope in the myth, emphatically arguing for the audience (and most likely for herself), that “¡Eso es, no hay amor sin sexo!” (17), as well as the belief that stereotypical roles for women are, many times, also a myth. Marilú does concede that there may be perhaps one type of Penelope who does exist, but she is one who does not happily wait for her husband to return; instead, she has become embittered and angry (“…no existe la Penélope que espera feliz, que sólo existe la Penélope traumatizada, amargada e infeliz…” [18]—in other words, quoting Marilú directly and, most likely, in reference to her own life and the notion of accepting the sometimes harsh and difficult to accept truth in one’s own life, “la vida real es otra cosa” (18).

Now acting nervous and absorbed in her own thoughts and distanced from her initially delineated role319 (“Paseando nerviosa y cada vez más ensimismada” 18), she admits one of the first personal and intensely truthful divulgences in the play—that she married for necessity, as well as the fact that she has a ‘weakness’ for the flesh: “Por eso, por qué no

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319 Again, those qualities that are associated or expected stereotypically of women: that they are non-sexual, proper, and firmly entrenched within ‘accepted’ or ‘normal’ societal institutions.
decirlo, con mi novio…, mi marido ahora. Pues, efectivamente, no me era suficiente, me faltaba la chispa y tenía que recurrir a otros métodos… yo soy así. . . muy débil a los placeres, a cualquier placer, pero especialmente débil a los placeres de la carne” (18). Such truthful statements, in which she establishes her need for physicality as well as her criticism of the often hypocritical social institutions, begin openly to sexualize her, shifting her from the normative role she played into more of the marginal. Her statements also demonstrate the inception of what Cixous would term ‘écriture féminine’. According to Cixous, “Woman must write her self” (“The Laugh of the Medusa” 875); “By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display” (Ibid 880). While Cixous’s text clearly refers to the act of ‘writing,’ such a notion may be extrapolated to apply to Reiz’s play as Marilú ‘creates’ her own discourse in the form of the increasingly sexualized commentary she articulates, thus ‘recuperating’ the sexualized, marginal body that the role she played had denied her for so long.

More honesty continues to emerge as Marilú divulges more of the relationship she shared with Elisa, a sexual relationship that she initially minimizes or attributes to other factors such as alcohol (“Lo verdad de lo que pasó es que estábamos borrachas hasta las trancas y no sabíamos ni lo que hacíamos” 27), thereby creating a sort of dialectic, swinging between admitting and negating the truth, between accepting and denying that something more than just sex occurred between her and Eli. Nonetheless, a topic that continues to compel Marilú toward more sincerity is, once again, the idea of the role(s) that many women

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320 Marginal with regard to some of her predilections, and the fact that she now boldly stands against the previous conceptualization of how she originally was presented (i.e. following a ‘script,’ being a married woman, denying that the girlhood activities with her friend Eli was anything other than normal, etc.)
(now, openly including herself) have played: “…yo quiero ser libre. Por eso mismo me casé con mi novio de toda la vida porque no le amo y no amarle me deja libre. . . .
Afortunadamente hoy las mujeres podemos elegir nuestros papeles. . . el que he elegido. . . es precisamente aceptar la realidad” (29).

Marilú’s admission that she did not marry for love (which has afforded her a measure of freedom: “. . . y no amarle me deja libre” [29]) would seem to endorse the notion of empowerment in the sense that she does not define herself relationally, emphasized by the establishment of her own personal credo, that life is meant to be enjoyed, poking fun (yet again) at Eli for concerning herself with woman’s subordination to patriarchy321, and reinforcing her viewpoint as she argues that “¡O sea que estamos aquí para disfrutar de la vida y punto pelota!” (30). Yet, just as she appears to swing between the performance and those emotions which disclose the performer’s truth, so, too, does a dialectic occur with the notion of power, indicating that perhaps such an empowerment is ‘not what it seems.’ Marilú’s commentary about the sexual, along with notions of power become all the more complicated as the play shifts style and transforms from monologue to dialogue.

Thus, up until this point, Marilú has championed the normative in her overt femininity and insisted-on heterosexuality, appearing as if she is following a script and playing a role for an audience to whom she directs her monologues and for whom she is desirous of convincing that what she represents is true. She also has purposefully stood apart from those around her (specifically her friends and her family), citing examples of their deception in order to posit herself as the sole provider of truth and the ‘real’, criticizing others for their deceit to

321 In imitation of Eli’s speech, she states “‘Los condicionantes sociales o educativos que conlleva esa decisión. . . basada en leyes patriarcales de sumisión al macho y de su hegemonía sobre la mujer, adaptada a las costumbres sociales que propician el concepto de defensa de la familia tradicional y no admiten las diferencias y libertades’” (29 – 30).
themselves (such as Eli), or for their untruths for the sake of maintaining a certain image (what her mother attempted to teach her with regard to men). In doing so, she has appeared to empower herself for, in summary of Butler, what is real or true is ultimately a question of knowledge and power, since power dissimulates an ontology, and knowledge and power thus work simultaneously to set up criteria for conceiving of (and representing) the world and what is ‘real’ in it (Undoing Gender 215). Hence, for Marilú, her knowledge of what is true/not true generates power, which then permits her to create a sense of being of the world, and, ultimately, enables her to transmit this reality to others. Nonetheless, as revealed in Reiz’s play, spontaneous utterances demonstrate that perhaps the performance of Marilú does not mean the same as the performer; in other words, something that reads as ‘true’ is not what it appears to be, and, as such, neither is the power she appears to possess. As Marilú slowly breaks away from the normative, hegemonic role that gradually reveals that she has been ‘performing,’ through bursts of honesty and sincerity, Marilú begins to illuminate what appears to be the ‘true’ performer that lies behind the performance, one that is both sexually marginal, yet, as stated already, perhaps not as powerful as one might have thought.

The second half of the play is mostly comprised of an analepsis—the recollection of a recent bachelorette party in honor of Marilú’s (then) upcoming marriage. The action takes place in a sexually-charged environment, a seedy bar populated by semi-naked men (described by the stage directions as “Ambiente cargado. Coqueteo sano, caliente, atrevido y muy, muy picante. . . . Alrededor, un montón de camareros, enseñando sus culitos, apenas cubiertos por el clásico taparrabos” 31), as more players are added to the performance in the form of the other fellow attendees at the party. Each is defined according to her own role, which, like Marilú before, also happens to be tied to some element of stereotypical femininity
or womanliness: “...Juana, excesivamente elegante. Elisa... demasiado discreta. ... Alejandra... aparentemente viuda explosiva” (30). As the women engage in conversations about various sexual practices and preferences, Marilú, perhaps initially attempting, once again, to distance herself from some element of the sexual and to denigrate that which is delusive, comments sarcastically (in asides) on the need, displayed by her friends, to play a role that is untrue to themselves (as she sees it), this time, in criticism of the hypersexuality that she feels is deceptive to both them and their partners. In reaction to Alejandra’s frank descriptions of sex with others and with herself, Marilú comments both sardonically and with a modicum of entertainment value: “La estoy viendo en ese momento (Imitándola de forma exagerada), excitándose, poniendo ojitos, morritos, lengüitas y suspiritos, a modo de perra salida” (32); “... no me canso de verla haciendo esa parte del papel y eso que se lo he visto interpretar miles de veces” (33). Nonetheless, the present discourse turns the tide of the conversation to the sexual and serves as impetus for a frank discussion to take place, a discussion that ultimately reveals the truth of Marilú’s sexuality as well and the role(s) she has played to mask it.

Finally breaking away from her asides and joining the other ladies in the scene, Marilú elaborates on her feelings with regard to the ‘joke’ the women were planning for Elí, especially the notion of ‘playing’ (a type of deception for her), stating to Elisa: “Aunque la verdad es que creo que yo también quería jugar, quería que lo probaras de nuevo y que lo probaras bien” (38), as well as qualifying the type of feelings Elisa had for her, claiming “... éramos amigas y sabía que me querías más allá de lo que yo podía quererte nunca y porque

322 For example, quoting Alejandra, “Está bien el masajeo del clítoris. ... Y casi tuve un orgasmo allí mismo sólo de explicárselo” (32).
323 That of contracting a male prostitute for her
no podría darte lo que necesitabas, lo que en realidad te merecías y tal vez también para salir de dudas yo misma y..., y..., ¡y nada más! (Silencio)” (38 – 39, my emphasis). Marilú’s comment about wanting to ‘play’ conjures the notion that she again was using the guise of a ‘role’ (in this case, pretending to be part of the joke on Eli) in order to reveal what had been slowly yet continuously built up to this point—that she strongly desired to engage sexually with Elisa; nonetheless, her subsequent admissions that she possesses ‘doubts’, and the exasperation that quickly builds in the ellipsis, exclamation, and indication of ‘silence’ in the stage directions introduce a new element into the play and add yet another layer to the notion of deception: the possibility that Marilú may have, in fact, removed the mask of the heteronormative to arrive at the non-normative and highly sexualized, only to realize that it, too, masks something deeper—the chance that Marilú may also share such loving feelings for Eli, eventuating the conclusion that the process of sexualizing herself against the grain will ultimately be undone. She, thus, has, in fact, deceived herself as well, and perhaps lost all sense of power in the process.

Returning to the text to explore such potentialities, as her recollection of the planned activities for that evening continues (specifically, that they were going to rent a man for Elisa), in the first declaration of her sexual proclivities, Marilú concedes that a very real possibility existed for her to engage openly in sexual activity with Elisa, and perhaps the male prostitute as well, insinuating her desires for a threesome: “... y de saber que era una noche para el exceso total...Iba pensando que el tío que habíamos contratado para ti muy bien podría acabar haciéndoselo conmigo y yo contigo o que quizás los tres..., o que te dejaría mirar, porque me encanta dejarme hacer y dejar que me miren...(Silencio)” [39]. Marilú’s frank admission that what started out as a sado-masochistic threesome with Eli and the
prostitute (who summarily exited after the situation converted into something beyond his control) then became a sexually charged exchange between Marilú and Eli, finally transforming into a tender, loving scene between the two women (telling Elisa “porque ya no era el sexo y tú lo sabías” 40), ultimately revealing a performer who up until now has, in fact, played a type of double role. Marilú’s initial role performance of the ‘normative’ and the ‘feminine’ was shown to be illusory, revealing something which lied beneath, that of the homo-erotic and the highly sexual, which has resulted in a de-sexualization. We see that the aberrantly sexual Marilú is also a role that she has played, a ‘pretense’ signaling something deeper still, and involving even more deception.

In the most intimate and truthful revelation of the entire play, Elisa, at last openly dialoguing with Marilú, in her first extensive speaking part, elaborates on the “siestas de... niñas” (46), which indubitably extended into adulthood and admittedly were regarded by Eli (and also by Marilú) as something much more than just the sexual: “Fueron los mejores momentos de amor y sexo que he tenido nunca en mi vida. Creo que en aquellas siestas aprendí a amarte más que a mi vida” (48). Although Elisa’s discourse does describe the sexual experiences she shared with Marilú, the emphasis is on her repeated references of love and longing for Marilú, even commenting how she was heartbroken after Marilú’s bachelorette party (“me hiciste añicos el corazón” 48) since Marilú would then be marrying. Such truthful declarations of love and deep affection for another woman, on the heels of the new hypersexualized role that Elisa also appeared to play—that of the coquette who reportedly relished the experience of the prostitute the ladies had rented for her (“Me refiero

324 Again, Reiz does not intend to make high levels of lesbian sexuality appear aberrant in order to vilify them; rather, they are used as a comparison to the initial characterization of Marilú, and also stand in contrast to the Marilú she later reveals herself to be.

325 Keeping in mind that the initial delineation or ‘role’ for Elisa was that of a virgin
would likely empower her much as they empowered Marilú earlier because there exists a belief that the act of speaking one’s sexual desires or preferences, for Butler, gives that deed ‘new life’ in that the deed takes on a life of its own as it is spoken, or, one might say, a sense of power as well (Undoing Gender 165)\(^{326}\). In addition, a blatant female sexuality as that which Elisa expresses (combined with the apparent power she has acquired in speaking her innermost sexual desires) to quote Irigaray, “. . . involves a different economy more than anything else, one that upsets the linearity of a project, undermines the goal-object of a desire, diffuses the polarization toward a single pleasure, disconcerts fidelity to a single discourse” (“This Sex Which is not One” 253 in Conboy, Medina, Stanbury, eds. Writing on the Body), thus indicating that female sexuality can and does upset the normative. Yet, one must also regard another consideration of female desire, that “Woman derives pleasure from what is ‘so near that she cannot have it, nor have herself’” (Ibid 254). In other words, for Marilú, often times pleasure is generated only from what one knows what one cannot have, and, sometimes, what one cannot have ends up being her own self.

After the revelation that what began as a highly sexualized ménage a trois ended in Marilú and Elisa lovingly embracing each other, Marilú sadly indicates that she was not able to explore further her feelings for Elisa, deciding to marry her husband anyway, since, for her, reality superseded truth, and, ‘nothing changed’: “. . . me casé al día siguiente con mi novio de toda la vida, porque para mí nada había cambiado. . . . Porque para mí no cambió nada (Pausa y recuperándose)” (40), thus ending one performance (the highly sexual which

\(^{326}\) Butler later dismantles this theory, yet it is pertinent that, at this point in the text, there exists a belief that, like confession, speaking one’s sexual secrets brings them power.
ultimately reveals true love between two women), only to replace it with another (again donning the mask of the heteronormative, as we shall see) at the end, openly admitting her contrarieties and the fact that she had deceived herself as well: “Y yo, tratando todavía de disimular” (44); “ya sé que soy contradictoria” (45); “¿Te pareceo falsa, frívola, inconsistente?” (45).

As mentioned before, it may be said that Marilú does engage in the practice of what Cixous would call écriture féminine whereby “‘writing’ for [Cixous] is always in some sense a libidinal object or act” (Moi, Sexual Textual Politics 126). As we have seen, with Marilú, she does create her own sexualized and/or marginalized discourse that stems from her libidinal and amorous feelings for Elisa, keeping in mind earlier theorizations that the creation of such discourse would, apparently, empower that individual; yet, for Cixous, there persists a warning about such ‘writing’ (in this case, Marilú’s discourse) that (in Moi’s summary of Cixous): “If a woman is to write, she will feel guilty about her desire to obtain mastery over language unless she can fantasize away her own responsibility for such an unspeakable wish” (Sexual Textual Politics 118). Marilú clearly feels guilt for the sexualized, marginal discourse that she created and articulated through and with Elisa, expressed in such remorse over her longings for the past with Elisa, another sign of how power is formed due to modes of constraint: “Sí, claro, los recuerdos. Tenemos tantos recuerdos que, la verdad, es que ya empiezan a pesarme un poco” (46); nonetheless, while Elisa still remains honest and forthright in her declarations of love and desire for Marilú, Marilú again performs the normative, what, for her, has become ‘reality’, when, really, it is nothing more than another form of deception.
Quoting Marilú, “Yo me miento a mi misma todos los días”, not only in denying her true feelings of love for Elisa, but also in deceiving herself in minimizing those same sentiments, passing them off as theatrical performances of pretending to be ‘others’, when, really, those same performances demonstrated the truth and signaled the feelings both women felt for each other: “La verdad es que creo que de todas las experiencias que hemos vivido juntas las mejores fueron esas, cuando de niñas jugábamos a ser otras...” (49). Conversely, Elisa recognizes the falsity of their performances, again returning to the notion of how theatre performance often obfuscates the truth of the performer, stating, “Y tal vez también en esto del teatro se inventan mentiras o no se cuenta la verdad a medias, cada cual a su manera” (49), sarcastically adding to Marilú that the theatrical permits self-deception: “Está bien, juguemos un poco más a engañarnos si quieres. Esto del teatro lo permite casi todo, el público no conoce la historia y cómo el juego es que todo pase en escena en el momento mismo de la representación pues qué mejor, que aquí y ahora acabemos con esta farsa para siempre” (50).

While both women appear to understand the truth about their feelings for each other, Elisa continues to remain the only one who eschews (self) deception, accepting her sexual and loving feelings for Marilú, all the while recognizing that Marilú has chosen the path of deception. When Elisa tells her “Creí que el hecho de venir hoy a buscarme significaba que algo había cambiado, pero ya veo que no. Aunque me da igual porque la buena noticia es que surgi de mis propias cenizas como el Ave Fénix...” (49), she not only acknowledges that the situation has not changed for Marilú (that is to say, she continues to deny her true feelings for Elisa, and, as such, denies herself), but also uses a key metaphor of the Phoenix bird, who rises from the ashes to find new life and perhaps a sense of power in embracing the truth, a
stark contrast to Marilú who, immediately afterwards, during the pinnacle of Eli’s honesty, adds yet another layer of deception to the scene when she announces that she is dying and has but one month to live: “(De repente absolutamente trágica) Me han dado un mes de vida” (50). With regard to deception, as explained earlier, for Galasinski, “deception is a type of manipulation” (The Language of Deception 21), and, at this point in the play, Marilú has proven not only to have deceived the spectators around her performance (that it to say, society in general, most likely including her husband), has attempted to deceive Elisa (which appears to have failed), and, most importantly, has deceived and manipulated herself into believing a non-truth, in the denial of her true feelings and emotions. With regard to power, as we shall soon explore, one should consider Harding’s thesis that “Since sexuality is coextensive with power, there is no subversive or emancipatory sexuality which could be free or outside of power relations” (Sex Acts: Practices of Femininity and Masculinity 47), thereby positing the possibility that Marilú’s performance, even of the normative, was never intended to empower her, only provide the guise that it did so—Marilú appears never to have truly possessed any power through her performances, and, ultimately, will be doomed to fail as they will be continuously caught up in the web of deception.

In the last few exchanges of the play, amplifying her theatrics, as indicated in the stage directions “muy en su papel dramático” (51), Marilú makes one final attempt to experience the truth of the amorous-sexual feelings for Elisa, when she suggests that, since she has such little time to live, they should embark on one last journey together where they may, finally, be able to express their desires ‘sincerely’ without playing a role: “Siempre nos hemos hecho el amor jugando o borrachas. Deberíamos empezar a ser más sinceras, me queda poco tiempo
para quererte y que me quieras‖ (51), divulging that she should not have married, and that she should have made public her love and affection for Elisa (50).

In such honest articulations, Marilú appears finally to have stripped off all masks and ended all performances, admitting that she realizes that, in reality, she will not be able to enjoy a long-standing relationship with Elisa such as that which she describes; nonetheless, she hopes to relish an ephemeral experience with her wherein, for the briefest of moments, she will enjoy what is truly important to her—love, friendship, and sex, something she has only ever experienced with Elisa. At last acknowledging openly that, throughout the entire evening’s performance, she has hardly told any truths and that, nothing is as it seems (“Dos horas soltando por mi boquita cosas y casi ninguna verdad. Señores y señoras nada es lo que parece” 53), Marilú again recurs to the theatrical, to her ‘performance’, deceiving herself yet again, adding perhaps the most crucial line (and the title) of the entire play, that the most important thing is not what something is but rather how it seems to be: “Y como decía al principio, lo importante es que las cosas sean lo que parecen y no lo que son…” (55).

As if to emphasize the return to Marilú’s performing a role, the monologist appears on scene, yet, even more importantly, Elisa no longer appears as she has appeared throughout the play—as if transformed (or even eliminated) by Marilú’s own self deception and theatricalities, Elisa, now identified as the ‘Actress who interprets Elisa’, is described as no longer herself. The Elisa throughout the play now fails to exist, supplanted by Marilú’s creation, indicated in the stage directions as, “A Elisa que fuera de papel ya no parece Elisa” and “Sonrisa falsísima de Marilú a Elisa, que cada vez parece menos Elisa” (54), and shown only as muttering about how the extras in the audience have already gone (“Se han ido los extras del público, ahí abajo no hay nadie” (54). Marilú likewise alludes to more theatrical
elements as she brings up the script mentioned early on in the play (―¡Ya sé que esto no 
estaba en el guión pero es lo que hay y para eso pago!‖ 54), and, in one final effort to make 
all remnants of Elisa and the evening disappear, forces ‘Elisa’ off the stage, shouting, “. . . 
Eli, te he dicho que te vayas, que no quiero volver a verte nunca” (55). Reflecting on the 
events of the evening and becoming angered with Elisa for accusing her of being mendacious 
(and represented as such in what Elisa will write) (“Me acusó de frívola, de hacerme de 
ingénua y de mentir” 55), Marilú goes on to criticize the other women about whom Eli is 
writing, ironically highlighting their deception, the very same thing she has most 
implemented with regard to her sexuality and identity: “¡No entiendo cómo [Elisa] puede 
tener tanto éxito con esas historias de mujeres cursis y salidas, que tratan desesperadamente 
de esconder su verdadera identidad!” (55, my emphasis). For Lynda Hart, “Identities are 
necessary if we want to live in reality, but they mask our desire” (“Introduction” p. 2 from 
Hart and Phelan, eds. Acting Out: Feminist Performances). Marilú has fashioned her own 
unique identity that she expressed through a series of performances, initially a 
heteronormative, feminine woman, then trading that mask for another identity that appeared 
to be her ‘true’ self, that of a highly sexual lesbian interested in the marginal, eschewing 
typical conventions such as marriage in favor of hypersexuality, only to divulge that it, too, 
was yet another performance, and that ‘nothing was what it seemed.’ Unfortunately, for 
Marilú, her true ‘desire’ involved deep feelings of love and affection for Elisa, yet, it was 
ultimately denied her—she was forced to ‘perform’ a certain identity in order to survive in 
public, yet it was not her true identity.

Near the end of the play, now speaking alone, and, once again, being honest with 
herself (even admitting her “Muerte Terminal Simulada” 55), Marilú admits that her entire
life has been like a performance, with her roles being that of theatre apprentice that evening (perhaps in that she has tried out other roles in order to negotiate her identity) and aspiring actress all of her life (in having to deceive herself most of all) as she played many roles, without being able to live the true role she desired—that of a woman in love with another woman, forever bound to another identity, another ‘role’ in society: “He sido aprendiz de teatro por unos minutos y aspirante a actriz toda mi vida… (Sacar un pañuelo y se seca una lágrima por debajo de las gafas. Muy afectada)” (56). As she says her goodbyes to the audience (“¡Hasta siempre querido público!” 56), Marilú again refers to the female figure in Greek mythology, Penelope, no longer stating that she does not exist, but that, “Penélope sí existe” (56), thereby encouraging the spectators (and most likely herself) that waiting for the one for whom another truly feels passion and love should be merited. According to Marilú, perhaps it is worthy to wait for that one true love, just as Penelope waited for Ulysses, since there exists a Penelope in everyone: “En cada uno de ustedes hay una Penélope y un mohicano que nos dice que nos conservemos con vida hasta que encontremos a la persona amada, que esperemos al ser querido por siempre jamás” (56, my emphasis). In one final attempt at self-delusion, Marilú claims that the real problem is not that their relationship was fraught with failure because they were two women, although the means by which she communicates the message indicates clearly that it was her connection to Elisa, as well as the fact that society would frown upon her leaving her amazing husband (whose accolades she lauds excessively, and, one might observe, hyperbolically) for a woman, once again appearing to attempt to want to convince herself of the veracity of her own words in its delivery, yet, not being very successful at it: “Y el problema nunca ha sido (¿Nunca? ¡Dios
mío la palabra otra vez!) que ella sea una mujer como yo, es decir, que las dos seamos mujeres y eso a mí me parezca que no está bien visto” (57).

Ending the ‘performance,’ since the monologist indicates to her that all have left the theatre and that it is now closing, and, one would imagine that Marilú, likewise, would end her performance, but she gives signs that it will go on—she will continue to ‘perform’ the likeness of a ‘normal,’ heteronormative woman, in possession of her body and her sexuality, and thus, as we have seen, seemingly endowed with power over her life and her sexuality, yet, she does announce in the last lines of the play that she does not possess any of these; instead, she is the one who, like Penelope, now must forever wait for those feelings of love and passion, just as Elisa did so many years (unsuccessfully) for Marilú: “Por eso Eli fue Penélope en el pasado y ahora Penélope soy yo” (57 – 58). The play ends with the stage directions that forever cement Marilú in her histrionic role, just as she was at the beginning—deceiving heself in order to deny her true feelings for another woman, and performing what seemed to be a series of powers and roles, which inevitably exterminates the true ‘Marilú’, so that she, ultimately, quoting the text, “disappears”. Marilú exits much as she entered, in full performance mode: “Y continua su mutis espectacular entre risas, llantos, despedidas y besos al aire, como una auténtica diva, hasta que desaparece” (58).

As we have seen in Reiz’s Nada es lo que parece, ‘nothing is what it seems.’ What began as a simple performance of the heteronormative demonstrated that it masked a different role beneath, and what has resulted are a series of masks that, when removed, reveal a series of performances linked by a web of deception and desire designed to make spectators believe what they viewed was the truth, only to divulge the truth as something far more complex and layered, and often times viewed as liminal. Through a series of denials and
honest divulgations, Reiz’s character Marilú has shown that the ‘performer’ stands in sharp contrast to the ‘performance’, and that one’s definition of ‘sex’ and ‘love’ often differ from society’s conceptualization of such terms.

Returning to the initial series of considerations posed in this study, many different things lie behind the mask of ‘womanliness’ or ‘femaleness’ in this play—as Marilú discovered, it is not necessarily a highly sexualized lesbianism, nor is it a masculinity in female form; rather, it is a sense of deep love and longing for another individual who happens to be a woman, yet, concomitant with these feelings is the belief that such expressions in society will never be accepted. For Shane Phelan, “Driving the mechanism of these performed identities is the notion of ‘the real.’ Realness is determined by the ability to blend in, to go unnoticed” (From “Crisscrossing Cultures” in Ferris’s Crossing the Stage p. 161), and, for Marilú, such deep expressions of love and affection for another woman would, unfortunately, never go unnoticed in society. One such as Marilú must, inevitably, feign a role in order to fit in and have it considered as ‘real’, yet, for Lerner, with regard to that type of deception, “. . . pretending is potentially the most serious form of deception because it can involve ‘living’ a lie, rather than telling one” (The Dance of Deception 122). Marilú’s lie encompassed many facets of deception, but, the most serious form, were her many attempts to deceive herself above all others, attempts that appear to have failed. Never seeming completely convinced of her own performance, Marilú thus transformed into spectator as well as performer, with the space of the performance playing out within her own body and psyche.

Within her own self she experienced apparent power, in denying those non-normative sexual pulsions and adulating the heteronormative initially, then later in discarding the
normative altogether as she cleaved to the marginal in her relish of explicit sexual experiences with another woman. Yet, as indicated throughout this analysis, ‘nothing is what it seems’, and the development of power is no exception. Marilú, likewise, has experienced disempowerment, since, while she appears many times to have convinced herself that her involvement with Elisa was only ‘normal’ and ‘typical,’ her own articulations of its realness belied such lies. In this play, we have witnessed how Marilú has appeared to possess power as she wielded knowledge about others whom she severely criticized, and seemed to herald control over her own body while denigrating others around her, yet, as with the last play as well, such displays of power also were, again, ‘not what they seemed.’ Ironically enough, in this play, it was through various modes of deception that the truth was realized, yet, ultimately, it failed to matter.

What, then, was the function of power in this play? For Butler, many times, “we must be undone in order to do ourselves” (Undoing Gender 100). Applying such a theory to this play, perhaps Reiz wants to indicate that, the only way to possess any kind of power is ultimately to have to give it up. The only means for Marilú to be honest and truthful in her articulations of desire, love, and longing for another is to deny it, and thus deny herself in the process. As with the previous play of Reiz, Hambre ciega, the main character in this play likewise appears to possess power, yet, ultimately, has none. Although Marilú did divulge many honest and forthright expressions of her own sexual and amorous feelings and desires, and, while one may argue that this empowers her somewhat, in the long-run, she returns to the performance, to what ‘appears’ to be power, but what ‘is’ not. Marilú proves that, while modes of deception allow one to reveal the truth, this does not mean that the expression of it generates power. Marilú has revealed how she truly wishes to sex herself through de-sexing
herself and denying her true feelings. Hence, for Reiz, the marginal tones in this play perhaps are made salient by the means that deception reveals truth, that displays of power ultimately result in disempowerment, and that one’s performance has little to do with the performer. Quoting again the title, in this play, nothing is what it seems.

In summation, the theatre of Margarita Reiz additionally demonstrates how her characters are complexly inflected by structurings of power when it comes to their sex and sexuality. In the first play, *Hambre ciega*, the characters Eva and Pablo, initially delineated as docile bodies, experience a sexual awakening as they discard these roles in favor of more sexualized ones that shift them away from traditional characterizations and toward the liminal where their sexual hunger is able to be consummated as they sexually ‘consume’ each other. Desirous of enjoying each other sexually in the space of the abandoned city outskirts and acquiring power as they do so over their own bodies and their sexualities, both characters realize that the ‘hunger’ they felt for each other may prove to be ‘blind,’ for, ultimately, they cannot remain there, and are driven to return to the (hetero)normative. In Reiz’s second play, *Nada es lo que parece*, Marilú, parroting normative and traditional sexual values, attempts to stand apart from her friends and speak the ‘truth’ regarding their deception, only to realize that she, in essence, has deceived herself most of all. As she ‘performed’ power over her own self and over others, she demonstrates in the end that, through her deceptive articulations, she succeeds in locating and realizing the truth of her sexual self. In appearing to possess power and attempting to convince herself of certain roles she performed, Marilú results in being stripped of power at the end. As with all of the other authors in this study, the point of Reiz’s theatre is not necessarily to offer solutions to problematic issues, but rather to provide the audience with a chance to reflect upon their own lives, that so often resemble the struggles
and difficulties that her characters experience. Her plays remind everyone that there often exist societal pressures for us to ‘sex ourselves’ in certain ways in order to thwart or erase those non-normative or marginal sexualities, yet, as has been shown in her theatre, these always manage to seep through and make themselves known.
Final Conclusions

To conclude this project, it is crucial to consider again that which the plays in general have discovered or illuminated with regard to crisscrossed sexes and sexualities at the threshold. The two works by Paloma Pedrero appear purposefully to present characters who initially may be categorized in one sexual way, whether it be ‘masculine’, ‘feminine,’ ‘lesbian,’ ‘asexual,’ ‘immature,’ or ‘dependent,’ only later to reveal the complex bodily constitutions of these same characters that definitely do not fit neatly into any one category but rather simultaneously occupy many different categorizations, or whose sexualized bodies shift and change throughout, often times difficult to categorize or classify, due to their complexity. Cachorros de negro mirar examined the violent penetrations that characters exhibited toward each other in an attempt to destroy or erase the other’s sex(uality), thus referencing traditional or normative associations regarding sex(uality), and mirroring the fear and loathing that society can display toward such figures. While indexing what is usually expected for such figures, Pedrero’s theatre also reveals how the constitutions of those very characters ultimately challenge and often subvert or decimate those categories, such as the transsexualism of all the characters in Cachorros de negro mirar. Her play En la otra habitación also serves to reveal the
multiple sexual constitutions and changes that occur when characters come into contact with someone of a different age, thereby requiring a change and expansion of the usual sexual expectations of people, such as ‘older, divorced woman,’ or ‘young, immature daughter,’ as well as complicating issues of dependency and independency, motherhood, and childhood. Pedrero here again holds a mirror up to society’s normative associations for those characters but also shatters the mirror and demonstrates how very complex and layered their sexualities can be, maintaining that they can and do occupy conflicting sexualities that are somehow always able to be reconciled. Pedrero successfully demonstrates in all of her plays that issues such as sexuality are far more complicated than they often appear. She also proves that one does not always have to choose between conflicting sexes or sexualities, for one can simultaneously (and successfully) occupy many different sexual roles at once, whether it be an erotic yet concerned mother, a phallic lesbian, a transsexual, or even a sexually mature young girl.

Yolanda Pallín likewise presents her angle on crisscrossed sexes or sexualities at the threshold in her plays. Despite the fact that they are much more symbolic and abstract than Pedrero’s, she nonetheless presents a similar viewpoint. With the first play the realm of the interspace both reflects traditional, normative values and bodily demands on the characters and also provides a space for the characters to break away from those demands. In *Los restos de la noche*, characters are offered an oneiric realm in which they may finally come to terms with what is expected of their bodies with regard to sexuality, and also where they may contest those same expectations and forge their own marginal bodily constitutions, such as women like Laura who reject both wifehood and
motherhood and opt instead to die. With *Memoria*, Pallín demonstrates how traditional society often puts much effort into the containment of liminal or peripheral sexualities that are so feared and rejected, yet that are often times unsuccessful at containing those marginal bodies such as the Woman whose previous sexual abuse and adulterous relationships were also hidden by society. Nonetheless, for the characters in her play, the very efforts of bodily-sexual containment can be subverted and re-appropriated by the characters, resulting in a liberatory experience. Pallín also demonstrates the hypocrisy often present in society, since sometimes liminal sexes/sexualities are either never to be looked at, or that they should be looked at, only to be contained and never internalized (as in *Memoria*). Her plays examine the ramifications of rupturing the control or containment mechanisms that seek to undermine or erase liminal sex(ualities), and how her characters do enjoy resulting freedom from these fracturings, even if only for a short while.

While the characters in all of the plays by both of these playwrights do not necessarily refer to any one person in particular, it may be argued that they could represent anyone. The characters in their plays often struggle to break away from traditional assumptions of what they should look like or how they sexually should (and should not) act, and the authors provide with them an arena in which they are able to do so. Although these authors do not claim that their art always imitates life, what I believe their works reveal is a keen sensibility of the intricacies of the sexual as it appears on or through the body, and how figures can (or even should) pose a challenge to traditional mandates with regard to bodies, perhaps suggesting that it is possible to do so in real life as well. Both playwrights thus have demonstrated how non-traditional sexual or gendered
bodily forms can use the very structures that configure them in order to inveigh against those same structures and thus re-articulate something else, and their plays demonstrate that anyone can accomplish this.

As Jones states in “Acting Unnatural” with regard to the fear of the un-ordinary, “The most disturbing acts are those that insistently perform bodies/ selves in such a way as to activate spectatorial anxieties. . . while at the same time calling into question what it might mean to call something ‘natural’ (or, for that matter, ‘unnatural’)” (in Decomposition: Post-Disciplinary Performance 13). What the plays by Pedrero and Pallín essentially accomplish is first the means to step back and visualize the system that regulates and dictates appropriate or normal (‘natural’) sexual standards for all bodies, and that castigates those that are abnormal or unnatural. These plays also provide concrete examples of what occurs when this system is dismantled and refused, and may even suggest how to do so. They thus facilitate an understanding of what it means to challenge or reject those typical dichotomized or binarized sexual structures and encourage a movement beyond the binary, advocating an eroticization of the marginal, the non-traditional, the liminal. These plays by Paloma Pedrero and Yolanda Pallín, in my estimation, truly accomplish one of the tenets that Butler suggests: a means of moving past the center as that which should dictate how bodies operate, and looking instead toward the ‘outside’ “as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome” (Bodies That Matter 53).

The dominating principle of the last two chapters of this study has been the notion of how the characters in both Yolanda Dorado’s and Margarita Reiz’s play have sexed
themselves in certain ways, often times in order to appear as empowered bodies, but, as we have seen with the plays of both Dorado and Reiz, what ‘appears’ to be empowerment often results in its complete and total converse. All of the plays involve characters who ‘sex themselves’ in a particular way—in Yolanda Dorado’s first play, *Confesiones*, three women appear to empower themselves through the multiple sexual confessions in which they divulge many unpleasant details of their ‘first times.’ In what appears to be a series of revelatory confessions that ‘constitute’ the innermost essence of who these three women are, the very admission of the sex acts results in an entrapment and, most likely, a disempowerment of these women, proving that sexing themselves often times fails to accomplish the hoped for freedom and liberation they believed it to promise. In Dorado’s second play, *Lo que callan las madres*, once again, her characters appear to gain power through rejecting certain societally-delineated roles (such as ‘mother’ or ‘daughter’) in order to embrace more marginal roles that lie ‘outside’ hegemonic categorizations, only to realize ultimately that they are forever trapped between being forced to act the role that society expects of them, and never quite reaching the role they desire to embrace. The promise of a freedom in the margins appears all the more alluring than, in reality, it turns out to be. Dorado’s plays prove that, often times, not all is what it appears to be regarding the ‘empowerment’ of her characters—more times than not, her characters are lulled into experiencing some small measure of power, only to have it denied them later.

The same proves true for Margarita Reiz’s plays as well: in her first play, *Hambre ciega*, her characters are lulled into false sense of security and power as they seek to satiate their sexual hunger and desire in the marginal space of the collapsed city, later to
realize that they never attained any power or personhood in such a space, and are left with no recourse other than to return to the normative locus of the city—their desire to consume and consummate the liminal ultimately leads them back to their own subordination. And, in Reiz’s second play, *Nada es lo que parece*, again a belief in the existence of power exists, this time, as it is performed by the characters, only for them to shed these masks that reveal how a series of deceptive performances, ironically enough, reveals the truth of the characters’ desires, yet, as with the other plays in this chapter, what appears as power, at the end, is not, and that sexing oneself in a certain way ultimately ends in a de-sexing of that same self.

Both authors demonstrate that power is not a straightforward, easily-understood concept, but rather forms complexly through the multiple sexualizations of their characters. As this chapter involves ‘sexing oneself,’ and the multiple ways in which the characters in these plays seek to ‘sex themselves’ in or along the margin, where they also often seek means to empower themselves and, concomitantly, their sexuality. As the authors examined in this chapter reveal, appearances are often deceiving, and, as is always the case with these plays, issues of power as they intersect with sexuality and notions of the marginal present as much more complex and layered than they appear. Dorado and Reiz, like the other authors already examined in this thesis, do not necessarily seek to resolve the question of sexuality and how it becomes empowered or disempowered through various circumstances; rather, they appear desirous of presenting the complex and multi-faceted situation to the reader/spectator in order to provoke thought and permit them to consider for themselves the layeredness of the issue(s) at
hand. To quote Harding with regard to sexuality and issues of power, instead of viewing such intersectionality in traditional terms,\textsuperscript{327} “it is possible to extend the boundaries of what is culturally intelligible by reworking and displacing elements of convention” (\textit{Sex Acts} 47), and these two authors accomplish precisely that: they rework and extend the boundaries of what is typically understood for ‘power’ and ‘sexuality,’ thus displacing traditional notions of such terms and offering many alternative possibilities for consideration.

The plays examined by the authors Pedrero, Pallín, Dorado, and Reiz essentially, accomplish one important feat: all examine and then break down traditional and normative associations or incarnations of sex and the sexuality when regarding bodies and power, and offer instead non-traditional/normative considerations of the sexual, demonstrating that deep, rich meaning may be located in the area of the threshold, the liminal. Albeit in different ways and with varied presentations and voices, the four playwrights in this study encourage a thinking that transcends the middle and explores those margins that often are ignored, feared, or vilified, in order to argue for the existence of sexes and sexualities that may be ‘blurred’ or ‘unclear,’ but that merit consideration for they undoubtedly exist in society today. These playwrights have proven that an eroticization of the margins of what is usually typified as the ‘sexual’ must be foregrounded when discussing society and social relations today, and that it is both crucial and necessary to question and sometimes event disrupt the center in order to negotiate meaning, and personhood, elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{327} That is to say, that people who have power are empowered and those without it are disempowered.
Although this study is not at all intended to be exhaustive, what it does aim to accomplish is an analysis of the works of four Castilian playwrights who use sex and sexuality as tools through which to achieve an expression of differenced and multiple subjectivities that already exist and need only an outlet to be realized and valued. This particular study will hopefully serve as a catalyst to foment more studies of this kind in other disciplines and genres. The project will build upon studies of sex and sexuality in literature and will present these considerations as they interface with new contemporary female-authored Spanish drama. It is with earnest hope that this study will be used to bring to light the multiple and marginal (expressions of) sex and sexualities as presented through the plays by Pedrero, Pallin, Dorado, and Reiz, so that the ways by which these playwrights ‘eroticize the margins’ may allow their works to travel from the shadows of the periphery to center stage.


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