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Feminism and Identity
in Three Spanish American Novels, 1887-1903

by

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Dissertation

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**The dissertation Committee for Nancy Anne LaGreca certifies
that this is the approved version of the following dissertation**

**Feminism and Identity
in Three Spanish-American Novels, 1887-1903**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to Anne, Roy, and Josephine LaGreca

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Feminism and Identity
in Three Spanish American Novels, 1887-1903

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In this study I focus on the novels La hija del bandido by Refugio Barragán (Mexico, 1887), Blanca Sol by Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera (Peru, 1888), and Luz y sombra by Ana Roqué (Puerto Rico, 1903) to show how the narratives encoded alternative models for womanhood in the post-independence era, when the hegemonic norm was that of the domestic Angel of the House. I examine the social, historical, and legal burdens faced by women of the bourgeoisie (in regard to education, dress, mores, marriage, and property), to then analyze how authors represent these struggles symbolically. My socio-historical research is based in part on field work at the Biblioteca Nacional and Centro de

Documentación Sobre la Mujer (Lima), and the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (Havana).

I have dedicated two chapters to each novel. In the first, I detail the historical frame as outlined above. The second chapter highlights the authors' symbolic attempts to forge models of subjectivity that portray women empowered by agency (i.e., who act publicly rather than domestically, who travel unchaperoned, who refuse to marry, etc.). While I reference diverse theorists according to the focus of each narrative (Laura Otis, Victor Turner, and Judith Butler, among others), my conclusions draw heavily on post-Freudian theories of identity of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva. In the case of Barragán, I read the female heroine's rebellion against her father as an unresolved Oedipal drama that allows her to attain freedom by perpetuating the liminal (threshold) mode, rather than enter prescribed heterosexual adulthood. Cabello's novel exposes the falsity of the Mary/Eve dichotomy in order to broaden models of womanhood. Finally, Roqué's narrative defends female sexual pleasure by using medical discourse—at a time when masculinist rhetoric employed it to essentialize and objectify women.

This exploration adds to scholarship on early Spanish-American feminism by viewing it in regard to personal identity, agency, and public participation, rather than focusing on how women's fiction fits into a nation-building agenda.

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INTRODUCTION

Toward a Nineteenth-Century Spanish-American Feminism

This study is based on the premise that, by discovering the ways in which Spanish American women authors between 1887 and 1903 conceived and strategically wrote alternative creations of female identity, we can begin to define a formalized, specifically Spanish American brand of feminism that was in germination in the second half of the nineteenth century and flowered in the twentieth century. Much of the time, this feminism does not manifest itself in overt statements of protest against oppression, nor can one always read explicit rallying cries for reform in regard to women's (mainly domestic) roles, legal rights, and private and public liberties. Instead, women authors' dissatisfaction with the gendered status quo may be read indirectly—in the form of increased agency for female characters and fictional contortions, expansions, and denials of the hegemonically-imposed notions of female identity that limited and controlled women's self perceptions.

I will make my case for reading early feminism as outlined above by addressing texts that, for the most part, have not been read as playing a part in

nation building, but rather are fantastic imaginings or stories whose plots do not focus on socio-political themes. In this approach to what constitutes a Spanish American feminism, my research differs from that of recent critics who have published on women's writing in the nineteenth century. For example, Jean Franco's Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico (1989) is a cross-temporal study of women's struggle for interpretive power in Mexico. It focuses on the nation-building process from the Aztec empire through the modernization of Mexico. Franco analyzes the silencing effect of nationalism on women's writing and intellectual activity and the ways in which women represented themselves as gendered subjects in the construction of national identity. In taking this approach, however, Franco largely eludes the emergence of feminism in the nineteenth century.

As other scholars have noted, Argentine women authors of the nineteenth century have enjoyed more critical attention in recent years than those of any other country in Spanish America. Therefore, there are three major critical works on women's writing in Argentina, probably because of the rediscovery of texts by Argentine authors such as Juana Manuela Gorriti (1819-1892), Eduarda Mansilla de García (1838-1892), and Juana Manso (1819-1875).

In her 1992 study Between Civilization & Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina, Francine Masiello, like Franco, is

interested in women's "struggle for access to the symbolic realm that determines the cultural imagination of a nation" (Masiello 2). The volume covers the early nineteenth century up to the 1930s.

Lea Fletcher's compilation, entitled Mujeres y cultura en la Argentina del siglo XIX (1994), includes literary as well as purely sociological studies; the first part focuses on women writers and their texts, while the second part contains studies on women's social, political, and cultural context in nineteenth-century Argentina. The articles on literature mainly analyze literary themes, biographical elements, and the authors vis à vis the literary history of Argentina.

Bonnie Frederick's Wily Modesty: Argentine Women Writers, 1860-1910 (1998) identifies women's construction of an authorial self that pretends to take on the self-abnegating role of the Angel of the House to appease male critics. In this way, they hoped their work would have a better chance of forming part of the national literature. She terms this tactic "speaking up with eyes lowered" and the "rhetoric of femininity" (11). Frederick also examines how male critics' reception of the works led to the marginalization of women authors by excluding them from the canon.

Whereas these critics have focused on women's placement within a national consciousness and/or national literature, my view will be more focused on the study of gender identity in such mutable contexts and on how women

constructed the female self in writing in opposition to the hegemonic ideal of the Angel of the House. The scholars listed above concentrate on Hispanic women as part of the colonization, independence, and nation-building processes, whereas I am interested in the evolution of a specific set of Spanish American women's voices as part of the evolution of a self-conscious bourgeois civilization in its own right, largely independent of concerns in regard to the transition from colony to republic. That is, they have focused on a description of female identity as part of the sociology of the nation, where I am interested in testimony about the pressures and identity politics that female authors felt represented women's psychological predicaments in these eras of national change. In this context, I will use sexual identity politics to refer to the authors' attempts to reclaim the task of forging alternative ideals for women in a symbolic order that proposed the Angel-of-the-House model as their primary role.¹

In order to make the case that such a tradition of feminism and self-reflection did indeed exist in the era, I will combine several methodological approaches. The primary methodology that I will employ is textual analysis, including analysis of women's agency as presented in the novels (defined below), analysis of literary tropes and images, and analysis of narrative technique. These analyses will be conducted against the background of available historical and sociological data concerning women of the period in the countries of interest in

order to gain a well-rounded view of the elements out of which could have constituted their feminism. By reading these poetic imaginings within this frame, I hope to arrive at an idea of the impetuses and desired outcomes that produced them. In this way, my approach parallels those of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva in that it is based on the “premise that language and consciousness are intertwined in social practice and must be subject to a general historical critique of subjectivity” (Arens “Linguistics”; 172). My study thus is structured to include two chapters on each novel: the first chapter introduces the sociological and historical frame of the situation of women in the author’s native country and the second chapter focuses on the narrative strategies the authors used to address these issues.

As a further approximation to discovering female identity, as I execute the close reading of the texts, I apply various theories of subjectivity, desire, the feminine abject, and liminal modes to the findings from my textual analysis, with some emphasis on the ideas of Jacques Lacan and Kristeva. I have chosen to draw on the writings of these two theorists because of their extensive work on identity, and because their elaboration of theory on the formation of the subject (based on the thought of Sigmund Freud) has led to a greater focus on the feminine than other works on this topic.

Let me now turn briefly to justify my choices of text, a central image that will guide my close readings, and how psychoanalytic theories of subjectivity will help open out the distinctive voices in each work.

The Authors and Their Texts

The novels that I will analyze in the following chapters are La hija del bandido (1887) by the Mexican Refugio Barragán de Toscano (1846-1916), Blanca Sol (1888) by the Peruvian Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera (1845-1909), and Luz y sombra (1903) by the Puerto Rican Ana Roqué (1853-1933). As I engage these authors and their words, I will also make brief reference to some poets, contemporaries of the authors, as a means of illustrating themes in the novels and to give examples that show that these authors' preoccupations were shared by other Hispanic women intellectuals of the period.

What distinguishes these works among the many texts by Latin American women authors from the nineteenth century specifically is the fact that they were not written in order to propose or amend nationalist agenda. While their subject matter may include messages that underline a need for social reform, specific sociopolitical issues are not the primary focus of their narratives and are not addressed overtly, as they are, for example, in the novels of Clorinda Matto de Turner (Peru 1852-1909) and Juana Manuela Gorriti. The one possible exception is Blanca Sol, which was written to criticize women's education, but which also

embodies fascinating problems of gender and female identity—a completely other voice. In general, then, my selections concentrate more specifically on relating an account from the point of view of a woman and on how the authors insert women as subjects and the focus of the narrative.

I have chosen texts that focus on the sociology and psychology of women, rather than on their place in geopolitics. My selection is based on my belief that these authors have chosen to imagine alternatives to women's roles and feminized identities into a world that has not yet admitted them. Thus fiction studied here is more imaginative and creative, based on fantasy rather than on the realities of nation building in the era. This is, in my account, part of the Spanish American feminism that other critics have overlooked.

Part of the reason that I have chosen texts in this way is due to my belief that in pure fiction (fiction that does not have a concrete historical or political basis), as in dreams, one can interpret desires and intentions. I am not the first to make a connection between dreams and written and spoken language. Freud's chapters in Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1904) reflect an inseparable link between words and the unconscious; he grapples with subconscious meaning of forgetting proper names, foreign words, and word order, as well as other types of mistakes in speech, reading, and writing (3-55). As Lacan reminds us, referring to Freud, dreams have the structure of a form of writing, and in adults reproduce

the “simultaneously phonetic and symbolic use of signifying elements, which can also be found in the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt and in the characters still used in China” (57). Thus, there is a necessary connection between the symbols of the written language and dreams; the former can structure the unconscious workings of the mind and also serve as a medium by which the unconscious is expressed in writing. Lacan further lists many rhetorical tools of literature that reveal the intentions of oneiric discourse, in which desires are expressed:

Ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, apposition—these are the syntactical displacements; metaphor, catachresis, autonomasis, allegory, metonymy, and synecdoche—these are the semantic condensations in which Freud teaches us to read the intentions—ostentatious or demonstrative, dissimulating or persuasive, retaliatory or seductive—out of which the subject modulates his oneiric discourse. (58)

My intention is not to suggest that the women authors were not consciously aware of the early feminist agendas in their writing, but rather that, by writing in a subversive and circuitous manner they were speaking to readers’ unconscious minds. They sought to dream of women’s voices, and to tell of new dreams in

poetic form so that they, like the repressed material of the dream, could force their existence into consciousness.

Logic tells us that these authors, aware of the negative criticism and scorn their critiques of society could provoke, did not voice their concerns directly. Yet in the narratives I have chosen I will show how concerns regarding women's place in the symbolic order are subtly woven into the authors' discourses, paralleling the way our unconscious weaves our everyday worries into our dreams. Just as these unconscious cues from dreams offer insight that we do not have during waking hours regarding the nature of our problems and how to solve them, so do these women authors give their readers subtle cues to facilitate the liberation of women through development of their identities.

It should be noted, however, that these circuitous attempts to forge new images of womanhood into the reader's consciousness by means of an entertaining poetic discourse did not always avoid negative criticism, as the authors may have intended. Cabello de Carbonera, for example, was tormented and harassed publicly for attempting to reconstruct existing social codes for women, as I will later discuss.

A Central Image: the Angel of the House

The material social signs out of which these women wove their dreams of a new public voice were scarce. The most prominent among these signs were, in fact, often less than feminist in inspiration. The trope of the Angel of the House (*el ángel del hogar*) was key among these in the nineteenth century and earlier to defining woman's publicly acknowledged primary role as keeper of the home, attentive mother to her children, and obedient wife to her husband. The phrase gained widespread use throughout Europe in the 1850s and is also common in Hispanic literature of the nineteenth century. I would be reluctant to say that the Angel of the House has ever really died in the Hispanic world (or beyond it); it certainly resurfaces with a vengeance as late as the early 1970s in Franquista Spain, as thoroughly researched and creatively related in Carmen Martín Gaité's Usos amorosos de la posguerra (1981).

Frederick attributes the origin of the phrase to a didactic poem by English clergyman Coventry Patmore in 1858. In Wily Modesty (1998), Frederick defines the Angel of the House as a woman characterized by self-erasure and abnegation. The Angel of the House is the woman who shows sweet, willing servitude to parents and husband, and holds motherhood as a religious mission (46-48). This was the Victorian social role that was generally held as a standard for nineteenth-century women in Europe and beyond.

In Spanish-language texts, the term appears in an 1859 book of essays by María del Pilar Sinués de Marco entitled El ángel del hogar, although it is not certain where the phrase originated in Spanish. It is probable that the Peruvian author and contemporary of Cabello de Carbonera, Clorinda Matto de Turner, read Sinués's collection because a passage from one of the essays is quoted in Aves sin nido and attributed to the "escritora española," although Sinués is not named. Her book is a six-hundred-twenty-eight-page guide to virtuous womanhood. Neglect of the self and enclosure were two of its main tenets that were meant to enforce an oppressive brand of virtue, privileged as the ultimate goal women should hope to attain. This brand of virtue (pure, Christian, and maternal), since it was held in such high esteem in bourgeois society, was difficult to critique openly. This was especially true for the woman intellectual, who walked a fine line between acceptance and rejection in male-dominated intellectual circles. However, in the textual analyses in this study I will show how women authors found subversive ways to condemn these oppressive standards of virtue and limited roles for women.

The Angel of the House represented the women's ideal-I in the dominant culture's symbolic order, one that effectively served as a restraint in women's daily lives, in large part through its emphasis on self-abnegation. In order to gain an understanding of how the angel standard affected women's everyday life, let us

turn briefly to Sinués's guide. It is a collection of anecdotal and didactic stories written to show women examples of how to be a good wife and mother. Although the collection upholds the same damaging standards encouraged by the nineteenth-century patriarchy, Sinués's stated goal in teaching this standard is to protect women, yet from the perspective of a woman, speaking as one who understands the "azarosa existencia de la mujer" ("women's hazardous existence"). She thus underscores not women's fragility, but the inherent burden and second-class status that comes from being born a woman. This lowly status starts even before birth, as the entire family longs for a male offspring and fears the child will be female (Sinués 1).

However, rather than criticizing and attempting to modify this restrictive stereotype directly, as do the authors I will present here, Sinués writes for the protection of women by working harmoniously within the hegemony's vision of womanhood (x). Thus, the angelic standard advocated in her writings has little to do with a woman's personal happiness or cultivation of her own identity. The ideal angelic woman is not focused inward on her own subjectivity, but rather outward to those around her. She is judged by her tenderness and virtue toward others: women should be "buenas y tiernas madres, hijas sumisas y amorosas, esposas irrepreensibles" ("good and tender mothers, submissive and loving daughters, irreproachable wives" Sinués 21). In addition, almost all of the

definitions and discussions of the Angel of the House speak of this model in terms of the woman's relationship to those around her: she is always daughter, wife, mother, and never just an individual independent of these patriarchal family ties. By teaching women to ignore their own desires, or to achieve happiness by making those around them comfortable, the standard kept women from actualizing their own identities. The angelic standard was a major impediment to women's liberation because it caused them to ignore the most basic step toward an early feminist activism: the cultivation of the self.

A second impediment to women's self-realization inherent in the Angel of the House's emphasis on virtue, and enforced in social policy, was physical enclosure. A 1999 study characterizes the connection between virtue and enclosure in nineteenth-century Lima. Speaking of the term *recogimiento* (seclusion), Van Deusen states:

...el término implicaba tanto una conducta controlada y modesta como el encierro dentro de una institución o dentro del hogar, y una actitud retraída y quieta (...) El recogimiento implicaba un dominio de la sexualidad y la conducta femenina, lo cual se podía lograr por medio del encierro institucional o el aislamiento dentro del hogar. Por consiguiente, el

término implica que las libertades sociales y los cuerpos de las mujeres debían ser controlados.

...the term implied controlled conduct and modesty as much as it implied enclosure within an institution or the home and a submissive and quiet attitude (...). This seclusion implied dominance over feminine sexuality and conduct, which could be achieved by way of institutional enclosure or isolation within the home. Consequently, the term implies that women's social liberties and bodies must be controlled. (39)

Van Deusen expresses in terms of social policy the restrictive stance toward women that Sinués expresses in her manual. The institutions to which she refers were at the time probably convents and *beaterios* (reform homes, run by nuns, for women temporarily separated from their husbands during ecclesiastical conjugal trials or reform for prostitution). *Recogimiento* was also a term for other houses that took in marginal women (Franco xvii).

Because it is such a pervasive social signifier, the image of the Angel of the House today still poses an obstacle to a feminist reading of texts of the period. To the twenty-first-century reader, it often masks authors' attempts at criticizing women's position in society from within—their attempts to argue for change without a necessary revolution. In some cases, as we shall see, the trope of the

angelic housewife or daughter probably served the female author as a shield against negative criticism that would likely be expected against the presentation of an openly dissident female literary voice. When employing this tactic, the author appears to be arguing in favor of things to which no one can object: here, the superiority of the angelic housewife. In my analysis, however, I will show how the trope of the angel in the house is manipulated in each novel to allow the author to offer an alternative and unique female identity.

From Text to Alternative Images of Female Identity: Definition of Terms and Theoretical Framework

Identity, subjectivity, and agency are terms centrally important to this study and will help us assess the impact of texts written against the background of the Angel of the House. I will use identity to designate what the subject and we as others around her share as the vision of the subject's complete self as a social and psychological function. Thus, female identity refers here to the images of women that are created in the texts in question as potentially understandable to readers, if not yet understood, when they are rendered as actions within the shared social understanding in which they function. Lacan and Kristeva refer to this shared social understanding as the symbolic order: a realm or discourse of spoken and written language which, more broadly, includes sets of social as well as

linguistic signs.² In the texts I have chosen, the images of women that the reader finds are almost inevitably alternatives to those commonly seen in predominant literature of the period and often subvert traditional creations of female identity, albeit in subtle ways. Their goal is to redefine what I call subjectivity to refer to the process of creating an individual as an imagined subject within this social formation, the consciousness of an individual who can work herself into the social scripts of the symbolic order. The formation of such a subject, according to Lacan, occurs when an individual confronts and learns to deal with others or a symbolic other (an other in the mind or social consciousness, also denoted by Other or *grande Autre*).³ For Lacan, the ideas of ‘identity,’ ‘certainty,’ and ‘truth’ only exist in the realm of fantasy—the Other is the site of language, located outside the individual, to which the individual refers in its quest for ‘truth’ (Rose 32). Agency and, specifically, women's agency refer to what the subject can effect, by using her identity and conscious subjectivity to engage in the symbolic order and act upon those around her.

In Lacan's model, when the subject enters the community and activates her identity to accomplish these actions, she also learns to redefine her drives and impulses.⁴ Using the concept of agency allows us to talk about how the female characters move within the text, as a world of growing alterity, revealing how the authors empower them, and what they wish to achieve through their actions.

Representing such female agency is a particularly important element of study in the texts that I have chosen because the narratives ascribe actions to subjects who claim these actions as systematic parts of their identities, as conscious desires leading to identified social agency. Through the characters' actions, the reader forms a new vision of what a woman's identity could be, for example, in a free, adventure-filled, virtually unrestrained utopia (as in Hija), or in a more probable context which, instead of encouraging the intellect and imagination of the subject into a socially-viable identity, has undercut the character in a series of damaging actions for her and others through more material desires (as in Blanca Sol).

The crucial role of agency as a part of identity within society and as a vision for change (social, national, and historical) can be seen in terms of Kristeva's idea of the chora as an essential part of the feminine.⁵ The chora is part of the semiotic realm, a complement to the realm of the symbolic, composed of pre-linguistic drives and rhythms, similar to the rhythm one may sense in music and poetry (Revolution 93-97)—it is the realm of social and personal sense that can be signified, but which the social order has not yet chosen to designate as significant. The chora plays an important role for women in the nineteenth century because, as Kristeva points out, the symbolic realm or the realm of language had been rendered to some extent inaccessible to women in these social

historical settings. Yet below that surface of designations, a region of sense, the semiotic and the chora that is its physical presence, waits to emerge as signified.⁶

The authors I am studying here thus highlight and deconstruct the myths at the basis of traditional visions of female identity, such as the stereotype of the angelic housewife whose job it is to raise children and create a pleasant home life, as they move to designate those heretofore unspoken senses of the semiotic and the chora. Thus the characters that the authors here create embrace the chora especially (the body rhythms), which can yield an impulse, or rhythm that can allow a female subject to realize empowering actions and create alternative identities. By so doing, they hope that the traditional myths of the symbolic order can be subverted and replaced with a new vision of women that can move out from individual (female) subjects' isolated imaginaries into the symbolic order in general. The idea of chora will be most relevant to my analysis of Barragán's novel, which focuses on reviving the maternal connection and building upon a tradition of Hispanic women agents.

Lacan calls what such subjects lack desires.⁷ Desires can tie the individual subjects to such agency in the symbolic order and society which results from this shared identity; as we find in Kristeva's model, they are driven not only to dream but to desire concrete actions, roles, and objects in the symbolic order; and thus to seek agency. This is particularly true in the case of Cabello de Carbonera's

Blanca Sol, because the heroine's insatiable desire for material things plays a central role in the novel and in motivating her search for a subjective agency. Her desire is considered one of the impulses behind her actions, as it reveals her perceptions of the symbolic order and the restructuring of agency it imposes on her identity. Yet the Lacanian sense of desire is most useful here for seeing this drive for acquisition as something more: it signifies a lack, which is often cloaked in the guise of requests, wishes and demands (Leader 82). In my analysis, revealing how the character's desires are lacking as they are constituted by the superficial forms for a limited symbolic order can be a key to discovering identity and to reconfirming women's agency. We are brought to see what she lacks, and what social constructs led her to these desires.

This model of a subject's agency posits that overcoming such limits will bring a change not only in society but also within a woman's own identity. In the works of Kristeva and in those of Lacan (drawing on Roland Barthes's 1973 work The Pleasure of the Text) this experience of overcomings is called jouissance. Jouissance has disparate meanings in Lacan and Kristeva, ranging from unbearable sexual or other types of pleasure resulting in pain (Lacan), to a specifically female pleasure, perceived as dangerous and threatening within the patriarchal bourgeois symbolic order (Kristeva).⁸ The overt expression of jouissance, a pleasure emerging outside the structures of the social order, is, in

these texts particularly, a sign of woman gaining her own identity and entering the sphere of the subject as opposed to that of the passive object (Kristeva, Chinese 138-52). Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément express a similar idea in The Newly Born Woman (1975), when they study the liberating and ecstatic dance of the tarantella in Mediterranean culture.

The definitions of jouissance that I have outlined parallel a myth clearly highlighted and reinvented in Ana Roqué's Luz y sombra. In this novel the female protagonist is motivated by her sexual attraction to a man whom she is not to marry. Her desires affect her to move her toward agency that determines her placement in the social order in a dissident way: she shatters the mold of the obedient and faithful woman of the house by allowing herself to go to the verge of adultery. But her passion (from the chora) is counterbalanced by the imagery from the symbolic order, which tries to constrain her at the same time that it explains and justifies this illicit desire. The novel employs medical discourse strategically, as a discourse popular at the time for justifying political aims (i.e. "hygienic" cleansing of Argentina) by diagnosing as mental illnesses any social phenomena that were considered aberrant, such as the manifestation of effeminate characteristics in men or, in the case of women, prostitution (as studied by Jorge Salessi 1991-1997). However, in Roqué's novel the same medical discourse is employed by the protagonist's physician to justify her sexual desires as a natural

part of a woman's physiognomy, thus breaking the stereotype of female jouissance as something to be suffocated (or madness-inducing) and arguing for it as a liberating force.

Obstacles to the Reading of Nineteenth Century Female Identity

My project is, to be sure, somewhat utopian. There are several problems associated with the project of deducing female identity from texts. The first, and most obvious, problem for modern readers is trying to reach across temporal and cultural boundaries to reveal notions of identity and uncover what we think authors wanted to express. Frederick and Janet Todd, among others, have voiced this same concern when looking at women's texts from the nineteenth century (Frederick 7). Todd's logical solution is one with which I agree: to use the only thing that we have at our disposal--the text: "The woman who wrote is no doubt in the end unknowable, but, at some level or in some gap, trope, or choice, she was working to be known" (qtd. in Frederick 8). Frederick works along these lines when she coins the term "rhetoric of femininity" that authors used to create an "acceptable feminine authorial self" (11). In this study I will thus build upon Frederick's approach by adding the theoretical concepts on agency and subjectivity outlined above to specify a known level on which the authors are

working, and to claim for it a possible larger social significance, aimed at by the authors if not always immediately effective.

Two more scholars of Latin American literature, Sylvia Molloy and Iris Zavala, have studied authors' manipulation of such existing literary commonplaces in complementary ways, in order to make a parallel statement. Zavala is referring to these textual strategies when she states: "It is important to identify the... polymorphous exploits of tropes to exercise critical power. (...) The already spoken and already written triggers the imaginary to re-write the same narrative, with different images, portraits, expressions, idiolects" (179). I will be using the methodologies that I have outlined to try to know, as Todd put it, the authors in their acts of writing, rather than as psychological individuals. Analyzing agency, desire, jouissance, identity issues in conjunction with authors, and the use of literary tropes in a way that is sensitive to our available historical and cultural data is a cautious approach to the delicate problem that these critics have pointed out.

A second concern for feminist literary critics is the problem of generalizing a concept of female identity to an entire culture. Judith Butler addresses this concern in Gender Trouble:

Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (3)

Supporting points like Butler's, Denise Riley challenges the overgeneralization of the term woman in her 1988 critical work Am I that Name?. Turning to the Spanish-American context, the Bolivian miners' union organizer and social activist Domitila Barrios de Chungara expresses concern regarding the use of a universal tag for women that encompasses all social classes in her testimonial, Let me Speak! (1978). Here she addresses a feminist from the privileged class:

Ahora señora, dígame: tiene usted algo semejante a mi situación? Tengo yo algo semejante a la situación de usted? Entonces, ¿de qué igualdad vamos a hablar entre nosotras? (...) Nosotras no podemos en este momento ser iguales aun como mujeres.

Now tell me, madame: do you have anything similar to my situation? Do I have anything similar to yours? So, what can we

say about equality between you and I? (...) We cannot at this moment be equals, even as women. (qtd. in Kirkpatrick 48)

Gwen Kirkpatrick cites Domitila's views as representative of a current trend in gender-based studies: “Su cuestionamiento -o desafío- del uso del término ‘nosotras’ es emblemático de una vertiente importante de los estudios feministas: la definición del sujeto femenino ¿Quiénes somos nosotras?” (Her questioning—or challenge—of the use of the term ‘we’ is emblematic of an important wave of feminist studies: the definition of the feminine subject; who are we? 48).

In light of this justified questioning of a single image for “the Spanish-American woman” that would constitute female identity, I will not attempt to discover a single female identity, or coherence in themes for Spanish American women, as Gilbert and Gubar have done in the case of nineteenth-century British women's writing.⁹ While perhaps more fitting to analysis of one country's literature, such generalizations would level the specific internal histories of the various countries in which my authors lived during the bourgeois nineteenth and early twentieth century they shared.

However, like Molloy, Zavala, Todd, and Frederick, I do believe that it is possible to theorize the strategies of reconstruction of female identity recovered

from a specific cultural context and used by the specific authors whose work I will be analyzing. I will take each work on an individual basis and look at the mechanisms within the text to form an idea of that particular author's view of female identity within its specific historical context and within the general society's expectations about that identity within the symbolic order. While I will use the Angel of the House as a common theme that allows comparisons among the works, I will look at how the trope is manipulated differently in each particular case, and suggest some reasons for those differences—class based, historical, and other.

Chapter Foci

To make my case, I will dedicate two chapters to each of the three novels in chronological order by date of publication; the introductory chapter will focus on the social and historical context of the author and novel in preparation for the close reading of the text in the second chapter. I will divide each novel into sections according to its country of origin: Mexico, Peru, and Puerto Rico.

My first two chapters focus on Refugio Barragán's La hija del bandido. The protagonist María's angelic surface is convincing; she exhibits devoted love to her father and she is described physically as celestially becoming. Her father, a bandit and kidnapper, adores her and she is the joy of his life. However, the

resemblance to the angel in the house stops on this exterior level as María, upon the pivotal moment of her fifteenth birthday and coming-of-age celebration, takes complete advantage of her father's affections to leave the bandits' hideout cave and become the author of her own life and, to some extent, of the lives of those around her. She thus is revealed as a shell of the domestic angel who leaves the sheltered patriarchal space (symbolized by the cave) and experiences an unheard-of amount of liberty for a female character in a Latin American novel of its time.

In Hija, I look at how the author positions the narrative in marginal spaces in terms of life-stage, history, geography, society, and genre. Within this collection of “in-between” spaces, which I compare to the Victor Turner’s liminoid (threshold space), a superficial image of the Angel of the House soon leads to the shedding of this guise in favor of freedom and adventure. By writing within the marginal and, by definition, transitional, liminoid the author weakens the imagined hegemonic symbolic order in the context of the novel in order to facilitate the insertion of a subversive character. Within this space, I will look at the family dynamics and how the narrative plays out an early feminist version of the Oedipal drama—in which the character side-steps entering “normal” heterosexual adulthood (and its inherent gender-based oppression).

The third and fourth chapters concentrate on Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera’s Blanca Sol. The novel gives a naturalistic description of the

protagonist Blanca's poor education and upbringing as the cause for her ruinous behavior. Ironically, patriarchal society bears the burden of her destructive agency, which is spawned by its superficial values. Through the title character, Cabello de Carbonera harshly criticizes women's education for encouraging them to be vain, stubborn, spoiled, lazy, infantile, materialistic, and capricious, while giving them little or no discipline and teaching them little of real value to themselves or society. However, a second and more subtle result of the creation of Cabello's protagonist is a complex image of female identity that escapes definition by traditional standards.

The protagonist also embodies a series of dualities that lead to an alternative vision of female identity. By looking at the contradicting dualities in the creation of the title character and protagonist as an active subject within the symbolic order of the text, we can see both a problematization of gender stereotypes and a creation of a non-traditional image of woman. I will argue that the author makes use of popular Cinderella imagery to convey her ideas on female subjectivity; the self-abnegating ideal serves as a model the author deconstructs. This reproof of the narrowness of traditional boundaries for female identity points to nineteenth-century bourgeois women's need for the ruling class to broaden the symbolic order in order to accommodate more diverse roles for women. This broadening necessarily entails the elimination of the angelic standard for women.

It is only by eliminating this suffocating role and having alternatives available that women can concentrate on their own individuality and cultivate their own identities, rather than focusing outward on their husbands, fathers, and children.

In Luz y Sombra by Ana Roqué, the third novel and focus of chapters five and six, I first outline concrete social policies in Puerto Rico (in regard to dress, social customs, sexual segregation, etc.) that focused on repressing and containing women's bodies. These policies, which stemmed from both the church and the more secularly-oriented lettered elite, were symptomatic of a society that defined women biologically, in terms of their reproductive functions. I then analyze Roqué's discursive efforts to legitimate female sexuality in a symbolic order that marginalized and pathologized female sexual desire. In so doing, Roqué legitimates physical desire as part of woman's whole sexual identity and thus deconstructs the asexuality and self-denial of the Angel of the House (evidenced in ecclesiastic mandates). In this way, Roqué humanizes the biological focus of the enlightened elites.

To define with greater precision the authorial strategies of Roqué's early feminism through writing, I juxtapose her female characters with those of the novel La charca (1894) by the Puerto Rican medical doctor and politician Manuel Zeno Gandía. I will also talk about how Roqué's use of the epistolary novel is a

discursive choice that both implicates the reader in the feminist rewriting at hand and grants voice to the female characters as subjects of their own narratives.

To conclude this study, I will point to certain generalities and differences characterizing the fight for identity and agency shared by these women in Spanish American fiction in a symbolic order different from that of Spain; the first steps in the emergence of a specifically Spanish American feminism that comes to fruition in the twentieth century.

Notes to Introduction

¹ Despite the negative connotations the term identity politics has acquired over the last decade, its original meaning serves to speak about women authors in this study who responded to oppressive stereotypes of their sex. Heyes defines identity politics, in its original use, as any marginalized group's "reclaiming, redescription, or transformation of previously stigmatized accounts of group membership" rather than "accepting the negative scripts offered by a dominant culture about one's own inferiority" (1). All of the authors in this study engage in identity politics by redefining womanhood vis à vis the patriarchal Angel of the House.

² Lacan discusses the symbolic in his lecture "On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis" I-III (Écrits 180-197). For more on Kristeva's view of the symbolic order see selections from "Women's Time" (Kristeva Reader 199-200).

³ As his translator Alan Sheridan notes, Lacan avoids defining terms explicitly in his writings and lectures and instead lets the reader gather meaning from the use of the terms in context (Écrits vii). For this reason, and due to the complexity of the writings, secondary sources on Lacan are very useful. I suggest Elizabeth

Grosz's Jacques Lacan: A feminist Introduction (Routledge, 1990) and the two introductions by Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, respectively, to Lacan's Feminine Sexuality (WW. Norton, 1982). For the novice Lacanian scholar Introducing Lacan by Darian Leader and Judy Groves (Totem, 1996) gives a basic outline of Lacanian principles and terms, complete with illustrations. For a postmodern perspective which mixes interpretations of Alfred Hitchcock with Lacanian theory, see Everything you always wanted to know about Lacan : (but were afraid to ask Hitchcock) Ed. by Slavoj Zizek (Verso 1992) or Zizek's Enjoy your symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out (Routledge, 1992). Jean Copjec's Read my desire : Lacan against the historicists (MIT Press, 1994) offers a Lacanian interpretation of desire and historicism.

⁴ Lacan's ideas on the creation of the illusion of a subject in the individual can be found in "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience" (Écrits 1-7).

⁵ For further reading on Kristeva, please see Katherine Arens's "Discourse Analysis as Critical Historiography: a Sémanalyse of Mystic Speech" in Rethinking History 2:1 (1998) focuses on Kristeva's sémanalyse as a critical historical analysis that emphasizes the roles of the subject and language, Elizabeth Grosz's chapter on Kristeva in Sexual Subversions (Allen and Unwin, 1989), and, for an square-one introductory reading, Toril Moi's chapter on Kristeva in Sexual Textual Politics (Routledge, 1988). Kelly Oliver's Reading Kristeva: unravelling the double-bind (Indiana UP, 1993) is a reading from a philosophical perspective that navigates the ambiguities of Kristeva's discourse and examines how it can be used for feminist criticism.

⁶ Kristeva defines the semiotic and the chora in chapter one of Revolution in Poetic Language.

⁷ For further primary reading on desire, please see the following selections from Lacan's Écrits: "Function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis" I and II (49-53, 57-61) and "Direction of the treatment and the principles of its power," V (256-74). For secondary reading see Grosz's Jacques Lacan 61-66.

⁸ Lacan defines *jouissance* in his seminar notes on "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious" (Écrits 316-318). Kristeva's definition of *jouissance* can be found in chapter one of About Chinese Women (Kristeva Reader 146-154).

⁹ See The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Yale UP, 1979).

SECTION I: MEXICO

Chapter One

Women's Imagined Roles during the Porfiriato (1876-1911): Domestic Seclusion and Early Feminist Reactions

In her 1887 novel La hija del bandido (The Bandit's Daughter) the Mexican novelist Refugio Barragán de Toscano (1846-1916) wrote an imaginative contestation to the immobile domestic Angel of the House in the form of a dynamic female protagonist. This fictional female adventurer travels on remote roads and systematically acts against her father's interests, thus challenging two fundamental tenets of women's imagined social roles in the 1880s: seclusion within the home and obedience to a patriarchal figure (usually an unmarried woman's father, or a married woman's husband). In the current chapter, I investigate the possible social and ideological influences during and leading up to the rule of Mexican president José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz, who lived from 1830-1915 and ruled in two terms, from 1876-1880 and 1884-1911. I will examine how policy and decisions affecting women may have resulted in the imagining of such a transgressive fictional female agent. Specifically, I will

highlight the various social forces involved in determining bourgeois women's roles in Mexico: their legal status, education, and professions, as well as the beginnings of the feminist movement, and anti-feminist discourses that attempted to counteract them.

A look at early feminist role models and publications in Mexico reveals that the times were ripe for a female fictional character like Barragán's to appear; with the onset of modernization, women began to imagine how progress applied to them. By juxtaposing proto-feminist ruminations and manifestations with two anti-feminist treatises about women's roles during the Porfiriato (the first Catholic, which only refers to "theories" without naming feminism, and the second positivist and explicitly anti-feminist), we can begin to grasp what was at stake on subversive and hegemonic sides of identity formation for female citizens during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

As an answer to early feminism, masculinist essays on women's place in society revealed a marked antagonism toward women's intellectual development, activity beyond the home and church, development of the female self (indulging in any genre of personal desires), and generally any threat to the Angel-of-the-House model. Just as the French Revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie brought with it explicit efforts to marginalize women to the domestic sphere and deny them public power of any sort, as Joan B. Landes has shown, so did ruling-

class ideology bar women from participating in Mexico's power structures as these were becoming more defined in the late 1800s. Patriarchal discourse strictly defined women's roles and attempted to keep these from changing in three main ways: 1) by rigidly defining how positivist "progress" applied to them; 2) by ideologically confining women to a domestic ambience and denying them access to public voice or power, and 3) by undermining feminism and any role models or ideology that could interfere with the angelic model.

In light of the influence of the suffragist and early feminist movements in the United States and Europe and the manifestations of feminism in Mexico (which I will discuss shortly), men of the ruling classes vocalized the importance of the angelic standard in innovative ways and at least as emphatically as they had previously. In the eyes of the ruling majority, national progress depended upon women being caretakers and shapers of future generations and obedient and faithful wives. Their writing shows the importance to the hegemonic power structure of maintaining the angelic standards intact and not allowing them to be weakened by early feminism.

An additional impetus for advocating the angelic model was the fact that the energizing slogans for progress of the Porfiriato seemed to be misinterpreted and appropriated by elements of society for which they were not intended, i.e., women and the lower classes. Positivist discourse focused on progress and

modernization—but in practice these were only for elite and bourgeois men. These modern ideals and the catchy lexicon used to speak about them stood in stark contrast to women’s secluded lives (or compared to the unchanging misery in the lives of urban and agricultural workers of both sexes). Although elite wives benefited materially, many noticed that they did not share power or individual autonomy that the positivist slogans implied. As one historian puts it, “feminism in the early twentieth century was an unexpected and largely unwelcome by-product of modernization in Porfirian Mexico” (Macías 17). While progressive policies included incorporating technology in factories and using the capitalist economic model of the United States, intellectual energy was expended to assure that women’s situations remained largely the same as they had been at the beginning of the century and earlier.

Although the two treatises I will examine next are both from 1909, they voice masculinist concerns about women’s changing roles and access to education that were circulating since the mid-1800s. For example, in 1856 an anonymous writer published an overtly misogynist article in the newspaper El Monitor Republicano (The Republican Monitor), in which he mockingly critiques *talentacias* (bluestockings), who “eat little, pay no attention to their appearance, constantly bemoan the ignorance of the masses, and consider themselves unfortunate because one lifetime is not enough to read even a millionth part of

what has been written” (qtd. in Macías 16). This was clearly a reference to the growing number of women who were interested in education instead of, or in addition to, becoming self-sacrificing housewives. Similarly, in 1894 the Mexican modernist poet Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera satirizes a young woman from the University of Cambridge for winning a mathematics competition, in which she excelled over all of her male colleagues: “esa laureada señorita no se casará,” he explains, because “una esposa fuerte en multiplicación es un peligro” (qtd. in Zalduondo 44). As Zalduondo notes, although the poet’s words may not indicate his personal opinion, they mark the unease with which many men of the era viewed intelligent women. In 1904 the conservative Mexican thinker Ignacio Gamboa published the book-length essay La mujer moderna (The Modern Woman), in which he condemned feminism, separation of spouses, and lesbianism for being the prospective downfalls of womanhood and the end of reproduction (Macías 16). For years, men in Europe and in Hispanic America had criticized women writers of novels and adult women who chose not to marry or enter religious orders. The seeds of a women’s movement, their new presence in factories and in offices, and the proliferation of their own journals (run and owned by women), added new force to anti-feminist reactions.

The focus in the current chapter, then, is to determine the stakes for female identity politics, to later concentrate on how Barragán’s protagonist embodied a

challenge to a Porfirian symbolic order in which women were imagined and described as incapable of agency in public life and critical thought. Since Barragán's novel is noteworthy for its theme of independent female travel, I will pay particular attention to policies of seclusion in women's roles and status in the Porfiriato and in the hegemonic essays. I will also discuss in detail feminist psychoanalytic theory of the father-daughter relationship, as the author frees her protagonist by rupturing the paternal tie. By outlining some examples of traditional Mexican thought and rhetoric, as well as women's early objections to them, I hope to give context to Barragán's adventurous protagonist; that is, I will present the desires she embodies and the ideology she subverts.

Brief Overview of the Porfirian Era

Porfirian progress and the growing cultural sophistication and cosmopolitanism that modernization entailed was ironically juxtaposed to reactionary policies in regard to women's social status. This section and the next will examine the social and historical characteristics that made up this gender-based power hold, which was one of a series of inequalities involving social class and race as well.

Two characteristics of the historical epoch called the Porfiriato that lent themselves to imagining fictional women who travel were: 1) Mexico's increased

participation in an international economy, which brought increased exposure to North American and European travelers; and 2) the exclusion of both married and single Mexican women from the social progress (and, in the case of single, separated, and widowed women, from the economic advancements) of the bourgeois men they witnessed around them. (Bourgeois and elite women were included in the plans for modernity—but mainly as traditional wives and mothers, as I will demonstrate shortly.)

The Porfiriato's emphasis on progress implied an increase in trade and active governmental efforts to keep abreast of industrial technology and the demands of foreign markets. To reach its goals of modernization, the nation required improvements in infrastructure and capital from abroad. During the Porfiriato, then, foreign firms built railroads, bridges, and a telegraph system; Mexican- and foreign-owned factories imported machinery to attempt to reach a level of production of goods on a par with that in Europe and the United States. In part because of the reduction of the national debt, and also owing to apparent political stability, it was the first time in Mexico's history as an independent nation that it gained respect internationally, as many historians have noted. This recognition manifested itself in an increase in trade and diplomacy.

While foreigners went to Mexico in large numbers for business, diplomatic service, and adventure (Meyer and Sherman 450), it, in turn, went

abroad, ideologically and literally. Díaz's group of advisors and politicians (called the *científicos*, because they followed various forms of the scientifically-driven social philosophy positivism) used the French technocratic republic as a model for modernization (Tenorio-Trillo 23). The word *afrancesamiento* meant Francophilia and was used to refer to Mexico's (and many other Spanish-American countries') eye toward French philosophy, science, and medicine, as well as fashion, art, and architecture.¹ Being a member of the Mexican elite almost invariably meant having a French education, either by attending school in France or receiving an education in French arts, letters, and sciences elsewhere. As Tenorio-Trillo demonstrates in his study on the participation of Mexico in the World's Fairs, the new nation was reaching out internationally to establish itself within so-called Western modernity, and France was the center for scientific and socio-political thought.

Along with cosmopolitanism and major improvements in the national economy and infrastructure, the Porfirian era was characterized by wide-scale disenfranchisement of the masses from prosperity and a decline in their living conditions, as often accompanied modernization. The alleged progress of the Porfirian era almost exclusively benefited a growing bourgeoisie and the elite. Agricultural and urban workers suffered in abject poverty, while signs of wealth sprang up more widely than before in urban centers, particularly in Mexico City.

In order to achieve the appearance of peace necessary for such developments, Díaz made use of strong military and police forces to crush opposition and to attempt to keep bandits in check to make cities and roadways as safe as possible.² Minimizing crime in Mexico City and maintaining a semblance of safety were imperative to attracting foreign investors and creating the appearance of a strong democracy. Díaz's political corruption to maintain control and the concentration of wealth in the upper classes, among other causes, led to the Mexican Revolution that ousted him in 1911.

Although women of the privileged classes enjoyed the material gains and prestige as the dependents of financially successful men, ideologically they, too, were largely disenfranchised from the so-called progress. As nurturers of future generations of the budding modern nation, their primary role remained the Angel of the House: they were to be the chaste, virtuous, self-sacrificing wives, mothers, and daughters, of whom blind obedience to husbands and fathers was expected, as the upcoming essays will show. Despite the entrance of feminist ideals into Mexican society, the male ruling class during the Porfiriato, with few exceptions, excluded women of all classes from progressive national policy that upheld democracy, and sought to improve education and create greater opportunities within a laissez-faire capitalist economy. The sections that follow will explore

the terms of the angelic status quo in more detail, as well as individuals and early feminist efforts that challenged them.

Women's Roles in Mid-late Nineteenth-Century Mexico

This section will explore how social policies in regard to female citizens leading up to and during the Porfiriato were geared toward making them ideal mothers of the nation (or, later in the century, self-sacrificing workers at the service of modernization). As Mexican society became more cosmopolitan, a smattering of education for well-heeled women that did not emphasize critical thinking was considered a prestigious reflection on their husbands. Within the role of model homemaker, perceived to be of utmost social importance, women were meant to be somewhat cultivated, yet largely unthinking, domestic beings to serve as paragons of morality and propriety for their children (a social function I will discuss at length in the section on anti-feminist discourses). Hence a common characteristic of feminine education in all classes was that it was conceived to reflect well upon or provide utility to *others*, rather than for developing areas of interest for their *growth as individuals*; i.e., a woman's fine piano playing could add prestige to her father's or future husband's home, but the moment it began to interfere with the care of her children or domestic responsibilities, she ceased to live up to the self-abnegating ideal of the Angel of

the House. That is, women could practice a hobby or even hold a profession, “as long as they did not neglect their primary responsibilities as wives, mothers, and daughters” (Zalduondo 66). The development of one’s abilities as an autonomous agent who thinks critically, acts upon society, and engages in public life was reserved for upper-class men, as women were thought to be too delicate and incapable of such activity (Barreda 59-61).

Similarly, women’s participation in the workforce and access to public schooling in the Porfirian era were invariably a function of hegemonic ideas of national progress. For instance, if girls’ elementary education improved, it was to proliferate prudent and decisive, rather than frivolous and materialistic, mothers of future generations (Macías 8). If women entered the work force, it was because low-paid labor was needed for office jobs and other menial or time-consuming work that did not yield high income and was not intellectually stimulating; as men generally sought work with higher pay to support their families than what this “feminine” work provided, women’s participation in the work force was not considered a competitive threat to men, thus their exit from the home was tolerated to some extent (Macías 10).³ My point here is that, rather than equal citizens alongside men, bourgeois women, like working-class Mexicans, were generally considered tools of the Porfirian push toward progress. As one historian simply communicates, the “condition of women was... a concern

that Mexican Científicos did not seriously consider” (Tenorio-Trillo 24). In the section on anti-feminist discourse, I will show that *científicos* were indeed somewhat concerned with the status of female members of society--insofar as they attempted to maintain the Angelic standard in the face of outside threats, such as suffrage and feminism.

While the Angel of the House was a consistent role model for women throughout the 1800s and beyond, the primary difference between their roles before and after the Porfiriato is that in the last quarter of the century there was a surge in middle-class women working outside the home in low-level office and technical jobs. Another distinguishing characteristic of the Porfiriato was that education generally became more secular and women’s legal rights and access to higher levels of public education were reduced, as I will shortly detail. So in the midst of social and economic advances, particular effort was exerted to keep women from gaining equal footing with men socially, legally, and in the workplace. (Political voice, of course, was completely out of women’s reach as they, like women in many European and North American countries of the 1800s and early 1900s, were not allowed to vote or hold any type of government office.)

Although post-independence enlightenment ideals mid-century included education for women, it was generally limited to catechism, reading, writing, and some basic math (Carner 96). After years of considering the construction of a

secondary school for girls in a fickle political environment, liberals finally opened one in Mexico City in 1869, and several more like it in provincial areas in the next five years (Macías 10). The director of the schools heard demands from female students for courses of study in pharmacy, medicine, and other “masculine” professions, but these fields were not open to women. Many worked as schoolteachers and could be certified to teach the secondary level (Macías 11).

As the century marched into the Porfirian era and Díaz and his *científicos* achieved progress in industry and trade, women’s access to advanced education was reduced. After 1889, graduates of the women’s Normal de Profesoras (Normal School) received two years fewer instruction than before 1889, and were licensed to teach only primary school, rather than primary and secondary, as had previously been the case (Macías 11). Apparently progress, for women, meant sheltering them from excessive knowledge and too much contact with “worldly seductions” (Moreno 150). Although several pioneering female scholars graduated from medical school and one from law school at the end of the century, these were the exceptions to the rule (Macías 12). (The law graduate received particular criticism, as there was actually a need for women doctors, but law was strictly controlled by men. She was forbidden to practice criminal law because it was “improper,” and, alternatively, concentrated on civil law; Macías 12.)

Ladies of the upper classes in the Porfirian era were prepared to be just cultivated enough to be able to carry on polite conversation (without appearing ignorant) and perhaps entertain guests by singing or playing a musical instrument; being mothers of future generations of ruling-class Mexicans meant having an ornamental education to make a favorable impression on visitors and reflect well on their families. They were literate and were taught embroidery, domestic arts, and perhaps French or English, some literature, drawing and/or music, and the basic notions of geography, geometry, and astronomy (Moreno 27).

It was commonly believed that providing a broad but very superficial education to women added prestige to the family. A cultivated young lady could attract a desirable suitor more easily than one who lacked social grooming, as this meant she could be a better role model for her children; as I will show, a mother's positive influence was considered paramount to modernizing and advancing bourgeois society. Thus women's education was suited to fit their imagined social roles: "[v]alues that were deemed eternal in women [delicateness, moral superiority, and spirituality] were readapted to the specific needs of the moment" (Tuñón Pablos 47). Studies beyond the elementary levels were reserved for young men; as the overview of masculinist discourse in regard to women will show, anything beyond a very basic education for women was not only considered improper, but a burden to their minds. The female mind was believed

to function naturally to nurture others and to suffer under the strain of profound thought.

While socially acceptable ladies mid-century were to occupy themselves exclusively with motherhood and activities in the home and perhaps church, there were few professions for women of lesser means. A woman could eke out a living as a seamstress, laundress, cook, artisan, domestic servant, or, in more desperate cases, prostitute. The convent was an option for those who could afford the dowry (although this option was limited with secular reforms later in the century; the *exclaustración* law [anti-cloister law] in 1863 disassembled all but a few convents in Mexico; Tuñón Pablos 61).

Early modernization, however, required female labor and women responded to new opportunities for work. In the last quarter of the century, women worked at underpaid jobs in textile and tobacco factories, and, if more educated, as office workers, telegraph operators, school teachers, and in jobs involving some artistic ability, such as photography or painting porcelain (Carner 105, Ramos Escandón 154-58). One should note that, although careers for women existed, it was still often viewed as inappropriate for them to work outside the home unless absolutely necessary for survival, as in the case of those who were widowed or were granted the rare ecclesiastic separation (which did not permit remarriage) and therefore did not have a man to support them.⁴ Working

women often faced critique if they had small children, because it was considered immoral to neglect the foremost feminine duty of childcare. So, although modernization's demand for cheap labor was in conflict to some degree with the Angel of the House by requiring women's work outside the home, the domestic model was still considered the most important ideal of womanhood for the nation and for women, as the Porfirian social treatises I will analyze show.

In response to the need for female labor, in 1871 a vocational school was opened, the Escuela de Artes y Oficios de Mujeres (School of Women's Arts and Trades, Macías 10). It offered instruction in arts and crafts, watch making, bookbinding, photography, weaving, telegraphy, and some basic science courses (Macías 10). These were careers considered feminine and appropriate because they could be done out of the public eye and they were not high-paying enough to attract men to the areas; women were granted jobs for which they would not compete with men in the workforce (Macías 10). Law, medicine, and politics--the vocational building blocks of bourgeois society--were guarded from female entry to ensure the concentration of power in the hands of ruling-class men.

The most "natural" position for female members of society was in the home, shielded from public life. The principal social model for women in nineteenth-century Mexico besides the Angel of the House was the Virgin Mary; both meant that the most highly prized feminine characteristics were self-

abnegation, strict obedience to a father or husband, disinterest in and avoidance of public life (politics and most issues outside domestic life), chastity before marriage/sexual propriety within marriage, and motherhood (Ramos Escandón 150). Seclusion within domestic life and general powerlessness, major issues Barragán subverts in her novel, were part of “the logic of patriarchal corporatism” in which “Hispanic law granted women little authority over others in either the public or private sphere (...) their degree of personal autonomy depended on their relationship to men” (Arrom 81). That is, generally women could only participate in public life as much as their husbands or fathers would permit, and since the word public in regard to women in many European countries as well as in Hispanic America and in the United States often inferred unchaste or exposed, “a prostitute, a commoner, a common woman” (Landes 3), it was unusual for women’s public participation to be sanctioned by male family members invested in maintaining the family’s honor and propriety.

Upper-class ladies’ everyday lives, then, were spent directing quotidian domestic activities, such as managing the servants and the economy of the household; their decision-making power did not often extend beyond this sphere, except perhaps in some organizing activities for church functions (Carner 105). From a masculine ruling-class perspective, there were good reasons to disallow their women to wander from the hearth and church: it kept them out of power and

maintained domestic stability. Tuñón Pablos makes the insightful observation that, in light of the constant political turmoil and clashes in the years between independence and the Porfirian era, “Mexicans saw their private world, the home, as the source of order and stability. Despite their different political positions, the various factions clearly agreed in their ideas concerning women” (46). The Angel-of-the-House model facilitated patriarchal control over women physically by limiting women’s mobility so as to be able to monitor their actions. Social customs of seclusion, chaperoning, and ensuring that women espoused these values as an intrinsic part of their identities were intended to assure virginity or fidelity (Carner 97).⁵

Mexico’s laws in the 1800s reflected and enforced the national ideology of the Angel of the House. Most historians agree that, in many respects, married women maintained “the legal status of minors,” as often a woman could take legal action only with the consent of her husband (Ramos Escandón 147).⁶ In the 1850s married women, however (unlike minors), did have the power to bequeath their property or take authority away from their husbands if it could be proved that they were mishandling their wives’ money (Arrom 73). Women could use the recourse of ecclesiastic separation to distance themselves physically and legally in extreme cases, such as harsh physical abuse, forced prostitution, threat of contraction of an incurable disease (such as leprosy), or if the man was a

“pagan,” but they could not remarry (Arrom 206-208).⁷ Note that, except in extreme cases, a man’s infidelity was not a reason for separation.

Despite minor rights for female citizens, the Civil Code of 1870 legally enforced the tenet of wifely submission: in return for protection and economic support, a wife’s obligation was to “obedecer a su marido así en lo doméstico como en la educación de los hijos y la administración de los bienes” (obey her husband in domestic concerns as well as in their children’s education and in the administration of property; qtd. in Ramos Escandón 147).

As was the case with certain areas of women’s education, their legal rights also decreased under Porfirio Díaz. The Napoleonic Civil Code of 1884 “deprived married women of any rights to administer or dispose of their personal property” and “married women... could not take part in civil suits, draw up any legal contract, or even defend themselves against husbands who squandered their money” (Macías 15). Genaro García, a Mexican law student who presented his thesis in 1891 entitled “La desigualdad de la mujer” (The Inequality of Women) summed up the situation by stating that the law maintained married women in the status of “*imbecilitas sexus*” (an imbecile by reason of her sex, qtd. in Macías 13).

Widows had the most legal and financial freedom, as they had full control over their property and children upon the death of a husband. Although single adult women were legally released from their fathers’ authority and were given

control over any children in the 1850s, and were granted the same rights as adult males in the Civil Code of 1884 (Macías 13), economically and socially their lives must have been very difficult given the social emphasis on marriage and chastity, combined with the financial problem of having to support oneself and perhaps a family on a woman's meager income. It would appear that under such a civil code, heiresses would also enjoy a high degree of personal autonomy, although it is likely that social pressure to marry would have been great (especially if the heiress could form part of a favorable family union to ensure the consolidation of wealth).

Virtue, for women, was an oppressive burden and yet it was also a key to some small amount of authority in the general scheme of things. Moral goodness was one area in which women were generally perceived to excel over men; women could be more authoritative in regard to spiritual concerns, charity, and sexual restraint. However, fixing inflexible roles for women within the angelic model, which focused on their reproductive capacity and sexual fidelity, was also a way of attempting to maintain patriarchal control: “el trememendo poder de su sexualidad y de su papel reproductivo debe [sic] ser controlado para conservar el orden social dentro de los parámetros fijados por la sociedad” (the tremendous power of [women's] sexuality and their reproductive role had to be controlled in order to maintain the social order within the parameters set by society; Carner

97). Ultimately, feminine virtue was a crutch that women could use to argue cases for social rights or stake a claim for separation, but when a woman's virtue was questioned, she was in danger of losing her rights (e.g., women who "engaged in improper sexual activity were denied protection from sexual crimes" Arrom 79).

In addition to limited access to education, minimal legal rights, and restrictive policies in regard to female virtue, clothing trends may have been a way of keeping women from cultivating self-fulfilling (rather than angelic self-sacrificing) activities. The Scottish travel writer and wife of a Spanish diplomat Fanny Erskine Inglis Calderón de la Barca claimed that Mexican women's feet were squeezed into shoes so small that they restricted walking and dancing; this was apt to keep women from becoming too adventurous (qtd. in Tuñón Pablos 56). Another reference to feet advocates limiting their use: one of the women's "ten commandments" of being good Angels of the House was "Do not study more with one's feet than with one's head" (Tuñón Pablos 59). (Of course the reference to studying likely implied studying female-appropriate subjects like catechism or hygiene.) These references link desirability and obedience with immobility. Ramos Escandón speaks of women's physical and ideological restrictions in terms of a "double corset": the article of clothing pinched her waist and limited her movement and spontaneity, while the ideological corset enforced

a strict morality, which entailed taking responsibility for the actions of others as well as for her own behavior (153).

I did not find statistics specifically on Mexican women's unchaperoned travel in the nineteenth century, probably because the act was rare and considered unacceptable, a stain on a woman's virtue (Carner 97-99). The domestic sphere was women's purported natural domain, and their lives "normally excluded travel" (Tuñón Pablos 49). This was generally true, regardless of the political background of a woman's husband or father: "The common domain for nineteenth-century Mexican women was the home: among... federalists and centralists, Liberals and Conservatives, women devoted their efforts to maintaining peace and order in the private sphere, to keeping the world of reproduction safe" (Tuñón Pablos 47). This sentiment is echoed repeatedly in the 1909 treatises I will examine shortly. We can gain a better idea of women's level of mobility (or lack thereof) by looking at contemporary essays in regard to their place in society. First I will present some of the subversive claims on the symbolic order, which may have sparked the impassioned reactionary defenses of the angelic standard that I will be analyzing.

Feminism in Mexico, mid-1800s to early 1900s

While most ruling-class men, even progressive liberals, did not envision major changes in women's roles, this was not always the case. Ignacio Ramón, a thinker who wrote in the 1860s, was an early advocate of sexual equality. As was often the case (even with early female feminists), his vision still located women in the role of mothers, and he saw equal education as a way to ingrain the value of education into the minds of their children. Nonetheless, some of his ideas were radical for the times: he condemned women's objectification as "machines of pleasure," a "positive piece of luxury furniture," and, most notably, advocated their becoming "equal to men in teaching posts, tribunals, at the rostrum and possibly even on the battlefields" (qtd. in Tuñón Pablos 62). The idea of women interacting with men as equals was unusual for the times, given their official subordination to men under the law and in education. Of the areas Ramón mentions, only primary school education was an exemplary field for women. (Primary school teachers, as many scholars have noted, often received official praise for their self-abnegation and dedication—that is, they performed an important, work-intensive, and motherly job, for little money, and thus ideologically fit within the Angel of the House model.) Genaro García, whom I mentioned, was another male Mexican thinker concerned with women's legal equality in the 1890s.

Despite patriarchal culture's almost complete prohibition of women's participation in the public sphere, Porfirian progress needed its female citizens for the underpaid work of blue- and white-collar jobs in factories and businesses, and a few, as I mentioned, even entered the forbidden areas of law and medicine. In the 1880s to 1904, lower- and middle-class women entered the workforce by the thousands, thus becoming more aware of their role as earners and of the inequality between the sexes outside of the feminine ambience of the home (Macías 13-14). It was from the ranks of this emerging sector of educated bourgeois women that early feminism arose in Mexico.

Women's journals were an important outlet for early feminist concerns. Between 1870 and 1910 several important publications appeared. In 1870, Rita Cetina Gutiérrez published La Siempreviva (The Everlasting Flower), whose name connoted the tenacity of the movement in the face of patriarchal resistance, and in 1873 Las hijas de Anáhuac (The Daughters of Anahuac) appeared, which was nationalistically named for the Anahuac Valley where Mexico City is located.⁸ Albúm de la Mujer: Periódico Redactado por Señoras (The Women's Album: Newspaper Written by Ladies) circulated from 1883-1889 and was a venue through which women voiced the concerns of their sex. One pioneer of feminism was the poet Laureana Wright de Kleinhaus (1846-1896), an early suffragist and advocate of equal rights for women. In the 1880s, Wright de

Kleinhaus founded the feminist publication Violetas de Anáhuac (Violets of Anahuac), in which she reported to her readers gains in women's rights in Wyoming, Arkansas, Kansas, and Mississippi (Alvarado 15).

These early attempts at a women's movement did not seek to change women's roles drastically, but did articulate demands for the right to secular education and greater social recognition (Tuñón Pablos 81). The writings and organizing efforts of the well-known British positivist John Stuart Mill (Subjection of Women 1869) and pioneers of suffrage Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony "were not hidden from Mexican society" (Alvarado 11). They were likely role models that inspired Mexican women to take action for their own causes, although suffrage seems not to have been among their concerns at this early stage.

In the early 1900s, feminists in Mexico began to flesh out an agenda. The feminist journal La Mujer Mexicana (The Mexican Woman, 1904-1908) was a major step for organizing bourgeois women to create an actual and symbolic community in which to speak about sexual inequality. The publication was started by three highly educated Mexican women: Dr. Columba Rivera (Mexico's second woman medical doctor), María Sandoval de Zarco (Mexico's first female civil lawyer), and the normal schoolteacher Dolores Correa Zapata. Although suffrage was still not on the list of rights women demanded, the following were

concerns that the women contributors to the journal voiced passionately: the right to a single sexual standard (legal recourse for wives against unfaithful husbands), reformation of the 1887 Civil Code to grant married women more legal control over their property and the ability to sue and make contracts, higher wages for women workers, and more training for women to earn their own livings to share in Porfirian progress (Macías 14-15).

Although these early feminist desires did *not* include women abandoning their traditional roles (they still wanted to be good wives and mothers), one contributor stated that the idealization of bourgeois and elite women as selfless, dutiful, and good was not enough; they needed to be able to earn more income to support themselves without the help of a man, if necessary (Esther Huidobro de Azua qtd. in Macías 14). Women were recognizing that the praise and idealization ruling-class men bestowed upon them for self-abnegation was a substitute for paying them living wages and enfranchising them into the public sphere.

Thus, by the 1880s when Barragán was imagining an active female anti-Angel for her adventure novel, a small percentage of Mexico's learned female elite were imagining their own alternative roles for their sex. This early feminist activity did not go unnoticed; masculinist contestations with the intention of

stagnating these early surges of feminism and maintaining traditional roles were well underway, as I will now show.

Antifeminism I: The Catholic Discourse of Moreno and Elizalde

The publication La mujer (Woman 1909) carries the seal of the secretariat of the Archbishop of Mexico City and presents itself as a collection of actual correspondence between the Mexican poet and intellectual Antonio de P. Moreno (who writes in a spiritual, romantic style) and his young protégé Domingo Elizalde.⁹ The collection of letters, which are not individually dated, seems rather to be a didactic manual written in epistolary form, as I will point out in my analysis, although I was not able to determine whether the letters were authentic or invented.

In the epistolary dialogue, Moreno defends women in response to Elizalde's critiques of them. The point of the exchange is that the delicate sex is very easily influenced by men and/or God toward good, but is also extremely vulnerable to evil (Cepeda vii). Women's easily impressionable nature must be taken seriously since, Moreno asserts, they exert a profound influence on society as mothers. Thus men bear the burden of defining models for them as "vírgenes... esposas... madres" (virgins... wives... mothers, Cepeda viii). According to Cepeda, a contemporary who wrote the introduction to La mujer,

Moreno's letters are an "estudio concienzudo acerca de la mujer y de su misión en la tierra" (conscientious study about woman and her mission on earth, v). His statement indicates that the publication expressed common beliefs about female citizens and their social responsibilities in the early 1900s.

Elizalde takes, or at least initially pretends to take, a positivist outlook toward women (his message later becomes heavily religious). He claims to "juzgarle desde un punto de vista real, positivo y desapasionado" (judge them from a real, objective, and dispassionate perspective 8). He will throw open the doors of women's domain, the home, and, he exclaims, "á la luz de una razón fría y reposada y de una filosofía inflexible y severa, busquemos la causa de los males que se han apoderado del sér débil..." (by the light of cold and calm reason and of a severe and inflexible philosophy, let us search for the causes of the evils that have overcome the weaker sex... 10). The severe, cold, and inflexible philosophy to which Elizalde refers seems to be positivism; the letters appear to be staged to criticize the anti-clerical policies of the positivists by presenting them as purely rational, unfeeling intellectuals. It is not surprising that the published letters would not favor a positivist stance, since Porfirian *científicos* generally believed that religion had little or no place in social policy.

Elizalde claims one of the gravest mistakes women make is to neglect their moral education and that of their daughters, which entails avoiding

flirtatiousness and vanity to instead cultivating modesty, humility, and self-abnegation (12). Moreno, in turn, agrees and only mentions academic education to question its importance relative to the indispensable teachings of “religion, morality, and duty.” Elizalde adds that the role of women’s education is “in a word, to take care of the heart, almost exclusively” (28, 30). Elizalde makes the distinction between *educación* (education, upbringing) and *instruir* (to instruct), in which the former deals with the heart and the latter deals only with the brain, the cultivation of the “intellectual faculties” (30). Needless to say, women were to be educated in matters of the heart rather than instructed intellectually; he scorns parents who teach their daughters math and science while neglecting religion (31). Elizalde, in the end, champions religion as the savior of men and women, and the panacea of society.

According to Elizalde, evil influences on women are fiction, journalism, Protestantism, and any other outside “theories.” He likens the sources of entertainment and information to “un reptil que, astuto y arrastrándose, acecha á su víctima, ha penetrado el descreimiento en el hogar bajo la forma de la novela y del periódico, atacando desde luego el pudor de la mujer, lanzando después el soplo de su hálito sobre la llama de la fe, y queriendo, en fin, arrancarle el grandioso poder que le da la religión” (a reptile that, astute and slithering, spies on its victim, and has infiltrated disbelief into the home by way of the novel and the

newspaper, suddenly attacking women's chastity, then extinguishing with its breath the flame of faith, and seeking, finally, to wrench away the grandiose power that religion bestows upon them 46). His words are in accordance with hegemonic ideology, which purported that women were not socially impotent, but rather held power in domestic, moral, and religious matters. This power only functioned within the angelic model; straying from it (by self-indulgently educating oneself with journals and novels, for example, as Elizalde notes), strips away the fragile legitimacy women could claim in society.

Besides newspapers and novels, Moreno expands the category of threats to woman's morality to a vast one: outside ideas, carriers of faiths other than Catholicism (e.g., Protestant missionaries) were also "slithering reptiles" waiting to dampen women's faith. He explicitly makes reference to the French Revolution (likely for women's prominent and notably non-domestic role in it) and the reforms, taken up by the United States, that have "demoralized" these societies (70). He specifically mentions "*Volterianismo, ... Protestantismo, Racionalismo, etc.*" as dangerous influences (71). The negative references to rationalism and the French deist *philosophe* and writer Voltaire (real name François-Marie Arouet; 1694-1778) are likely reactions against the political era in which Moreno writes, which is as dominated by science and enlightenment ideals of reason as it is skeptical of religion.

These unwholesome philosophies, then, could “pervertir á la mujer por medio de falsas religiones, de teorías seductoras y de libertades que le concedían vivir á sus anchas, satisfacer sus deseos y despreciar todo lo que la ennoblece” (pervert woman by means of false religions, seductive theories, and liberties that would allow her to live large, satisfy her desires, and reject all that ennoble her 55). In this passage, development of one’s identity and self-indulgence through worldly knowledge is explicitly adverse to the feminine ideal. This message is repeated in a section entitled “Virtue in the Home,” in which Moreno notes that errors women can make are often due to “demoralization and free thought” and “individual liberty,” which open the door to “worldly seductions” (150). It seems that the book recommended for female citizens is, in sum, the Bible (14).

It is thus the duty of men and God to keep women from being led astray: “la mujer, más que él, necesita de guía para emprender el áspero camino que la conduce al hogar, *término natural y preciso de sus aspiraciones, á despecho de todas las teorías que se inventen en contrario para deslumbrar á la que debe ser astro...*” (woman, more than man, needs a guide to set forth on the harsh road that directs her to the home, *the natural and precise goal of her aspirations, despite all of the theories that are invented to the contrary, in order to confuse she who is meant to be a leading light...* my emphasis Moreno 5). The final tone is that of

a protective shepherd who must look over the flock of women who are to be the gentle caretakers of Mexico's children.

Although the following anti-feminist discourse will have a very different tone and style from Moreno's religious rhetoric, the fundamental symbolic role that it defines for women in society is the same: that women's strengths are self-abnegation, morality, and nurturing others; that they are best at being wives and mothers; and that any foreign ideology that contradicts this is dangerous. The principal differences in the next essay I will examine are that the rhetoric is scientific rather than religious, women's strengths and weaknesses are biologically defined rather than divinely dictated, and contradictory ideology (e.g. feminism), in line with positivist rhetoric, is not evil poison to the soul, but rather "unhealthy" and "unnatural," given women's *organic* constitution. It is also communicated within the nationalist rhetoric of the era, rather than in a religious context.

Antifeminism II: Positivist Rhetoric, or Redefining Progress for Women

El siglo xix ante el feminismo (The Nineteenth Century in the Face of Feminism) is a compilation of articles by the Mexican positivist thinker Horacio Barreda (1863-1914) from 1909. Published in the respected and influential Revista Positiva (Positivist Journal), the articles use "scientific" logic to disprove

the viability of feminism as a social theory. That is, the articles consider what Barreda conceives as women's biological and psychological make-up (drawing on anthropological material of the Aztec and Spanish family structures among other "facts" of science and human nature), and then determines social factors that act upon them to influence their behavior (Barreda 124-26).

Barreda's study follows closely the tenets of womanhood that the originator of positivism, Auguste Comte (France 1798-1857) expresses in Systeme de politique positive (System of Positive Polity 1851-1854) in the section entitled "The Feminine Influence of Positivism."¹⁰ Comte, like Barreda, posits ideal republican women as fundamentally maternal and loving and champions their superiority in domestic, moral, and spiritual matters, while stressing their essential intellectual inferiority (Landes 170-89).

The result of applying positivist philosophy to women is that Barreda's essays support roughly the same oppressive and traditional roles for women as they previously had in Hispanic and European culture, but his writings are packaged in the positivist prose specifically in dialogue with the new threat of feminism. Whereas earlier writings about women's place in society tended to romantically extol the spiritual and virtuous beauty of women's place with their children by the hearth, Barreda's sentences, often occupying all of ten lines in a

standard eight-inch page, are a compilation of clauses into logical sequences, replete with scientific-sounding vocabulary.

Feminism, in the context of Barreda's articles, was a potential danger to the existing socioeconomic structures (Alvarado 9). Thus Barreda's study is an effort to give a positivist examination of women's roles with the goal of maintaining their traditional domestic placement and subservient position to men; his ideas were an expression of the general male consensus of the time (9). Tuñón Pablos notes that "discourse on women focused on two basic aspects of their supposed nature: their biology and their affective temperament" and these are the bases of Barreda's arguments (74).

Looking at Barreda's rhetorical approach, it is interesting to note that he puts in much effort to rationalize his traditional stance without initially dismissing feminism:

La importancia del feminismo en México la examinaremos de preferencia, desde el punto de vista teórico; pero antes se hace indispensable tratar la cuestión en abstracto, con el fin de averiguar cuál es el valor real de la solución feminista, examinando en relación con las conclusiones de la biología y con los principios fundamentales de la sociología positivista; esto es... a las condiciones *estáticas* o de existencia social.

We will examine the importance of feminism, preferably from a theoretical perspective; but first it is indispensable to approach the question in the abstract, with the goal of determining the real value of the feminist solution, examining it in relation with biological conclusions and with the fundamental principals of positivist sociology; that is...with the *static* conditions or those of social existence. (38)

It is not a surprise that Barreda's theoretical consideration of feminism will arrive at the conclusion that women's best route, for them and for the nation, is to serve the development of society as well-mannered and cultivated keepers of the home; feminism is not the solution to anything, but rather an obstacle to women's immutable natural condition. What is noteworthy is that feminism, this imported idea that bolstered Mexican bourgeois women's frustration with Porfirian sexual oppression in the midst of progress, is enough of a threat to Barreda (and, we may assume, to the *científicos*) to merit a lengthy, detailed analysis in one of Mexico's most prestigious journals of that era. From this fact, and from early feminist efforts in Mexico that I have discussed, it seems very likely that a number of Mexican women were familiar with foreign women's freedoms and struggles for equality.

It is useful to look at Barreda's definitions, as they apply to women, of words that were commonly used in positivist rhetoric: *progreso*, *libertad*, *igualdad* (progress, liberty, equality). The text I analyze in this section is entitled "Planteo positivo del problema social de la mujer" (A Positivist Consideration of the Social Problem of Women). First Barreda redefines progress as development, which implies advancement *within* an existing model (i.e. perfecting women's traditional roles). The idea seems to be that development is good for women because it does not drastically change their current status, while progress implies evolution and moving beyond one's current situation—which seems to be too extreme a transformation for women. After a long sequence of sentences filled with vocabulary taken from the social and natural sciences to speak about this particular interpretation of progress, Barreda concludes that

el progreso individual no podrá consistir jamás en alterar o invertir el orden fundamental de desarrollo, pero ni aun siquiera en trastornarlo, salvando algunos de sus eslabones importantes. De todo esto resulta, que el progreso en su marcha sería impotente para desarrollar bruscamente en el niño, facultades que fueran propias del hombre maduro.

individual progress will never be able to consist in altering or inverting the fundamental order of development, or even disturbing it, except some of

its important links. The outcome of all this, is that progress, in its course, would be impotent to develop, all at once, in children, faculties typical of a mature adult. (43-44)

The message is the following: women, like infants, may not budge from their traditional roles and must remain obedient, regardless of how much society advances in terms of wealth and opportunity. Barreda compares women to children in other sections as well as in this one, where he likens the natural growth of a child with the “natural” social growth of women; just as radical progress applied to children would be pushing the natural pace of development, so it is for women. He makes it clear that progress, for women, does not mean altering their roles as domestic wives and mothers.

The next word Barreda defines for us is *libertad*. He explains that, although it seems to suggest “apartar todos aquellos obstáculos que pudieran impedirnos el ejercicio de nuestra actividad en tal o cual sentido” (to do away with all of those obstacles that could impede the accomplishment of our activity in one sense or another; 46)—i.e., freedom is mistakenly interpreted to mean fulfilling “selfish” desires as individuals—Barreda clarifies that this is not the case in the context of social laws. He corrects the misconception by explaining that “la libertad verdadera a que debe aspirar el hombre y la mujer digna, habrá de

consistir en el libre ejercicio de las facultades superiores que sean características de uno y otro sexo” (the true liberty to which men and worthy women should aspire should consist of the free exercise of the different mental faculties that are characteristic of each sex; 49). *True* freedom, for Barreda (and, we may assume, the *científicos*) is liberty to act within a model dictated by the state. Before moving on to what these sexually particular characteristics are, so that we may see in what ways women are “free,” it is important to note that the same positivist ideas that Barreda applies to women in this essay were applied to (largely indigenous) working classes in order to dissuade them from attempting to gain power that was destined for the bourgeoisie and elite.

In the following section, entitled “La organización física, intelectual y moral que es característica de la mujer” (The physical, intellectual, and moral make-up of women), we learn that these female mental qualities are not actually mental qualities at all, but rather emotional faculties, because “en la mujer... predomina la vida afectiva sobre la intelectual” (in women... affective dominates over intellectual life; 61). The next sections of Barreda’s essay are worth citing at length, because it is here that he specifies women’s inherent intellectual limitations, according to “scientific” positivist thinking:

Ahora bien, la marcada repugnancia que inspira a la mujer toda observación abstracta, profunda y prolongada, a causa de la invencible fatiga que a poco le sobreviene, pone bien de manifiesto la debilidad relativa de sus órganos cerebrales que corresponden a las funciones de abstracción. En cambio, la meditación concreta, la observación sintética de las cosas reales, admite en ella un ejercicio mucho más sostenido; lo cual indica una aptitud cerebral mayor para ese género de observaciones. (...) la poca energía y vigor de sus facultades abstractas y analíticas ocasiona que la inteligencia femenina aprecie mejor las diferencias de los objetos que sus semejanzas...

Now then, the marked repugnance that any type of abstract, profound, and prolonged observation inspires in women, owing to the invincible fatigue that sets in shortly afterward, is an obvious manifestation of the relative weakness of their cerebral organs that control the functions of abstraction. Conversely, concrete thought, the synthetic observation of real things, allow them a more sustained activity; this indicates a greater cerebral aptitude for this kind of observations. (...) the abstract and analytical faculties' meager energy and vigor cause feminine intelligence to better appreciate the differences among objects, rather than their similarities...

(59)

Barreda goes on to elaborate the differences between female and male intelligence, which basically amount to men excelling at coming to universal conclusions or generalizations and synthesizing information, while women excel at “rapid” concrete observation, focusing on details, and negative comparisons, or how one thing differs from another (60). So, based on Barreda’s “biological” assessment, abstract or analytical intellectual functions such as interpreting or modifying laws, critical thinking, and decision-making would be masculine intellectual duties, while thought process for picking out items for the house, choosing between fabrics for the sofa or clothing, and distinguishing right from wrong on a superficial level (as long as it did not entail prolonged or profound contemplation), are mental chores appropriate to the female brain. From our current perspective, it is clear that Barreda was making a strong case using loaded rhetoric and pseudo-scientific facts in order to convince women and men that the former were incapable of holding any kind of power beyond the execution of very mundane domestic duties.

The section concludes by summarizing all of women’s strengths and weaknesses, which biologically determine their static place in society, regardless of how much society itself may advance:

Así, la naturaleza física del sexo femenino, su debilidad muscular, su viva sensibilidad, la movilidad de su imaginación, la rápida sucesión de sus sensaciones, sus tendencias a la observación minuciosa de detalle, la preponderancia de sus sentimientos de amor, de adhesión, de bondad, de abnegación y sacrificio, son atributos que se hallan en consonancia con los rasgos característicos que presenta el carácter de la mujer.

Ni el valor, ni la firmeza ni la verdadera energía, son cualidades que puedan distinguir a la mujer; y en ella lo que se nota es la timidez, la indecisión, la variabilidad y la debilidad en sus actos. (...) su admirable aptitud espontánea para poder subordinar el egoísmo al altruismo, la sociabilidad a la personalidad, la eleva muy por encima del [hombre]. La mujer será siempre, biológicamente considerada, *el tipo moral* de la especie humana... En cambio, la inferioridad de su inteligencia y de su carácter la colocará por necesidad, en una posición subalterna respecto del sexo masculino.

So, the physical nature of the feminine sex, her muscular weakness, her heightened sensitivity, the mobility of her imagination, the rapid succession of her sensations, her tendencies toward the observation of minute detail, the preponderance of her feelings of love and bonding, of

goodness, of abnegation and sacrifice, are attributes that one finds in harmony with the characteristic traits that women's characters present. Neither valor, nor strength, nor real energy are qualities that can be distinguished in women; and in them what one notes is timidity, indecision, fickleness, and weakness in their acts. (...) their admirable spontaneous aptitude to be able to subordinate egotism to altruism, the sociability of her personality, elevate them far above men. Women will always be, biologically speaking, *the moral type* of the human species... On the other hand, the inferiority of their intelligence and their character will necessarily place them in a subaltern position with respect to the masculine sex. (author's emphasis 61)

In Barreda's estimation of women's place in society, as in Comte's, there is no social learning that can liberate them in an age of progress in which such emphasis is placed on society's ability to move forward into international markets, advance into an industrial stage, and participate in European and North American economies.

Barreda, like Comte (as Landes convincingly demonstrates), seeks to prove that women are incapable of participation in the public sphere and that they are biologically determined to be Angels of the House. Liberty, for the weaker

sex, then, means the freedom to cultivate and participate in *all activities that pertain to an Angel of the House*, and remain subordinate to men in all other arenas, based on their physical constitutions. Women, in addition, are granted the *freedom* to maintain their weak physical constitutions in a “safe” environment by remaining at home and fulfilling their natural function: bearing and raising children.

The section on defining equality in a positivist context is fairly short, as it basically builds upon the base that Barreda has already established in the previous sections: that individuals are biologically diverse and have differing weak and strong points, and therefore the idea of equality cannot realistically be applied in the concrete world, outside of theory. He admits that the slogans of liberty and equality worked well for revolutionary purposes, but that with the development of culture and society, “natural” differences among individuals became apparent. Equality is thus not only unfeasible, but “opresiva” (oppressive) because it would not be fair to put the same demands on men, women, children, and the mentally retarded, as all have very “different” levels of intelligence and development (50-51):

Salvo el conjunto de garantías individuales que la legislación debe asegurar por igual a los diversos miembros de una sociedad cualquiera, es

evidente, que no naciendo iguales los hombres, *orgánicamente* considerados, y produciendo la libre actividad de cada uno de ellos, aptitudes, capacidades y resultados muy diversos, las posiciones, prerrogativas y consideraciones sociales, tienen que ser por necesidad también desiguales.

With the exception of the set of individual rights that legislation must provide equally to all of the diverse members of a given society, it is evident, that men not being born equal, *organically* speaking, and each one of them producing very diverse aptitudes, capacities, and results, the social positions, prerogatives, and considerations have to be, necessarily, also unequal. (author's emphasis 51)

Barreda repeatedly makes unambiguous essentialist claims that women are intellectually and physically inferior to men. From the passage above we can see that positivist society subordinates certain men, whom we may assume to be men of the lower classes, as well as women.

Women's strengths, not surprisingly, are their natural aptitude for love and morality and superior ability for nurturing others and for maintaining the everyday functions of the home. In return for her self-sacrifice, a woman receives the protection and care of her husband or father. According to the Comtean

social laws that Barreda sets up, women are not to take part in public affairs. Both thinkers aim to “silence women’s public speech, to deny them access to the public sphere by imprisoning them in the realm of feeling and domesticity” (Landes 175). While in real life this oppressive social propaganda was the code by which women were expected to lead their lives, in Barragán’s fiction readers were encouraged to think beyond this mold by reading about a female character who single-handedly took control of and reversed her father’s criminal affairs and traveled the countryside independently. In the next chapter, I will further discuss how Barragán’s protagonist was a symbolic contestation to this real-life silencing and seclusion.

Barreda abandons his high scholarly prose at the end of his essay to emphatically address feminism’s threat to society. He concludes with this vehement admonition, which I include in an abbreviated version of the original diatribe, nineteen lines long:

Si vuestras teorías ¡oh feministas! alcanzasen el triunfo social que ambicionáis, si la mujer llegase a ser virilizada en el grado que pretendéis...vuestra obra será el baldón de la civilización, podéis estar seguros de ello, y la posteridad os pediría severas cuentas de semejante labor revolucionaria... al contemplar el hogar desierto y frío... os gritarían

con voz llena de dolor e indignación: ¡feministas! ¡feministas! ¿qué habéis hecho de la mujer?

If your theories, oh feminists!, achieve the social triumph you seek, if women become masculinized to the extent that you wish... your work will be the disgrace of civilization, you may be sure of it, and posterity will have much to reproach you for such revolutionary labor... upon contemplating the cold and deserted hearth, they will scream to you with voices filled with indignation: Feminists! Feminists! What have you done with women? (151)

So masculinist rhetoric of the period, regardless of its philosophical ilk, emphatically prescribed strictly domestic roles for women, despite their increasing presence in the work force. Feminism, “outside theories,” and, we may assume, any challenges to the angelic model were adamantly opposed in hegemonic conceptualizations of female identity. Women were ideologically tied to the home and systematically denied public voice.

While these feminine roles did not necessarily vary greatly from those of European women in the late 1800s, they were quite different from the women like the aforementioned pioneers of suffrage that Mexican women were hearing about via the budding proto-feminist movement. Moreno’s and Barreda’s essays are

clearly written with the aim of mitigating the threat of women's "contamination" from non-angelic examples or ideas, i.e., the demoralizing feminists, suffragists in the United States and Great Britain, Protestants, and cultivating the female intellect by reading non-pious material to pursue one's scholarly interests.

Conclusion

Porfirian Mexico was a period of change for Mexican society during which Díaz and his *científicos* focused blindly on modernization, regardless of the costs to the exploited masses. While men of the elite and bourgeoisie reaped political benefits of power placed into the hands of a secular government that represented their interests, women had fewer rights under the law than before modernization. The political philosophy of positivism rationalized institutionalized oppression by providing scientific "proof" of women's biological inability to participate in the advances of public Mexico, while Catholic ideology advocated domesticity from a spiritual perspective that was ordained by God. It was in this ambiance, more cosmopolitan and diverse than ever, that bourgeois women took note of their oppression in an organized manner and began to contest it. Barragán's fictional attempts to forge a strong female agent into the public imagination by writing an adventure novel in which a woman is the prime motor behind the plot places her among the early feminists I mention in this chapter.

In deciphering the social forces at play in the creation of Barragán's public, active, and symbolically fatherless female character, one must consider the likelihood of women's desires for extra-domestic mobility (vis à vis prescribed seclusion), and the legal limitations they wished to correct, as well as the role models that facilitated the imagining of the author's rendition of female freedom. Early Mexican feminists were, like Barragán's character, neither entirely secluded nor always obedient. Now that I have outlined the sexual politics of the times, both traditional and subversive, I will examine how these were followed and transgressed in La hija del bandido.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ Mexico's officials did not, however, share French leaders' preoccupation with workers' conditions. Tenorio-Trillo notes that, during the World's Fair in Paris of 1889, France's congresses on social issues were sparsely attended by Mexican representatives (24).

² See Zalduondo's study for historical information on bandits in Porfirian Mexico and for an analysis of their role in Barragán's novel.

³ For instance, Macías notes that during the Porfiriato, "Women were especially encouraged to become primary schoolteachers, because teaching of young children required enormous dedication, but received minimal compensation" (10). She adds that elementary schoolteachers received less than two pesos per day, which was barely enough money to support one person without additional income from the woman's family (10).

⁴ Although it would seem that the death of a separated woman's husband could free her to remarry, I did not find any information on this particular scenario.

⁵ For more information on paternal, spousal, and ecclesiastic control over women's sexuality and maintaining patriarchal property and power, see Carner's "Estereotipos femeninos en el siglo xix." Tenorio-Trillo (149-50) lists a source that provides a medical perspective during the era on female virginity, specifically on a study of the Mexican woman's hymen, in Francisco de Asís Flores y Troncoso's El himen en México (The Hymen in Mexico, Mexico City 1885).

⁶ Arrom has specified the legal differences in some detail among the status of minors, slaves, and women under the law in Mexico through the middle of the 1800s (53-97). Although she argues that women were perceived as more deserving of rights than slaves and children, that single women were released from their fathers' legal control, or *potestas* (93), and that women of all civil statuses were given more authority over their children in the 1850s, ultimately, married women were still subordinate under the law to their husbands in most cases. After the 1850s, however, under Porfirio Díaz's Napoleonic civil codes, women lost many of the rights that Arrom discusses, as I mention in the body of this chapter.

⁷ See Arrom 206-58 for detailed information on marriage and separation in the mid-nineteenth century in Mexico.

⁸ Translations for the names of journals in this section (with the exception of Albúm de la Mujer) are taken from Tuñón Pablos 80-81.

⁹ The following is an example of the flowery, metaphoric, and poetic style that characterizes Moreno's discourse: "Esto ya es un buen principio, y casi estoy por creer que, al llegar al término de nuestra discusión, estaremos enteramente acordes en nuestro modo de pensar, como lo estuvimos antes de que tu alma impresionable apurara las primeras gotas de hiel en que mojaste tu pluma para escribirme la carta que tanta pena me causó" (This is already a good beginning, and I am almost ready to believe that, upon arriving at the end of our discussion, our modes of thinking will be in agreement entirely, as it was before your impressionable soul consumed the first drops of bile, into which you dipped your pen in order to write me the letter that caused me so much pain" 13).

¹⁰ For an analysis Comte's positivist view of women, see Joan B. Landes, Women and the Public Sphere (173-200).

Chapter Two

Coming of Age(ncy): Refugio Barragán de Toscano's

La hija del bandido (1887)

La hija del bandido (The Bandit's Daughter; 1887) is an adventure novel, set in the transitional period between the twilight of Spanish colonial Mexico and the dawn of the struggle for independence. The story is the lively fictionalized retelling of a rural legend about a cave-dwelling gang of bandits that circulated in the mountainous regions of the province of Jalisco. The protagonist, as the title suggests, is the head outlaw's daughter, whose *quinceañera* (fifteenth birthday and coming-of-age celebration) commences the narrative.

In this chapter I will focus on the role of the *quinceañera* (a Mexican girl's rite of passage to womanhood) as a medium for psychoanalytic identity formation (Freud, Lacan, Kristeva), the *transitional* nature of coming-of-age as a social fissure (Turner), and the subsequent social "lawlessness" or transgression allowed by this gap, as these are the tools at work in La hija del bandido. The role of transitional and marginal spaces will be of particular importance in this analysis, because Barragán situates the heroine's agency *between* life stages, genres,

historical settings, societies, geographies--and even genders--to introduce in the (pre-adolescent) father-daughter bond a rupture that drives the plot. It is this conflict that allows the protagonist to break many of the tenets of the Angel of the House; when María, the bandit's daughter, discovers her father's deceptions, she rebels against him and becomes the heroine of the novel.

To make my case, I will draw on Freud's Oedipal model/Lacan's Name-of-the-Father, Kristeva's maternal chora, and Victor Turner's theory of liminality to show how these models can be read, in Hija, as authorial strategies in which to present an imaginary vision of a desiring, assertive, and independent female character. In my literary analysis, I will then show how an Oedipal model plays itself out, detail the feminine agency María enacts, and explain how the agency is perpetuated within the rite of passage. By reading the story of Hija as a feminist version of an unconsummated Oedipal model, in which the transitional phase between pre-social and social (social meaning entry into a model of "normal" adult heterosexuality) is kept active for María, we can glimpse the author's early feminist visions of a girl who escapes patriarchal social law. The early feminism of the work, then, lies in this avoidance of completing the rite of passage that leads to a woman's integration into a society in which women were legally, educationally, and politically inferior to men.

The *quinceañera* and the break with the father, then, changes María from a subservient daughter to the fearless heroine who travels unchaperoned at a time when a woman's place was in the home, and, most notably, who pointedly disobeys her father, undoes his crimes, and even denies his name. She further rejects patriarchy, in its more universal sense, by refusing to marry and reproduce the model, literally and figuratively.

As I outlined in chapter one (in the sections entitled Women's Roles and Status in Mid-late Nineteenth-Century Mexico and Feminism in Mexico, mid-1800s to early 1900s), these discursive acts address the main obstacles to women's liberation at the end of the century: legal and social protectionism under the patriarchal wing (concretely under their husbands or fathers, or ideologically under the church and state) and policies from progressive and religious sectors that advocated seclusion within the home (evidenced by Barreda's and Moreno's discourses in chapter one). I will now turn to the theoretical frame as a means of interpreting how the author's story of fantasy and adventure was responding to the social imperatives of her day.

Since Barragán's biography and background are relevant to understanding her narrative choices, I will turn to these before discussing the theoretical frame and textual analysis.

Barragán and her novel: Disruptions of Power and Marginal Perspective¹

Barragán was an educated woman who was already transgressing norms by becoming a novelist; she was likely interested in and aware of how power was displaced and transferred. As her provincial origins, gender, and historical perspective lent themselves to viewing the workings of power from the periphery, she engages the reader to peer into the gaps of mainstream society as a way of experiencing the fictional heroine of her novel. Barragán chooses to lead our imaginations between categories in regard to genre, historical junctures, and gender (all of which I will demonstrate shortly), just as she herself was marginal in terms of being a woman from the provinces in a country where power was centrally located and masculine.

In regard to Barragán's preference for balancing her narration in the precarious political position between colonialism and the early republic, this choice likely reflects her conception of the symbolic order in flux, since she witnessed the mutability of political regimes from her early childhood in the 1850s to the late 1880s when she wrote Hija. In Barragán's Mexico, focusing on the moment that a regime crumbles and shifts must have been like looking through a doorway to opportunity, because it is at this moment that one may view the political structure (which, to a significant degree, dictates the social) in its most vulnerable and tentative phase.

The shifts in power in Mexico were extreme until Díaz's relative constancy starting in 1876. The 1850s saw post-colonial instability and the near-dozen stints of leadership under the slippery and corrupt, but talented military leader Antonio López de Santa Anna (1794-1876) from the 1830s to the 1850s. During this time, Mexico endured the loss of Texas in 1845, and the subsequent Mexican-American War, or *Guerra de Estados Unidos a México* and an extensive loss of territory to the United States (1846-1848). Later, the 1860s brought the respite, for the most part, of enlightened secular liberal reform under Benito Juárez.

Juárez's rule was interrupted by a French invasion, facilitated through the efforts of Mexican conservatives. Napoleon III installed the emperor Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph (1832-1867, Archduke of Austria) in a monarchy from 1864-1867. Although Juárez's republican forces defeated the French and Juárez had Maximilian executed in 1867, his presidency was cut short by his death in 1872.

The next significant period of rule, as I discussed in chapter one, was under Porfirio Díaz. Mexico's focus shifted from a progressive reform plan to a capitalist positivist modernization under Díaz, which was ongoing when Barragán wrote Hija.

Mexico's particular history differs from those of Peru and Puerto Rico (the countries of origin of the other two authors studied here) in regard to the timing

and type of its instability. The nineteenth century was a turbulent time all over Latin America and mid-century Mexico exemplified this. In Peru (which I will discuss in chapter three) there was instability until the early 1840s; however the prosperity from the sale of *guano* (organic fertilizer) and liberal government from 1842-1862 allowed for relative peace and reconstruction after independence. Puerto Rico's situation (the focus of chapter five) was distinct from Mexico and Peru in that the island was yet negotiating as a colony of the Spanish government throughout most the century. Albeit in a very abbreviated list, the historical outline above offers some examples of the abrupt shifts in power of nineteenth-century Mexico during Barragán's lifetime.

In Barragán's Jalisco (a province just west of the Mexico City), provincial life responded to the ebb and flow of political changes in the capital and international concerns, such as conflicts with France and the United States. For example, in nineteenth-century Jalisco the "social structure was in constant flux as the expansion of the railroad (under Lerdo de Tejada, González, and Díaz) in Mexico closely linked the national market with that of the United States" (Zalduondo 46). French occupation meant that more than 30,000 troops "overran central Mexico" and were stationed in provincial towns during Maximilian's rule (Meyer and Sherman 390-97). I offer these examples to show that it is unlikely

that living in the provinces isolated Barragán from the instability that was perhaps more keenly experienced in the capital.

On a personal level, much like the unpredictable changes in politics, Barragán's destiny transitioned by chance—instead of leading her to the common domestic life of a (largely uneducated) Mexican woman, her circumstances yielded her enough education to become a school teacher and, later, a noted author. She was born into a family of modest means in the town of Tonila in the province of Jalisco in 1846.² Her father was a schoolteacher and was saving a portion of the family's already small income for the education of Barragán's older brother. It is through the misfortune of both of her two siblings' deaths that she had access to education; the money intended for the eldest was used to send her to normal school in Colima and she then moved with her family to Ciudad Guzmán and worked as a teacher there.

In 1869 she married the professor Estéban Toscano Arreola and moved to Guadalajara. Barragán continued teaching and writing even while raising her two children—an uncommon practice for wives and mothers of nineteenth-century Mexico. After her husband's death in 1879, Barragán remained employed as an educator and added to her significant oeuvre, which included poetry, drama, and narrative. As a widow, she faced the financial burden of being the sole provider for her family and she supported them by publishing and teaching. However, her

widowed status granted her the highest degree of legal freedom possible for a woman in the 1880s (Macías 13). Although in a much less adventurous form than her fictional female heroine, Barragán was sure to have recognized, in comparison to married women around her, the greater agency she could enact as a widow. She put her freedom to good use; she is credited with having opened an elementary school and with collaborating with her son, who played a large role in the advent of the film industry in Mexico, to open and manage an early cinema in Puebla (Zalduondo 73, 87).

Both on a personal level and at the national level, the particular lessons of mid-nineteenth-century Mexico may well have taught the author of *Hija* that political power (and its inevitable effects on social norms) was a precarious and ephemeral force. Her perception of power on the national is one explanation why she chose to peer into the interstices of power to rewrite the feminine ideal.

From her life story and from her act of creating the fictional dynamo (the bandit's daughter María), who elides the socially prescribed model of Angel of the House, it is possible that the religious theme in the novel was in place to maintain the "protection" that female morality afforded, rather than to reflect the author's religious dedication. I will continue this discussion of Barragán's ideology as it is reflected in the novel in the following sections, but first I will give a summary of the novel under consideration.

The literary movement or style to which *The Bandit's Daughter* corresponds most faithfully is disputable. Although Barragán wrote at the beginning of what can, albeit arguably, be called modernism in Mexico (approximately 1880-1920), the novel is a hybrid text and does not fit into Spanish-American *modernista* aesthetics.³ While some of the more poetic moments in the narrative of Barragán's novel may show some minor influence of *modernismo*, it is mainly a novel of adventure and intrigue written in the romantic/realist style, without any hint of decadence or the more voluptuous landscapes and personages common in *modernista* prose. The foreword calls it "un libro 'costumbrista'" (a book depicting local color; Ruiz Cabañas i), however this categorization is problematic owing to the prominence of the action-packed plot, which overshadows the few passages describing local customs, landscapes, and festivals.

Even while the story championed a woman who is extremely independent and who has more agency than the men in the narrative, it passed ecclesiastic approval and earned a wide readership, with three editions between 1887 and 1934. Despite the Porfirian era's anticlerical policies, the Catholic church still engaged in censorship throughout the late 1800s and the wait for clerical approval could be up to three years (McLean in Zalduondo 59). One can see, then, how it behooved writers not to contradict clerical policies in novels. Barragán's success

at jumping this hurdle, then, could owe to the fact that María, despite her transgressive agency, is motivated by a moral sense of duty and that she is depicted as quite religious (aspects of her character that would make her appear in line with the Angel of the House). Considering the moral climate of the times and the church's power of granting or denying approval, though, we cannot take the minor religious undercurrent in the novel as an attempt to advocate religious ideology, nor an alignment with the Catholic church and its restrictive Marian model for women (see chapter one in the section on Antifeminist Discourses and chapter five on Clerical and Governmental Control of Sexuality through Popular Customs: Dress, Dance, Leisure, and Public Space: 1700s-mid-1800s).

Localism (*costumbrismo*) was a major characteristic of cultural production in Colima in the 1800s (66-67).⁴ Although *costumbrismo* is not the primary focus of Barragán's novel, her descriptions of provincial Mexico valorized it in the eyes of lettered elites interested in fiction that painted descriptions of landscapes and customs that could foment national pride, as evidenced by Ruiz Cabañas's introduction in the 1934 edition. His first words are: "La aparición de un libro "costumbrista", que pinte con justeza nuestro medio—rico en el color y singular en la emoción—debe ser saludada con simpatía por lectores y bibliófilos (The publication of a book depicting local color, that paints precisely our surroundings—richly colorful and uniquely exciting—should be welcomed

warmly by readers and bibliophiles; i). The story is based on a local legend about a cruel bandit, allegedly named Vicente Colombo, that was told to the author as a child by her aunt (Barragán 2-3). Next I will offer an abbreviated summary of the story of *The Bandit's Daughter*. The novel is much more complex than the basic story line I present here, as it is interrupted with tangential intrigues and is somewhat nonlinear. However, for the sake of space I will only tell the main action concerning María and only mention the subplots as relevant to my analysis.

The protagonist, María Colombo, is the daughter of the notorious chief of a gang of bandits. She has grown up in the thieves' subterranean hideout in the Nevado de Colima mountain in the state of Jalisco, believing that her father is hiding there for political reasons. Upon her quinceañera, she is given a letter from her dead mother that reveals the truth about her father's criminal activity. At that moment, her filial devotion largely vanishes and she embarks on a quest to find her grandfather in the city of Zapotlán (today called Ciudad Guzmán), about 60km from the caves.

Gaining her father's permission and means to travel requires ability on the part of the young lady to lie, cajole, persuade, and even employ powers of seduction. Although her primary goal is originally to reunite with her maternal grandfather, in a gesture of loyalty to her dead mother, her adventures multiply

when she discovers several kidnappings of her father's doing. She thus becomes the heroine who travels to Guadalajara, back to Nevado, drugs the band of criminals, including her own father, and rescues the victims. Zapotlán is about 125km south of Guadalajara in the state of Jalisco, and el Nevado de Colima is about 60km southwest of Zapotlán. I have estimated from the travels listed in the novel that the protagonist journeys about 400km independently.

In this process of tricking evil-doers and saving the day, she falls in love with a handsome young suitor, Rafael. She must, however, reject him on the basis that he would some day discover and resent her shady origins. Rafael has given evidence that this is true when he seems to recognize María as the beautiful damsel who rescues him from the bandits' cave—and questions her involvement there. Prideful and unyielding to her grandfather's and Rafael's pleas for her to wed, María instead decides to enter a convent. Her choice allows her to avoid becoming an Angel of the House and also positions her in a tradition of well-known unorthodox Hispanic women, which I will discuss in the conclusion.

In my analysis, I will concentrate on María's role in negotiating power in both family dynamics (rejection of the father, alignment with the mother) and public participation (travel, solving crimes). I will talk about how power is presented as a shifting and counter-hegemonic force in the novel by drawing on

the Oedipal model and the marginal state of existence of María's coming of age, for which I will next present the theoretical frame.

Psychoanalytic Theories of Adult Heterosexuality

My goal here is to outline in short form the Oedipal model, Lacan's extension of it to social law, and Kristeva's valorization of the maternal chora, as relevant to the literary analysis at hand. Although Turner's theory of the threshold (liminality) seems to be an anthropological, rather than psychoanalytic, construct, I base my inclusion of Turner in this trio on the fact that the Oedipal complex is a rite of passage, much like the ritual process that Turner describes. In Freud's onset of "normal" adult sexuality (which justifies phallic/social power) the liminal is the transitional space in which this resolution of the conflict with the father occurs. This is how the liminal and the name of the father (patriarchal law) are linked. Later in my literary analysis, I will show how the author, using the *quinceañera* as the rite of passage, perpetuates the transitional phase of the ritual, which is where the rebellion against the father plays itself out—but without any resolution in terms of María's adulthood and consummation of the metamorphosis into the Angel of the House.

In Totem and Taboo (1912-1913), Freud traces the change of state from the infantile autoerotic to the discovery of a sexual object (the mother), and later

resolution of the incestuous desire, with symbolism and ritual in tribal societies.⁵ Freud bases the Oedipal complex on the Darwinian imagining of a “primal horde” (a group of jealous sons who kill and eat their father in order to gain access to the women of the tribe; Freud 883). Freud adds to this myth the idea of the sons’ *remorse*, which is the basis for social taboos (thus law): “[tribal societies] created two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the *sense of guilt of the son*, and for this very reason these had to correspond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipal complex [desiring the mother, killing the father]” (original emphasis 885). The rite of passage is resolved, then, with the sons’ love for and identification with the dead father, and their pact not to desire the mother.

In Freud’s European application of the primal horde, the Oedipal complex, the son’s guilt (and subsequent renunciation of the desire for the mother) marks the transition from boy to man and an implicit pact/alignment with the father that determines social structure: “Society is now based on complicity in the common crime, religion on the sense of guilt and the consequent remorse, while morality is based partly on the necessities of society and partly on the expiation which this sense of guilt demands” (887). This pact between father and son, which has not gone unnoticed among feminist scholars such as Irigaray and Kristeva “founds patriarchy anew for each generation, guaranteeing the son a position as heir to the father’s position” (Grosz 68).

Although in Freud the correlations among father, law, and society are clearly present, Lacan presents them in terms of abstract law. Citing the fact that a father figure need not be genetically related, and drawing on the God the Father metaphor in religion, Lacan comes to the conclusion that “the attribution of procreation to the father can only be the effect of a pure signifier, of a recognition, not of a real father, but of what religion has taught us to refer to as the Name-of-the-Father” (Ecrits 199). In this sense he takes Freud’s theory of the primal horde and the dead father from Totem and Taboo, and posits it as a master signifier of the symbolic order.⁶

In the novel, María’s father Colombo is the symbolic *as well as* the genetic father, because he is the leader of the group of bandits and has complete power over that domain; he thus performs the “socially regulatory function of the name-of-the-father” on both abstract and biological levels (Grosz 51).

The Name-of-the-Father is significant for interpreting the action in La hija del bandido for several reasons. It is relevant because the narrative presents a woman (María) who wields power over Colombo, who is both father and law. The vicious criminal is quick to recognize his weakness when it comes to his beloved daughter: “delante de María soy un cordero, un niño, un manequí a su voluntad y sin fuerza propia” (before María I am a lamb, a child, a mannequin to her will, without strength of my own; Barragán 41). Thus, embedded in an

action-packed adventure novel, in which the reader's attention is drawn into the multiple story lines, there is always the underlying transgression of María's rebellion against her father and the patriarchal law that his name represents. This act takes on significance, as the freedom to enact agency is a result of it.

The second reason the symbolic nature of the Name-of-the-Father is relevant to a feminist reading of the novel is because it is Colombo's *name* that is his handicap in terms of being able to monitor his daughter's actions; the same name that is *law* in the hide-out, marks him as a wanted man in society. Thus he cannot circulate in it (unless he disguises himself). María, then, must deny the name of the father and assume a legitimate one in order to stay in Zapotlán. Here, she coaches her servant Juana in the art of assimilating the newfound false identity—the identity that will be her ticket to liberty and public agency:

Juana murmuró con cariño, dando a sus ideas otro sesgo:

--Yo temo no saber desempeñar bien mi papel en esta comedia. Y si no, ¿Qué diremos ahora?

[--] Simplemente que venimos desde México a cambiar temperatura, buscando aires más puros, porque me hallo enferma del corazón. *Además, por lo que pueda ofrecerse, no olvides que mi padre se llama Laurencio Granados; mi madre Gabriela Alvarado, y que soy huérfana. (...)*

Juana murmured affectionately, giving her ideas another slant:

“I fear I will not know how to play my role well in this comedy. And if not, what will we say then?”

[María replies] “Simply that we come from Mexico City to change climates, searching for cleaner air, because I have a heart illness.

Moreover, in case anything comes up, do not forget that my father is named Laurencio Granados, my mother Gabriela Alvarado, and that I am an orphan... (my emphasis 46)

So, in the context of nineteenth-century Mexican society, where women were almost exclusively defined in relation to their male relatives (see Moreno’s and Barreda’s discourses in chapter one), María’s assumption of her own, original identity-- intentionally detached from that of Colombo’s--is a heavily loaded symbolic act. It inserts into the symbolic order an example of a woman who finds her developing sense of self and worth through words and deeds.

Apart from the focus on María’s relationship with her father, there is a phenomenon of the elimination of paternal figures in the novel in a more general sense.⁷ María’s mother Paula is stolen from her father by Colombo, as is the father of María’s surrogate sister Cecilia. María’s suitor Rafael is an orphan, and this term is applied to the gang of bandits as well. While in nineteenth-century

novels in the Hispanic world, Europe, and the United States orphans and children torn from their homes are a plot staple that lends itself to adventures (e.g. novels by the British author Charles Dickens and the French author Victor Hugo), these novels do not simultaneously draw attention to the triangular relationship among mother-father-child as Barragán does in Hija, to then rupture it. The symbolic father's role of "instilling in the child the sense of lawfulness and willing submission to the social customs," then, gives way to agency (Grosz 68). This is one way in which the author breaks down the stability or perceived invincibility of her imagined symbolic social structure: by creating a fatherless society in which individuals act independently of this particular restriction. (Another weakening of traditional power is through marginal settings, which I will discuss shortly.)

At the same time that the protagonist rebels against the patriarchal figure, she valorizes the maternal impulses of her mother, who died soon after María's birth. María's post-mortem discovery of the mother's voice via a written document is her impetus for leaving the bandits' cave. As I discuss in the introduction to this study, Kristeva's chora is part of the semiotic realm, a complement to the realm of the symbolic, composed of pre-linguistic drives and rhythms, similar to the rhythm one may sense in music and poetry (Revolution 93-97). Barragán, then, valorizes these drives by symbolizing them in her

narrative and making them a part of the order of signs that act upon readers in everyday life. In the section on María's transition to the liminal mode I will talk about the maternal role further. By valorizing the mother as the voice of "truth," Barragán's discursive gesture is similar to those of Kristeva, Irigaray, Lacan, and others who have given importance (only superficially addressed by Freud) to the mother's significance in identity formation

The marginal nature of the various aspects of the narrative provide the context in which this early feminist version of the unresolved (and therefore transgressive) Oedipal model plays itself out. After outlining aspects of Hija's liminality, I will then discuss Turner's theories of the liminal and liminoid as ways of thinking of these marginal spaces as those where early feminist experimentation could flourish.

Fictional Liminality

La hija del bandido is a tale set on the threshold of hegemonic society—it is close enough so that the reader is mindful of the dominant social structure's proximity and influence, yet the novel's historical, social, and geographical settings, as well as its protagonist, are slippery enough to fall into an imaginary space just outside of mainstream nineteenth-century Mexico's delineations between civilization/barbarism, law/order, and urban/rural. In particular, it breaks

the dichotomy of the association of *criollo* men with public participation and agency on the one hand, and the linking of women to private domestic space and passivity (an association I discuss throughout chapter one) on the other. While ruling-class power in historical Mexico grants agency to men almost exclusively and is concentrated in the urban centers, the novel focuses on rural and provincial spaces and marginal bandit society. The author chooses these marginal spaces to present the counter-hegemonic notion of feminine agency because they represent a weakening of the dominant social order.

As I mentioned, the story transpires between the colonial times and independence. The narrator cites the current Spanish governor, Don Miguel de la Grúa Talamanca, Marquis of Branciforte, who was the unpopular viceroy of New Spain from 1794 to 1798. This time span is about five years before the war of independence, when anti-royalist sentiment was circulating. As I will explain in regard to the author's historical period, the positioning of an unorthodox female character at a time when the undercurrents of rebellion were in place is a way of putting a chisel into a crack that is already present in order to open up a space for change.

The most significant transitional mode in the novel is María's emerging status between girlhood and womanhood. In Hispanic culture and studies on the *quinceañera*, it is generally acknowledged as a religious and a social event that

marks a young woman's transition to adulthood. It is "a performance of budding womanhood on at least two levels... religious and social," complete with "symbols of sexual awakening," such as the donning of adult formalwear and high-heeled shoes (Cantú 27-29). This coming-of-age celebration is thought to have stemmed from Aztec and Mayan rites of passage that were assimilated into Catholic religious and social culture in colonial Mexico. Early ecclesiastic documents support this hypothesis, as well as the absence of celebrations of its kind in Spain, although there is no conclusive evidence to its origins (Cantú 3-8).⁸ Important for the focus at hand is the fact that a girl's fifteenth birthday meant that she was a woman rather than a child and thus marriageable.⁹ The date of the fifteenth birthday roughly coincides with menarche and childbearing. It is a date repeatedly mentioned in Hija, it marks the pivotal point in the narrative that begins the main action of the story, and it is also the threshold between girlhood and the commencement of a woman's role as an Angel of the House within marriage.

Because the *quinceañera* is such a poignant moment in a woman's formation and is profoundly embedded in the fabric of Spanish-American (but not Spanish) society and its gender power hierarchies, I will draw on Victor Turner's theory of the liminal and liminoid to interpret this rite of passage as a key aspect of the story of Hija. Turner uses derivations of limen (meaning threshold in

Latin) to refer to the conditions and persons who “slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Ritual 94). The limen, then, can be thought of as marginal space where the laws and rules of a dominant culture are temporarily frozen or neutralized, allowing alternative modes of being to happen, as the liminal transitions from one social role to his or her next.

While in Turner’s earlier work liminality refers to a specific ritual stage in tribal cultures, his later development of the idea of the liminoid (liminal-like phenomena) in industrial or post-tribal societies amplifies the applicability of liminality significantly. In brief, liminal personae are participants in a rite of passage who are cut off from their hierarchical societies and who lose all social markers, such as class and rank. Normally, in this status-less condition, the members form a “generalized social bond” which Turner refers to as *communitas*; in the liminoid, however, the marginal state can be achieved by an individual, rather than within a social group, as is the case of María in Hija. Turner’s definition of the liminoid is worth noting because he describes how it relates to art and literature:

We have seen how tribesmen *play* with the factors of liminality, with masks and monsters, symbolic inversions, parodies of the profane reality,

and so forth. So also do the genres of industrial leisure:...the novel, poetry,...and so on, pulling the elements of culture apart, putting them together again if often random, grotesque, improbable, surprising, shocking, sometimes deliberately experimental combinations.

(“Variations” 43)

In liminality “the underling comes uppermost” (Ritual 102). That is, there is a carnivalesque reversal of authority in which the leader loses all power and the weak exert authority over him or her. In this sense, Turner identifies as liminal the court jester’s freedom to critique the king.

Several aspects of the liminal (in rituals) and liminoid (in post-tribal societies) can be applied as a way of thinking about how the author positions the protagonist María into a fictional space ripe for symbolic social change. Liminal personae are “necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Ritual 95). Like María, they are often “neophytes in initiation or puberty rites” (Ritual 95).¹⁰ Liminal entities, Turner explains, “are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Ritual 95). The quality of existing between positions applies to María, as she embarks on adventures upon

her fifteenth birthday that bear little resemblance to preparing her for marriage and children, yet she is no longer a child: she is, in fact “betwixt and between” social categories. Although she is pursued by suitors, the protagonist’s mind is on doing everything in her power to free her father’s kidnapping victims and making her world a better place—that is, she is interested in (prohibited) public agency.

The liminal is important in terms of social power structures (e.g. patriarchal oppression) because “[we] are presented, in such rites, with a ‘moment in and out of time,’ and *in and out of secular social structure*, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition (in symbol if not always in language) of a generalized social bond that *has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties*” (my emphasis; Ritual 96). This threshold space of social structure is a place outside of the usual social law and the hegemonic symbolic order, where individuals may experiment with the rules of conduct and acceptability: in liminality “new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols, are tried out, to be discarded or accepted” (Turner, “Variations” 40). It is indeed a space of “creative potentials,” “great flexibility,” and “radical novelty” (40).

So, the liminoid in Hija is this space between girlhood and womanhood, between civilization (Ciudad Guzmán) and barbarism (the bandits’ caves), and between viceroyalty and independence, where it is perfectly acceptable that the

protagonist does not abide by laws of seclusion and angelic obedience to father/husband—bearing little resemblance to the social and legal restrictions placed on women in nineteenth-century Mexico that I have documented in chapter one. To give one brief example of María’s unrealistic independence (living alone in Zapotlán and doing as she pleases), her suitor Rafael points out: “¿No vives aquí sola, no eres la dueña de tus acciones?” (Do you not live here alone, are you not the master of your actions? 60). Although I will give further examples of María’s agency in the sections that follow, I will now back-track to the beginning of the story to show how the transition to the liminal and the connection with the maternal chora plays themselves out in the novel—an authorial strategy that attempts to undermine the patriarchal emphasis of Barragán’s Porfirian Mexico.

María’s Entry into the Liminoid: Reconnection with the Mother

The change of state between the characters pre-liminoid (obedient, childish) state and the transition to the liminoid mode is discernible in the novel. Before her fifteenth birthday, María believes she and her father must hide in the cave because he is part of the independence forces, and therefore wanted by the Spanish government: “Hija mía, yo estoy aquí porque así conviene a la cooperación de esa grande obra con que los mexicanos soñamos tanto tiempo hace; la obra de la Independencia” (My daughter, I am here because this is what is

most convenient to the cooperation in this great feat about which we Mexicans have dreamt for so long: achieving independence; 32). As long as María believes this lie, she remains juvenile and without agency because she obeys her father and is subject to his law. In this pre-liminoid state, María is a mere child and the cave is a “santuario de recato” (a chaste sanctuary; 20). She speaks and responds to her father’s wishes obediently and with “alegría infantil” (infantile joy; Barragán 20). When her father tells her to enjoy her special day, she responds in a way that is almost exaggeratedly subservient, to a request that she do as she pleases: “Haré todo lo que me ordenes, y voy a divertirme leyendo este libro” (I will do everything you order me to do, and I will amuse myself by reading this book; 21). The book to which she refers is a prayer book and she has just finished making an altar to the Virgin Mary (her namesake).

However, upon her fifteenth birthday, through a revelation she discovers that this safe “home” to which she is confined is all based on lies and deceit. María is soon to be un-deceived in regard to her father’s artificially constructed home life—and this marks the moment she enters the quasi-magical liminoid, and the liberty from social bonds it implies. The pivotal moment of transformation in María’s life is when her servant and maternal replacement Juana gives the girl a letter from her deceased mother, Paula. The letter, which is among the most poetically written passages in the novel, makes reference to a girl’s fifteenth

birthday three times, a common number used in rituals: “Mi juventud se encontraba en la fuerza de su vida... [como el espíritu] de los 15 años...” /“Quince soles han brillado sobre tu tierna frente... ” /“Cuando hayas leído este manuscrito, tendrás quince años; ésta is mi voluntad” (My youth found itself in the strength of its life...[like the spirit] of the fifteenth birthday / Fifteen suns have shone upon your tender brow / When you have read this manuscript you will be fifteen years old; this is my will; 28). The magical three-time repetition, which recalls the chanting of a spell, marks the daughter’s passage into the liminal.

In a gesture that presents the mother as savior, truth, and liberator, Paula’s voice emerges from the grave and comes to María to release her from her metaphorical prison, which also symbolizes the womb: the bandits’ cave—María’s domestic sphere, repeatedly referred to as a “tomb”:

[El] alma [de María] entera estaba suspendida entre dos tumbas. La tumba silenciosa, desde cuyo fondo se levantaba la voz de su madre suplicante y llorosa; y la tumba agitada y llena de peligros, en que su padre aguardaría su vuelta; la tumba en que vivían, pues no podría darles otro nombre a aquella extraña morada, sepultada entre las rocas.

[María's] entire soul was suspended between two tombs. The silent tomb from whose depths rose the voice of her crying and imploring mother; and the rough one full of danger, in which her father would await her return—the tomb in which they lived, as she could not give them another name to that strange dwelling, interred among the rocks. (35)

María feels the maternal impulses of the chora through the letter, her mother's kiss and emotions: "Sentía [los] besos [de su madre], le parecía escuchar sus palabras ahogadas por el llanto; y luego de aquellos besos y aquellas palabras, no quedaba ante sus ojos más que la soledad espantosa de una tumba" (She felt her [mother's] kisses and she thought she heard her words drowned out by the sobs; and after those kisses and those words, nothing was left before her eyes except the frightening loneliness of a tomb; 33). These maternal impulses, which seem to radiate through the rocks, set off María's agency and propel her out of the "womb" into the public sphere to vindicate her mother by reuniting with her grandfather and deserting Colombo.

María does not hesitate to deceive the father who has lied to her and confined her for fifteen years. Her fifteenth birthday marks a paternal rebellion (not unlike the Freud's Oedipal reading of coming of age) and a primary intimate connection to the mother, similar to the tie between the mother and child that

Kristeva describes in her definition of the chora. The difference here is that the desire for the mother (although not portrayed as a sexual desire in the narrative) is not just a road that leads back to an ultimate identification with the father, but rather a permanent mode for the young protagonist. The following passage takes place just after María reads the letter; it marks the transformation from obedience to the father to loyalty to the mother, and early feminist agency:

¡Pobre María!

Enjugó sus ojos; arregló sus cabellos, y procuró serenar su semblante, otros días tan festivo. Después fue a mirarse a un espejo; ensayó una sonrisa, y aguardó con cierta coquetería a que entrase su padre a saludarla. Como se ve, la niña comenzaba a ser mujer, y se ataviaba para desempeñar la primera escena. Pronto sería cómica. Había tomado una resolución, ya sabremos cuál era. Para llevarla a cabo, necesitaba fingir, engañar a su padre con una alegría aparente; con una tranquilidad que estaba muy lejos de sentir. (...) Más claro aún, si ella engaña, si ella finge, es porque aquél nunca le habló verdad.

María engañada por su padre,...se preparaba también a engañarle.

Poor María!

She dried her eyes, arranged her hair, and tried to soothe her countenance, which on other days held such a festive expression. Afterward she went to look at herself in a mirror; she practiced a smile and waited with a certain coquetry for her father to enter and greet her. As we can see, the girl was becoming a woman and she was dressing herself to play the first scene. Soon it would be comic. She had made a resolution and now we will find out what it was. In order to see it through, she needed to feign and deceive her father with artificial happiness, with a serenity that she was very far from feeling. (...) And clearly, if she deceived, if she feigned, it was because that man never spoke the truth to her. María, deceived by her father,... prepared herself to deceive him in return. (33)

In this passage there is an ironic twist in the boudoir scene of the quinceañera; normally the young damsel would don, before her vanity, womanly and seductive attire for the first time in a performance of subservient femininity in preparation for marriage. Here, however, María is beautifying herself to more easily trick or “seduce” her father into allowing her to go to Zapotlán—to venture out on her own in the world, and later, to shun her hegemonically prescribed betrothal. Thus the narration is unambiguous in regard to María’s conscious decision to resist

paternal authority and forge her own path in life. The Freudian rebellion against the father for the love of the mother is the impetus for the story from here on.

María's liminality, however, manifests itself in the fact that she neither takes full part in the society of Zapotlán, nor does she completely lose her connection to the bandits in the caves. For example, when the villain of the story, a bandit named Andrés Patiño, reveals the bandits' hideout in exchange for a valid passport, María shows solidarity with her former "family" by exclaiming "¡Desgraciado... !" (The wretch!; 199). She also insists on wearing mourning for her father, putting herself in jeopardy by implicating herself with the bandits (199). She is between girlhood and motherhood, in between the purely marginal bandit culture of the caves and the mainstream cultures of Guadalajara and Zapotlán, just as she is, to some extent, loyal to the mother yet still bound to her father in a sentimental, if not an obedient, way. Within this fictional transitional mode where social structure is softened and claims to power are more easily laid, Barragán takes full advantage of liminal spaces to allow her fictional protagonist to fulfill her desires as an individual, rather than within the marriageable ideal.

Feminine Agency for an Era of Progress: Public Engagement and Travel

In terms of her transition from girlhood through the onset of her *quinceañera*, the pre-liminal in the narrative is associated with the seclusion

within the cave-home, while the liminoid is characterized by ambulatory freedom to roam. Before María's *quinceañera*, her father recognizes that "la pobre niña vive siempre guardada, si no por espesas rejas de hierro; sí, por rocas impenetrables, donde sólo el águila anida, y donde habrán de estrellarse siempre, todas las pesquisas de la policía" (the poor girl lives constantly enclosed, if not by thick steel bars, by impenetrable rock where only the eagles nest, and where all of the police investigations might some day be launched; 7). Descriptions of the cave, a metaphor for the home and domestic life, are filled with language denoting darkness, graves, death, crime, and seclusion (11-13). This space is associated with María as the obedient daughter; her "burial" deep in the bowels of the cave is analogous to the domestic seclusion of the home.

While in the liminoid mode (post-*quinceañera*) feminine agency challenges patriarchal power, engaging María in active, extra-domestic activity that lays claim to public power. In an ironic twist of roles, María's father Colombo's movement is restricted to the domestic cave--he can only go to Zapotlán in disguise and at great risk of being caught by the authorities (103).

María navigates power in the city surprisingly well for a girl who has never ventured out from a subterranean bandits' lair. She uses her charms to win over the loyalty of the Count of Tunerada (a man of power and her "protector" in Zapotlán), to then arrange with him to help her free her father's kidnapping

victims. Her energy and decisiveness cause him to exclaim: "jamás se había imaginado que aquella joven, arrullada por las brisas de la montaña, fuese capaz de tanta energía como la que acababa de revelarle sus últimas palabras" (never had he imagined that that young girl, lulled to sleep by the mountain breeze, was capable of as much energy as her words had just revealed; 113).

After directing the Count as to what to tell her father in order to free the prisoners (113), she shows that she is aware of how power works and how to put it to her own use: "Mi padre es algo supersticioso tratándose de mí, y creo que accederá; de lo contrario apelaremos a la franqueza, y... quizá al ruego para conseguirlo; pero de todos modos lo haré; apoyada en el prestigio de Ud." (My father is somewhat superstitious when it comes to me and I believe he will give in; if not, we will call upon frankness, and... perhaps begging to achieve our goal; but no matter what, I will do it, supported by your prestige; 114). We see this same determination repeated throughout the plot: when she gets her father to establish her in Zapotlán, when she throws an opium-laced dinner party for the bandits to carry out her plan (which later leads to their demise) and when she frees the prisoners in the caves--including her own suitor. This is, perhaps, one of the most noteworthy single acts in the story: the damsel navigating the subterranean hideout to release her distraught, imprisoned suitor, the young and handsome law student Rafael.

In addition to being street-smart and unabashedly moving in political circles to reach her goals (like Cabello's Blanca Sol, as we shall see), another important element of María's agency is her penchant for travel. Travel, except in the case of relocating with one's husband or family, was not acceptable for a Mexican woman who considered herself honorable (i.e., chaste and marriageable). Not even in the rare cases of women working as physicians in Mexico City did women venture out to attend an emergency call for a patient; "a respectable woman could not go out alone or at all hours" (Macías 12). Foreign women's travel accounts of real women in Mexican society are in line with this image of Mexican women as sheltered and immobile. In 1884, Helen Sanborn (a U.S. citizen living in Mexico) writes: "It is contrary to custom and all rules of etiquette for a lady to go on the street alone, even in the daytime.... it is improper for ladies, even in groups of two or three, to be out after dark unattended by a servant.... An American girl does not half appreciate her freedom and independence until she goes to one of these countries" (in Agosín 210). Thus the narrative inscribes a vehement desire for freedom to travel (expressed by the narrator, as I will soon show) that was strictly forbidden in actual society.

There is some reflection of historical Mexico's disapproval of women's travel: María's nanny Juana tries to stop her charge's solo travel unsuccessfully. The young heroine shrugs off Juana's fears, issuing her the following mandate

before embarking on her quest: “you will remain here until I order your departure or come back for you” (95). María’s words are emblematic of her decisiveness in acting on her will and driving the action throughout the plot. The novel’s dynamic heroine moves freely among the private and public spheres, receives male visitors at her home unchaperoned, and, without anyone getting in her way, travels independently on “dangerous” roads (Barragán 95). Thus, Barragán’s heroine differs from those of nation-building texts such as those described by Mary Louise Pratt, in which women are models of republican motherhood: “[Women] are imagined as dependent rather than sovereign; they are practically forbidden to be limited and finite, being obsessively defined by their reproductive capacity” (30). This is clearly not the case in Hija.

To give an idea of the narrator’s conception of travel, freedom, and its link to imagining and writing fiction, I will cite a passage where she defends her right to make a temporal leap in the plot by comparing her pen to a magic wand:

Cuando yo era niña, solían referirme algunos cuentos de encantadoras, en los que varitas mágicas encendían en mí deseos irrealizables...

Hoy, gracias a Dios, he llegado a alcanzar una varita de aquellas, por la que puedo a mi antojo, cruzar en un segundo los mares, visitar el Viejo Continente y el Nuevo y el Austral: en una palabra, entrar y salir a donde

quiero, sin pedir licencia: andar tan de prisa que dejo atrás a los que iban delante; y oigo y observo, sin que nadie me observe a su vez.

When I was a little girl, they used to tell me tales of enchantresses, from which the idea of the magic wand ignited in me impossible desires....

Today, thanks to God, I have come to obtain one of those wands, by which I can, at my whim, cross the seas in a second to visit the old world, the new, and the south pole: in a word, to come and go wherever I want, without asking permission: to walk so fast I leave behind those who were ahead of me; and I hear and I observe, without anyone observing me in turn. (197)

The idea of freedom is closely linked to the imaginary journey and writing. Here the narrator (who, by her own references to herself as the author, is conflated with the female writer) expresses autonomy in terms of physical movement of one's body through space, and the uncensored liberty to observe. Both of these themes are reflected in the novel; the fictional María travels and the narrator comments, giving voice to what the heroine sees.

Here, again, the narrator's lack of (and desire for) agency and freedom are overt:

¡No hoy momentos... en que se piense más; en que la imaginación remonte, con más ahinco, su vuelo por los espacios intelectuales y morales... que cuando se camina a caballo... nos damos cuenta de todas las bellezas agrestes de la soledad... (...)

Pero dejémonos de viajes; pocos o ninguno de mis lectores leerán mi libro viajando; y yo, al escribirlo, no emprendo más viaje que el de la imaginación que inventa, el corazón que siente, y la mano que escribe.

There are no moments... when one thinks more; when the imagination elevates its flight through the intellectual and moral realms with more zeal... only by riding on horseback...do we become aware of the rustic beauty in solitude... (...)

But let us leave the theme of voyages; few or none of my readers will read my book while traveling; and I, upon writing it, do not set forth on any journey, other than that of the imagination that invents, the heart that feels, and the hand that writes. (79)

The narrator's tone of yearning is apparent in this passage and it is one of the moments of slippage, in which (similar to the novel riding the edge of fantasy and history in terms of its roots in local legend), non-fictional desires momentarily

creep into social commentary by pointing to the almost nonexistent opportunities for women to explore public space without repercussions.

Barragán's expression of early feminism in terms of freedom, the claiming of public space, and gender politics is a literary gesture not unlike those of later feminist theorists. For twentieth-century feminist thinkers, women's space and writing are intimately linked. On a concrete level, Virginia Woolf is perhaps the first feminist to write at length in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) of the important material link between writing and the need for women writers to lay claim to their own private space—signaling the fact that even in the domestic sphere, women did not have control over their environment. Joan B. Landes raises questions about the public/private dichotomy by analyzing how elite women in pre-revolutionary France became powerful agents within their domestic spheres by converting the private sphere (the home) into an important and powerful public sphere—the literary salons.

Later, other theorists associate feminine space and writing in more abstract ways. Cixous, for example, believes that women's transgressive writing is the way to break free from the masculine creation of "harem" space ("Medusa" 251), thus creating an abstract space of their own, but also a concrete one, because they could move within their physical space with a feeling of ownership. Irigaray theorizes all space, even the domestic, as masculine and thus women never truly

own it. For Irigaray, the mother is the “space by and in which man can find a position and locate himself.” In this view, woman cannot occupy a space of her own because she *is* space, and later exchanges her possibility for space for his: his home (Irigaray in Grosz; Sexual 174).

For Claudine Herrmann, *space* refers to both the physical areas around us (the home as well as nations and territories) and mental space; each is vulnerable to masculine domination (in Grosz; Sexual 168). Herrmann draws a parallel between men’s control over physical spaces and their domination of a language that is awkward and foreign (literally as well as figuratively) in the mouth of a woman (169). If for Herrmann the way that men oppress women is by aggressively taking possession of mental and physical space, it seems that the gesture in women’s writing of re-valorizing women’s space is one way to repossess it for themselves by being agents within it. However, the other theories of a more abstract concept of space that I have outlined above should be taken into consideration for this type of analysis as well, so that women writers not only repossess imagined “physical” space in writing, but abstract and mental space as well. These views offer interesting alternatives to viewing women’s space in terms of the dichotomies private space/women and public space/ men.

By writing the theme of travel into her novel as I have described it here, Barragán is pointing to the independence and self-realization that one scholar has

found in women's travel writing of the nineteenth century: "Traveling embodies a journey of the imagination and the possibility of creating a world of experiences, allowing women to tell of their own adventures instead of being mere receptacles for their male counterparts' stories. Traveling also allows women to witness life first-hand, to become accountable for their own histories, their own destinies" (Agosín 13). Thus in Barragán's novel, both she and María are authors of public action and together through writing they travel physical, fictional, as well as public (published) territory.

The Other Side of Agency: Equalizing Standards

By focusing on María's agency, I do not mean to imply that she escapes a superficial classification as an *ángel* on numerous occasions in the narrative. Despite the many heroic acts that María performs (her travel, dexterity at handling both known and unknown dangers, etc.) she is still described, at times, with images that conjure up the angelic ideal--although her actions contradict such characterizations, and at times, on the contrary, she is referred to as a "fallen angel" for her ties to the lugubrious bandits' cave (170). At times as well, the narrator makes generalizations about women and motherhood that seem to advocate the Angel of the House, for example: "la que cría y nutre con el alimento de su cariño y la abnegación de su ternura es madre" (she who raises and feeds

[her young] with the nutrients of her affection and her tender abnegation is a mother; 63). Nonetheless, we see the main female protagonist engaging in none of these maternal activities. It is true that she saves the kidnapping victims (which denotes a self-abnegating altruism); however, this is a feat that the (male) authorities would have performed, and one that wins the hero praise and recognition, unlike the day-to-day nurturing required of a wife and mother that goes largely unnoticed in a public way.

The narrative, however, seems to impose angelic standards on Rafael (María's suitor) and his confidant Adolfo, as well. While storming the bandits' cave to look for one of the kidnapping victims (whom they do not find), they witness, but ignore, a scene of a woman being taken away on a horse, causing the narrator to comment on their "egoísmo" (selfishness) and lack of "abnegación," "compasión," and "buenos sentimientos" (abnegation, compassion, and good sentiments; 83). In another section, the narrator exclaims "¡Oh! Si el hombre tuviera dominio sobre sus pasiones, ese clavo de la virtud" (Oh! If men could only dominate their passions, this sentiment that impales virtue; 209). The message is that it is just as important for men to be self-abnegating and virtuous as it is for women.

Barragán also includes an equalizing gesture in terms of morality and gender when she comments upon the wife of one of her father's kidnapping

victims. The pair has been separated for a significant period of time (unspecified, but long enough for his wife to suffer in poverty from the absence of his earnings). Rather than present a romanticized view of the reunion between husband and wife, the narrator points out the unjust blame that the wife is likely to face, due to the fact that their daughter has also disappeared:

Doña Mercedes fue preparada por sus amigos, para recibir no sé si la alegría o el pesar por la vuelta de su esposo, pues en sus tristes circunstancias todo podía caber. Además, en el matrimonio la mujer lleva la peor parte en todo lo que a él atañe; ni mis lindas lectoras dejarán de afirmarlo. Sucede un acontecimiento fatal en la familia, y el hombre culpa a la mujer, aunque ella no tenga culpa.

Doña Mercedes was prepared by her friends to receive (I do not know which) either joy or sorrow in regard to her husband's return, as in her sad circumstances anything was possible. Moreover, in matrimony the woman bears the heaviest burden in everything related to it; neither will my lovely women readers fail to affirm it. Some fatal event occurs in the family, and the man blames the woman, even if she is not culpable. (196)

So, just as Barragán equalizes agency in the plot of her novel, she also points to the discrepancy in moral standards set for women versus those set for men. The critique of marriage that the narrator levels above sets the stage for María's refusal to marry, and sets up her continuance in the liminal mode.

At the end of the novel, María successfully rescues Colombo's victims, he dies in a shoot-out with the police, and she is left in the charge of her grandfather, who longs to see her wed and thus protected. He urges: "un buen esposo a tu lado sería la paz de mi muerte," causing María to reply with "Pero... balbuceó la joven" (a good husband at your side would grant me a peaceful death; But... uttered the young woman; 220). María's hesitancy belies a fear of entering an institution that would deny her the personal autonomy to which she had been accustomed. She resolves this problem by entering the convent, which I will now discuss as continuation of the liminoid.

Conclusion: the Perpetuation of Liminality

Whereas Turner has found that rites of passage often end in a "return to society as a structure of statuses," María's liminality is never quite resolved as the convent is another marginal space where society's rules do not apply (Ritual 104). Normally in a coming-of-age ritual such as the *quinceañera*, the return to status is marked by a resumption or commencement of sexual relations (marriage); María

shuns the marital vow her grandfather wishes to see her take in order to enter the Carmelite order. Turner dedicates a chapter to the liminal quality of the Franciscan monks because of their extreme vow of poverty and constant state of marginalization from secular/worldly things and activities (Ritual 140-62). The Carmelite order was considered “closely analogous to the... Franciscans” because early in the establishment of the order the nuns took vows of poverty and silence and were originally hermits (“Carmelite”), thus it is comparable in its liminoid qualities.

By specifying the María’s entry into the Carmelite order, the protagonist reminds the reader of the history of respected women poets. In this way, Barragán has her fictional agent María follow in the steps of two illustrious Hispanic women of the baroque period, the Spanish reformer of the Carmelite order and poet Santa Teresa de Avila (real name Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada, 1515-1582) and, in particular, the colonial Mexican baroque poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (real name Juana Inés de Asbaje; 1648?-1695), whose early feminist messages have been the topic of many studies.

There are several moments in the narrative where Barragán seems to restate Sor Juana’s famous *redondilla*, which begins with “Hombres necios...” (“Foolish men...”) the poetic voice accuses men of placing blame on women for lapses that the men themselves provoke, from the patriarchal ideal of chastity:

Hombres necios que acusáis / a la mujer sin razón, / sin ver que sois la ocasion / de lo mismo que culpáis (Foolish men who accuse / women unjustly / not seeing that you are the reason / behind the sins for which you blame them; Cruz 109). María hurls the same accusation at Rafael, just before vowing to become a Carmelite: “¡Así sois los hombres todos... juzgáis, aborrecéis y despreciáis, sin examinar primero la causa...” (Such are all men... you judge, you despise and disdain, without first examining the cause... ; 201). In another passage, in speaking of how men fail to see that women trick them out of necessity, the narrator restates the same message: “Para alcanzar a conocer [a las mujeres], deberían los hombres hacer un estudio minucioso de sí mismos. Porque la mujer ha sido, y será siempre lo que el hombre quiere que sea” (In order to know women, men should conduct a detailed study of themselves. Because women have always been and will always be what men want them to be; 33). There is a very close connection, then, between these messages and the famous poem by Sor Juana, that was likely known to many of Barragán’s readers. It is, therefore, more feasible to interpret María’s entry into the convent as a rebellious act, than a second domestic-like enclosure.

To conclude, the fifteenth birthday, anthropologically and psychoanalytically significant as a celebration of womanhood, would normally entail the expectation of marriage and a life limited to home, church, and family.

In Barragán's novel, however, it is the catalyst for a plot that focuses on the young woman's heroic agency. Barragán's narrative is significant as an early feminist work--not only because it features a dynamic female character, but because it employs in its narrative strategy dominant (masculine) culture's fissures, gaps, and marginal spaces to create an ambiance in which to subvert the basic tenets of the Angel of the House. Within this space, the author grants the female protagonist freedom to travel, perform the public authorities' job of solving crime, and reject the prospect of a marriage to a man who unjustly questions her morality.

Barragán's fantastic liminal agent María speaks to the frustrations of women in the Porfirian era (as outlined in the section on Feminism in Mexico, mid-1800s to early 1900s, in chapter one), when, surrounded by discourses of progress and scientific advances, they were sheltered, secluded within the home, kept uneducated, and had legal rights only minimally greater than those of minors (Ramos Escandón 147).

In the next chapter, I will discuss the historical background of the Peruvian Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera, to then analyze how she implicitly critiques the false dichotomy of virtue and vice embodied in the Angel of the House.

Notes to Chapter Two

¹ The information from this chapter comes from Zalduondo's useful research on Barragán's biography, in which she pieces together the scant sources available on the author's life.

² For detailed information on Barragán's education, her friendship with the respected educator Rafaela Suárez, and Barragán's son Salvador Toscano (1872-1947), who is considered a pioneer of film production in Mexico, see Zalduondo 70-76. For an overview of Barragán's literary production and summaries of several of her works, see Zalduondo 76-87.

³ I should point out that the literary movement *modernismo* differs from Anglo literary modernism. Both movements are reactions against Enlightenment and bourgeois ideals. However first generation Spanish-American *modernismo* has a closer tie to romanticism and a strong influence from Parnassianism and the French fin de siècle decadent writers and innovates these tendencies with American subjects.

⁴ See Zalduondo's section entitled "Rural Ties" (66) for more on the importance of local journals and novelists.

⁵ Taking as a point of departure the tribal rituals in regard to the totem (a sacred animal who denotes clan affiliation) and incest, Freud applies tribal rituals that enforce exogamy to behavior in his European subjects. He observes that young boys, for example, will play out sexual obsession with the mother or other female relative in play with the "totem" animal, and replace the fear that the father will castrate his son for his desire, with fear of (or a wish to kill) the same totem, as in the cases of "little John" and "little Arpad" (872-876). For Freud's explanation of the primal horde, see page 883 and for his discussion of the Darwinian notion of the primal horde and its relation to social law see 874-877.

⁶ The following is the passage in which Lacan makes reference to Freud as the basis for his idea of the Name-of-the-Father.

How, indeed, could Freud fail to recognize such an affinity, when the necessity of his reflexion led him to link the appearance of the signifier of the Father, as author of the Law, with death, even to the murder of the Father—thus showing that if this murder is the fruitful moment of debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law, the symbolic Father is, in so far as he signifies this Law, the dead Father. (199)

⁷ Paula writes of her life prior to her capture by Colombo in her letter to María: “No tenía madre ni hermanos; pero tenía a mi padre que me amaba por todos ellos” (I didn’t have a mother nor siblings, but I had my father, whose love for me made up for all of them; 23). In the case of Rafael, the narrator informs us that “Carecía de padres y hermanos” (He lacked parents and siblings; 62).

⁸ The *quinceañera* is still widely celebrated today in many Spanish-American countries (most notably in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean) and by Latinos in the United States.

⁹ In Mexico in the 1930s a girl could get married at the age of fourteen (Cantú 5). In recent times the *quinceañera* does not mean a young woman is marriageable, but, according to one scholar’s surveys of girls and their families, it often means that she is given more privileges, is allowed to date, and is allowed to wear heels and make-up (Cantú 28).

¹⁰ The main criteria is that the liminar is in fact in transition. Turner, drawing on Arnold Van Gennep’s 1960 study, recognizes the rite-of-passage transition stages as separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation:

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a “state”), or from both. During the intervening “liminal” period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) are ambiguous; he passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation), the passage is consummated. The ritual subject...is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-à-vis others of a clearly defined “structural” type; he is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions. (Ritual 94-95)

SECTION II: PERU

Chapter Three

Women in Peru: National and Private Struggles for Independence, 1817-1888

The discussion at hand will provide a historical, sociological, and cultural outline of bourgeois women's roles and level of agency outside the home in nineteenth-century Lima, as well as their seldom-documented efforts to change their oppressed position in society.¹ The goal of this introductory historical chapter is to shed light on the political climate and what was at stake for early feminists like Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera writing in the 1880s.² This overview will focus particularly on the expectations of bourgeois Lima of the nineteenth century for whom Cabello de Carbonera was writing and how she manipulates these expectations (especially in regard to the Angel-of-the-House ideal and women's education) by addressing them in her novel Blanca Sol. In the following chapter, I will focus on the specific literary mechanisms in the novel that comprise the author's strategy for change.

This chapter will also evaluate the aesthetic and theoretical resources on which Cabello de Carbonera draws to form her narrative strategy, how she implements them, why she chooses them, and what their effect might have been on the ruling class. Knowing this background is imperative to appreciating the author's aesthetic choices, which I will highlight in the next chapter.

The case of women in Peru is especially revealing. If one were to look at a graph charting women's agency in politics and participation in the symbolic order through the nineteenth century, it would consist of a peak in activity in the first two decades during independence, followed by a sharp decline in the new Republic (I will use this term to refer to the post-independence period) at mid-century, and then a gradual rise through the 1870s and 1880s. Women in Peru (and across Latin America) experienced increased mobility and a degree of freedom from gender-based roles as keepers of the home during the period of pre-revolution unrest and the independence era (1780-1824).³ Later, they were forced to return to the restrictive space of the hearth after independence in the early Republic (1825-1870), and slowly began to take responsibility for their own liberation later in the century by seeking education reform for women and publishing their own work.

Cabello de Carbonera wrote Blanca Sol in 1888, at a time when women were discovering their voices and staking a claim for greater participation in the

symbolic order by challenging national policy on women's education. A more subversive goal for women intellectuals in the era (because it was more threatening in the eyes of the ruling class) was to change the restrictive stereotype of the angelic housewife and the ignorance and enclosure it entailed for women. We see both these tendencies in Blanca Sol: women's education reform is an overtly stated goal, while her narrative works in more circuitous ways to counteract the increasing moral pressure for women to adhere to the Angel-of-the-House standard. History set the stage for Cabello's intervention.

Women's Agency in the Independence Era

The chaos and social disruption brought by Peru's War of Independence with Spain (1817-1825) allowed women a chance to break free from their oppressed social roles and experience a degree of agency unknown to them under colonial rule. It is during this time that women's participation in the history of Spanish America became somewhat accepted and even necessary. As one historian puts it, the struggle for independence finally gave women the chance to leave their roles as "decorative elements" in the household and enter the symbolic order as agents in society and politics (Jaramillo 21).

In the case of Peru, the women whose participation is most often mentioned are the indigenous *campesinas*, called *rabonas*, who, as camp

followers, were the most visible women agents in the war effort. The *rabonas* traveled with their husbands and lovers from battle to battle gathering food, cooking, rationing water, managing supplies, and participating in direct combat when necessary. These women were so important to the soldiers that when there was talk of excluding them from the camps, the soldiers protested because they feared they would suffer if the women's tasks were left to the military. As virtual parts of the army, *rabonas* were not spared the consequences when the pro-independence forces were defeated in battle; they were the victims of rape, murder, and imprisonment. Historical accounts praise them for their heartiness and bravery.⁴

It is perhaps because of the *rabonas*' dramatic role on the battlefield that historians favor their inclusion in recent publications, while the roles of women of the bourgeoisie seem to be largely overlooked. While I was able to find one source dedicated to women's activities in Lima throughout history, García y García's 1924 study, most history books on women in Latin America cover a very broad geographical area and concentrate on the most spectacular and well-known stories, as opposed to pursuing local ones.⁵ The lack of information in recent historical accounts on bourgeois women's participation in Lima may be because documentation is not readily available or because these women have been forgotten, like many women poets and writers of the period.

Nonetheless, the untraced women of Cabello de Carbonera's social class were a vital part of the independence movement in Lima, as elsewhere through Spanish America. The motivation to fight the Spaniards was rooted in local elites' desire for power; thus it was within these rising-class households that much of the conspiring took place and women were actively included (Jaramillo 22). Although Jaramillo provides few examples from Lima, he claims that women were intimately involved in activities of the pro-independence leaders as hostesses for their meetings and that they also had a role in decision-making (22). He mentions that some women in Buenos Aires took part in the distribution purchase of arms; they often sold their jewels and other items of value to contribute to the constant costs associated with the war effort.

The only woman from Lima that Jaramillo includes is Rosita Campuzano, a woman of wealthy and powerful lineage who contributed financially and politically; she is included most likely due to the racy tidbit of rumors of her romantic involvement with Argentine freedom fighter General José de San Martín (28). While her romantic involvement may have made her seem unique to this particular historian, her participation in the revolution was not uncommon. In Lima, closer to Cabello de Carbonera's context, women performed in the name of independence jobs that they would not have dreamed of under the strict social

restrictions of the colonial period: they acted as spies, messengers, financial contributors, hostesses for pro-independence affairs, and writers of propaganda.

As I have mentioned, García y García's 1924 history offers the most comprehensive listing of the activities of *criolla* women (women born in Peru of pure Spanish lineage) in Lima during independence. The study, written in a romantic style in which all women are repeatedly praised for their "unparalleled bravery" and "supreme dedication," is nonetheless particularly valuable for its extensive listing of the names of individuals and the specific tasks they performed during independence.⁶ García y García's main sources are the official records of the Peruvian Ladies' Society (*Sociedad Peruana de Damas*), an organization created by San Martín in 1821 to honor women's wartime assistance. This study gives short descriptions of about fifty of these women and identifies one hundred and thirty six.

The *Sociedad Peruana de Damas* archives reveal that women from Cabello de Carbonera's social class in fact left the domestic sphere and their responsibilities to children and hearth to take part in worldly activities normally reserved for men and strictly taboo for women: war and politics. They were also responsible for significant financial backing. In this way they were able to use their agency to work toward personal beliefs, rather than spending all of their time caring for children and family. For example, two sisters named Juana and

Candelaria García donated all of their wealth to help the pro-independence forces, carried messages from pro-independence prisoners to their troops, and informed troops of Spanish whereabouts. Both were caught by royalist forces, bravely withstood torture without revealing any information to the Spaniards, and were finally released when the Spaniards departed Lima. Other women who were honored for their participation were Josefa Carrillo, the Marquise of Castellón, Rosa Merino, a famous vocalist who delivered the first public performance of the national anthem at the post-independence victory gala, and Angélica Zevallos, who provided the army with weapons. Petronila Ferreyros is mentioned for serving as messenger and also for writing the pro-independence propaganda that was distributed throughout the country. Although partaking in war-related activities was less comfortable at times than tending the home, these women were engaging in the world of power on a level that they did not previously have an opportunity to experience.

This era of increased and diversified agency necessarily altered women's day-to-day activities. Social roles were more fluid than they had been under colonial rule. For example, Ferreyros, a woman from the elite class, served in the hospitals "en el mismo rol que las sirvientas" ("in the same role as a servant" García y García 211). Previously sheltered women were leading more varied lives with more mobility. They left their own class circles and were allowed to

transgress social norms, thereby gaining a broader understanding of the world outside the family and hearth. This adventure in new, more active (even if less comfortable) roles was sure to have changed women psychologically, making them cognizant of their ability to engage in society and politics; they were aware that their intervention contributed to a grand cause. It is likely that they discovered facets of themselves they never knew existed and were, finally, able to develop a sense of self.

This newfound individuality had its consequences for the Angelic standard, by which women were expected to forgo their own desires for those of male heads of the household. For example, in Colombia a woman named Genoveva Ricaurte went against the wishes of her husband, a royalist Spaniard, by aiding her fellow freedom fighters who had been taken prisoner (Jaramillo 28). Similarly, the well-known Manuela Sáenz of Ecuador, daughter of a wealthy and powerful Spaniard, abandoned her husband and privileged position to become freedom fighter Simón Bolívar's lover for seven years, traveling with him and advising him as he led battles across Spanish America. This is perhaps the first time in *criolla* women's history in Latin America that they were publicly acting upon their own desires and beliefs, against those of their parents and spouses.

From a conservative masculinist pro-independence perspective, women's participation in independence was a double-edged sword: it was necessary for

success and also represented a threat to the ruling class's power hold. If women were taking on responsibilities outside the home and were needed beyond the domestic sphere, they were gaining power in these new realms that, under normal circumstances, were exclusively occupied by men.

This fear of women venturing into the political and the consequential threat to hegemonic power seem to be implied in the self-conscious wording of García y García's biography on Brígida Silva de Ochoa, honored for her services in 1822. She is a bourgeois woman noted for helping her two freedom-fighter brothers, Remigio Silva, a colonel in the armed forces, and Mateo Silva, a lawyer. Reflecting what must have been the opinion of the era, García y García first carefully praises Silva's role as wife and mother of *seven children* (211). Only after this emphasis on "la augusta misión de madre de familia" does the historian introduce her role in the independence process. García y García then takes a gendered perspective in her praise of Silva: "doña Brígida Silva se reveló siempre como la mujer toda corazón, que no se convierte en ningún marimacho, ser híbrido, que carece de las delicadezas propias de la mujer" (doña Brígida Silva always behaved as a woman full of heart, who never turned into a butch, a hybrid being who lacks the delicacy common to women; 212). Emphasizing Silva's motherhood and femininity, while defensively reviling the notion of any "contamination" of this femininity, reveals the historian's desire to counter

women's agency with elements of the Angel of the House, symbolically angling women back into that role. Although written in 1924, this account reveals the element of discomfort a traditional ruling class likely felt in regard to the level of freedom for women in wartime Peru. It also demonstrates the slow pace at which expectations for women have changed. In the following chapter I will show how Cabello de Carbonera addresses the need for a broader definition of the feminine and more options for women.

After independence, the fate of many women of the privileged class who had lent their services to the war was poverty: they had donated much or all of their property and the new republic did not offer compensation for their contributions. Some were taken prisoner by the Spaniards and even tortured or killed; many were widowed. Their overall condition would worsen; the stability of colonial rule would give way to chaos and economic decline. For those who survived, the level and scope of their agency was an expected return to the domestic sphere.

Tightening the Moral Noose in the Republican Era: the Angel of the House

After the South American revolutionary Simón Bolívar's permanent departure in August of 1826, Peru experienced two decades of grave

political instability. Between 1826 and 1845 the new nation suffered the inconsistencies in policy and rule of thirty different chief executives in less than twenty years, the majority of them *caudillos* (military strongmen). Debate and strife over the independence of Bolivia added to the general turmoil, under which social reform and rebuilding after the battles of independence were impossible. The once prosperous colonial city of Lima was in a state of disrepair and the previously thriving mining economy was stagnant.

During this post-independence period, women's agency was noted and countered. It is possible that keeping women at home in their traditional role was one way for the ruling class to add an element of control over the political and social turbulence. Lima's growing population and the increase of urban masses and rural workers also motivated policies to restrict women's activities (Hunefeldt 149). While bourgeois *limeñas* did not experience the mobility that comes with entering the market economy in the capacity of vendors or artisans, as Hunefeldt points out, they did enjoy increased freedom and participation during the independence period. The experience of leaving the domestic sphere, coupled with the efforts of liberal politicians to implement education for girls (a topic discussed at length below) were sure to have provoked counterreactions aimed at keeping women from gaining power in the symbolic order. Unofficial regulation

of women's activities came in the form of greater emphasis on the Angel-of-the-House standard.

As I discussed in the introduction to this study (in the section entitled "A Central Image: the Angel of the House"), two tenets of the angelic ideal of womanhood were self-abnegation and seclusion to ensure virginity. We have seen that special institutions, such as *beaterios* and *recogimientos* (reform homes for women temporarily separated from their husbands during ecclesiastical conjugal trials or reform for prostitution, run by nuns), were created in order to attempt to ensure women's adherence to the angelic norms.

Although records show there were ample opportunities for women to slip out of such refuges or receive visitors (Hunefeldt), the practical function of these institutions was to control the whereabouts and movement of women who were not currently under the protection of a husband or father. José Ignacio de Lequanda, member of the Sociedad de Amantes del País (an organization from the pre-independence era) voices his approval of this policy of enclosure for women that was brought back in the early republican era: "Nadie duda que la reclusión de las mujeres contribuye a conservar las buenas costumbres" ("Nobody doubts that the women's seclusion helps to maintain good behavior" in Rosas Lauro 143). Thus, the Church, together with the bourgeois society in power, exerted efforts to restrain women's liberty, and therefore limited the scope of

women's experience and kept them in the self-effacing role of the Angel of the House. In these ways, women were kept from exerting power in the symbolic order.

Pressure for women to suppress complaints about their domestic situations coincided with the above-mentioned ecclesiastic and social policies. Christine Hunefeldt's study of 1,070 conjugal suits in the archbishopric of Lima between 1800-1910 shows this increased emphasis on silent suffering and morality for women mid century. During these years, women could not argue in court as directly as they had done in the years following independence:

between 1840 and 1860, fewer women resorted to lawsuits; and women filing suit had to find the 'right' mix of arguments—for example, demonstrating poverty and suffering coupled with her own virtuous behavior—or present dramatic evidence of extreme abuse. Short-term personal suffering no longer constituted a sufficient reason to win a judge's compassion... (325).

This observation shows that it behooved women to articulate their arguments within a discourse of the Angel of the House standard if they wanted positive results from the judicial system. A woman had to prove that her virtue

had hitherto prevented her from speaking out, and that she finally did so out of concern for her family.⁷ Speaking of women from the lower classes, Hunefeldt notes that, with the threat of women's participation in the urban economy, "decency and correct moral behavior became mechanisms to separate women from men and women from each other to maintain class boundaries and political exclusion" (57). Not surprisingly, the ruling class's utilization of morality as a tool of control also affected women from the privileged class.

Evidence for a drastic decline in women's agency for women of the bourgeoisie can also be found by consulting historical records on women in the first decades of the Republic. Although García y García manages to write about sixteen women who were significant during this time period, the short biographies read more like the socialite pages of a gossip magazine than a study noting the feats of women worthy of inclusion in the annals of history. Most of the women are mentioned because they are the wives of presidents or generals, and have found their way into the pages of the study for being supportive, loyal spouses--a sharp contrast to the spies, writers of propaganda, and weapons-dealers of the independence period! Most are praised for their excellent manners, beauty, and conversational skills. Some are noted for writing verses--that were never published, so far as we know.

The two exceptions are Flora Tristán, whom I will discuss shortly, and the extraordinary Francisca Zubiaga de Gamarra (“La Mariscal”), who commanded her own troop under her husband, General Agustín Gamarra. It is clear from this general decline in women’s agency during the post-revolutionary period that women were once again confined to the domestic sphere and restrictive roles they endured under colonial rule.

Beyond Sinués’s manual and Van Duesen’s findings, we have first-hand accounts of the type of oppression that the Angel-of-the-House standard entailed in the home. Tristán, who traveled to Peru in 1833 to 1834 in a frustrated attempt to claim what she believed was her inheritance, wrote a detailed account of bourgeois Lima society in the early Republic. Although Tristán was born and raised in France and her mother was French, her father was a Peruvian from a wealthy family in Lima. After the death of Tristán’s father, her relatives in Lima offered her a stipend but refused to grant her any inheritance since Tristán lacked legal proof of her parents’ marriage. This disappointment probably instigated her subsequent anti-bourgeois, pre-Marxist activism; she dedicated her life to fighting injustices against men and women of the working classes, with whom she most likely identified.

In her travel narrative, Les pérégrinations d’une paria (1834), Tristán describes women’s condition in the early Republic. Although Tristán states that

women in Lima are freer than in any other place in the world because the traditional dress of *manta y saya* allows them to leave home and move outside the domestic sphere without being recognized, her later accounts do not uphold this view (329-30). Her psychological portraits of specific women in her family paint a bleak picture of the hardships women were forced to endure within marriage and in convents.

One example is that of Tristán's cousin Carmen, who must choose between the two options for women at that time: to enter a convent or marry. Carmen opts for the latter and is the victim of an abusive husband who marries for the dowry, parades mistresses in front of her blatantly, abandons her, and only returns when he has wasted her fortune on gambling and debauchery (Tristán 131). When Carmen dares complain about her spouse to friends and family they silence her by saying that she should be happy to have a good-looking husband, since she herself is ugly. Carmen's voicing of her unhappiness and desire to work against the system, rather than within it, go against two main principles of the Angel of the House: silent suffering and self-abnegation. The female self does not exist in this economy, except as a tool for the wellbeing of others. Tristán laments the apparent lack of recourse for an unhappy marriage, and women's entrapment in marital "hell" (132, 143).

The author's narrative offers a view of how women were oppressed: they had very few options, were perceived to hold a superior position only in regard to morality or beauty, but were left ignorant despite a promising natural intelligence (Tristán 335, 141). Pérégrinations nonetheless offers insight into the meager or non-existent education for women Cabello de Carbonera overtly criticizes in Blanca Sol, and confirms Hunefeldt's observation that "In the absence of efficient mechanisms of social control, morality was *the* weapon to maintain order. This control was acted out in the realms of family and marriage" (76).

Although I have highlighted the negative repercussions of the angel standard, it is important to note that virtue could also be a way of enabling social mobility. A woman who was raised "properly" and was sheltered or constantly chaperoned (and who, hence, would have been assumed by society to be a virgin) could be offered in marriage to a better-off man.⁸ In fact, this is the case of the secondary character Josefina in Cabello de Carbonera's novel, whose hard work and self-sacrifice in raising her siblings and supporting her grandmother wins her a husband from a higher social class. Significantly, Cabello de Carbonera chooses to situate this benefit of female virtue within the secondary plot, which diminishes its importance, and focus rather on the main character as a means of condemning stereotypes and limited options for women. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that meeting unrealistic standards of virtue promised financial and

romantic benefits, which explains why the angel standard was often appropriated and perpetuated by women themselves.

However, as outlined above, we know that the angel standard was not universally accepted and practiced by women; in some cases they found their way around these limiting standards. They used the ecclesiastical courts of the Archbishopric of Lima that presided over conjugal disputes to contest domestic oppression—and were sometimes granted divorce or annulment of their marriages. Hunefeldt explains that divorce in nineteenth century Peru meant “a temporal separation of the spouses with ecclesiastical court approval and not the dissolution of the marriage” (13). Despite debate in the 1850s over whether marriage should be considered a sacrament (thus indissoluble) or a civil contract, the latter did not prevail until 1930 when dissolution by divorce was legalized (Hunefeldt 83-85). The documentation from these court cases in the Archbishopric of Lima shows that women were using their voices to protest standards set by the ruling classes and the church, often by making use of the very rhetoric that oppressed them.

Around mid-century in Peru, women began using the excuse of “sexual incompatibility” for ecclesiastic separation (Hunefeldt 140). This was considered a valid argument by the Church because it prevented procreation—the main goal of marriage in Catholicism. Procreation was also desirable from a patriotic

standpoint, to populate the new nation. Women could not, however, legally remarry and start families with other men; if the courts allowed separation because of sexual incompatibility, wives were allowed to return to their parents' homes and live apart from their husbands (Hunefeldt 141).

Arguments of sexual incompatibility took various forms, and usually entailed medical examinations of the genitals. In one case a woman argued that genital size made intercourse impossible, another complained that she did not receive pleasure from intercourse with her husband, *and claimed this as her right* (Hunefeldt 142, my emphasis). The sexual incompatibility argument was later expanded to include character incompatibility. It is of particular importance that these women were focusing on their own desires and happiness, even as they were insisting on the official standard. It is also noteworthy that they were voicing their concerns in quasi-medical terms by speaking of intercourse as a purely biological, reproductive function, thus taking a positivist approach, which I will discuss shortly. Such attempts at circumlocution around an unhappy marriage indicate that women were finding ways to challenge the system even before the greater early feminist movements of the 1870s that I will discuss below.

It was not until 1845, under President Ramón Castilla, that the government stabilized and began to perform its basic duties. This consistency in leadership,

coupled with the discovery of *guano* (natural fertilizer) for export, gave Peru the peace and funds it needed for desperately-needed reform.

Under liberal leadership women would benefit to some degree through qualified inclusion in public education reform. But eventually they would have to engage in a kind of struggle different from the battles of independence, one toward personal liberty, in which women would use language to defend their interests. This battle would necessarily have to entail an attack upon the angel standard through the elimination of virtue as the sole saving grace for their sex (an ambitious goal for that era), or at least an expansion of what it meant for a woman to be virtuous. In addition, women would have to privilege their own intelligence and skills outside the home. The protagonist of Cabello de Carbonera's Blanca Sol seeks to achieve both; she attempts to break stereotypes, and in so doing, open the possibility for broader definitions of virtue and womanhood, as well as advocate women's education and criticize the limited options for women outside the home.

The Struggle against the Angel Status Quo: Liberal Reform, Women's Education, and Literary Battles

The political situation during this first part of the nineteenth century was generally characterized by fluctuations between liberal and conservative

tendencies, with no formal political party appearing until the latter part of the nineteenth century with the Civilianist party (*civilistas*).⁹ It is nonetheless useful to characterize the poles.

The label *liberal*, in the context of the first half of the nineteenth century in Peru, roughly implied a faith in the innate goodness and ultimate perfectibility of man characteristic of the Enlightenment. Liberals believed in Peru's capacity for self-government and sought to protect the individual from the abuses of those in power. They favored nearly universal manhood suffrage and relatively unrestricted access to government office. While women were not directly incorporated in this democratic vision, there were advances in education for women under liberal governments, which I will discuss in more detail below.

Conservatives feared rule by the masses and subscribed to literacy and property qualifications for voting and election to public office. They were often frustrated royalists adapting to independence by favoring an aristocratic republic with a strong president (Perú had been, after all, one of the most loyal territories of the Spanish Crown and among the last to rebel.) Conservatives believed that society was composed of inferiors and superiors and that the latter group should ensure its control over the state.

Many of the politicians welcoming education for female citizens did so because of women's role as the guardians and caretakers of the future generations

of Peruvians—but wanted their education to be limited to subjects that would improve child rearing and home making skills. Another possibility is that these politicians favored women’s education as a means of distinguishing their (more enlightened) nation from that of Spain, where no efforts were being made toward public education for women. As Bridget Aldaraca has found, Spain was a major emissary of the angelic standard: [from the 1850s on] “the growing public of Spanish middle-class women were instructed in minute detail on how to be and act, what to do and think, and, especially, what they as superior beings might never aspire to” (63). Although some liberal politicians believed the new nation could benefit from educating its female population, women took it upon themselves to voice concern for a thorough reform in the 1870s.

What did the liberal and conservative tendencies mean for a woman intellectual and activist like Cabello de Carbonera? Her arguments would be fashioned to criticize the conservative faction while using scientific language of positivism to court the liberals who were flexible regarding women’s education. Positivism, discussed in more detail below, was a school of political and philosophical thought that advocated an empirical and scientific approach to social problems. The adoption of positivist principles allowed Cabello de Carbonera to position women’s struggle as essential to the nation’s desire for

progress. In her literary-theoretical essay “La novela moderna” (1892), she expresses her support of positivism and her disdain of conservatism:

en el orden moral, las ideas muertas pasan a servir de base a otras escuelas y a otros principios. [...] Los que se llaman **conservadores** no son más que insensatos que pretenden hacer vivir cadáveres.

in the category of morality, dead ideas pass on to serve as the basis for other schools and other principles. [...] Those who call themselves **conservatives** are nothing more than fools who attempt to revive cadavers. (63)

Despite the fact that Cabello de Carbonera does not explicitly mention it, it is logical to assume that among the “dead ideas” in the category of morality is the suffocating moral standard of the Angel of the House. She rhetorically equates restrictive moral policy with “dead ideas”--to be read as ideas from the colonial era under imperial Spain. She reduces those who uphold these policies to royalists, backward thinkers who would see the nation under Spain’s yoke once more. I will focus on Cabello de Carbonera’s textual strategy in regard to the oppressive moral standards for women in the next chapter, but for now I will continue with the characterization of the political climate of the mid-1800s.

Although liberals and conservatives clashed frequently over the years, the former enjoyed almost two decades of rule mid-century. It is during this time that Peru underwent reform in education for both sexes that fueled the rise of women writers and intellectuals in the 1870s.

In 1845, the year Cabello de Carbonera was born, Ramón Castilla's presidential inauguration marked the beginning of an age of liberal politics.¹⁰ From about 1845-1862, during Cabello de Carbonera's formative years, the young author witnessed Castilla's abolition of slavery as well as his elimination of the tribute tax indigenous groups had been forced to pay, earning him the title of "The Liberator." The constitution of 1856 called for direct popular election of chief executive and limited presidential power. The economic success in the 1840s to 1870s from the export of *guano* provided income to fund infrastructure, social programs, and public education. In her late adolescence, Cabello de Carbonera witnessed both the reforms--and the shortcomings of reform efforts--which surely shaped her own social and political views. This experience would manifest itself in her later essays on women's place in society and the importance of education for women.

After the initial declaration of Peru's independence in 1821, as noted, a special effort had been made to initiate the education of the so-called "bello sexo"; this was, in part, the vehicle politicians used to articulate Peru's national

identity as distinct from the mother country of Spain, where no effort was made to create public schools for women (Villavicencio 37). However, this education would differ greatly from the scientific and philosophical formation available to boys. Women's education was clearly geared to prepare them to be better housewives and mothers, with some very basic knowledge of geography, history, composition, and penmanship.

A curriculum from 1822 shows that girls' education was heavily geared toward piety and homemaking: religion, spelling, calligraphy, and arithmetic (Tauzin Castellanos 99). The curriculum for the Colegio del Espíritu Santo in Lima, a school for girls of wealthy families, added French grammar, history, geography, and mythology (Tauzin Castellanos 99). An 1826 curriculum from la Escuela Normal de Mujeres, established to prepare women to teach primary school for girls, is indicative of the very basic education that would continue to be made available to girls: spelling, grammar, arithmetic, catechism, and sewing (Tauzin Castellanos 98). It is noteworthy that the listing of arithmetic in the girls' curriculum provoked heated dialogue that was published in local newspapers; arithmetic was later removed in 1840 (Tauzin Castellanos 99). Religious and domestic instruction, as well as classes on social graces, would continue to be the bases for curricula for girls' schools. In 1826 under President Santa Cruz, fully state-subsidized (although not mandatory) primary education was made available

to girls, and in 1836 Santa Cruz issued a decree to create equal numbers of learning institutions for both sexes, always at the primary level (Villavicencio 38). It is clear that girls' preparation was grooming them as authorities in domestic chores, morality, and spirituality. In other words, these educational programs were never intended to change women's role in the symbolic order or broaden their horizons, but rather to make them better Angels of the House.

Governmental efforts for women's education waned from the 1830s-1850s as enrollment dropped and the quality of the girls' schools significantly diminished. Nonetheless, there was a Ruling for General Instruction in 1850 that fixed curricula for girls' education, and improved it somewhat from the earlier years. The ruling added classes such as drawing, French, English, geography, and basic history, but continued to concentrate heavily on domestic arts and religion (Tauzin Castellanos 101). In 1855 the primary school Los Sagrados Corazones was founded and later expanded into two schools when education for girls was made obligatory (Guardia 51).

It was not until the 1860s, when Cabello de Carbonera was fifteen to twenty-five years old, the campaign for women's education was revived by Mariano Amézaga, who published articles lobbying for this cause and condemning the tradition of keeping half of society ignorant (Villavicencio 42). In the 1870s, for the first time in Peru's history, a group of women engaged in the

struggle for the enlightenment of their sex. In 1874 a woman named María Trinidad Enríquez was allowed, with special permission, to enter the University of San Antonio Abad in Cuzco. She later founded a girls' school with a truly academic curriculum, which included mathematics, law, philosophy, and logic (Guardia 52). Later María Aragón de Rodo, Luisa Rausejour, and Magdalena Chávez were to follow her lead and start more schools of this type (Guardia 52). Cabello de Carbonera was also at the vanguard of this battle, and the repeated message in Blanca Sol of the necessity of education for women is proof of her passion for this cause.

Cabello de Carbonera's own education is exemplary of the inconsistency in public education for girls. Because there was no regularly functioning school in her hometown of Moquegua, Cabello de Carbonera received lessons from private tutors (Tauzin Castellanos 105). Cabello de Carbonera's education seems to reflect the failure of public schooling for women, as sources show that beyond some basic lessons in subjects considered appropriate for young ladies of the bourgeoisie, she was primarily self taught. Biographer Tamayo Vargas describes her education in history as coming from both formal lessons and tales told in the home:

Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera conservó en la memoria las lecciones de Historia del Perú. Sabía el cuento de sobremesa del abuelo gruñón. Las escaramuzas realizadas en el lugar... conservó temerosa la presencia de los primeros aventureros que pasaban a Tarapacá e Iquique tras el nuevo Dorado del salitre.

Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera retained Peruvian history lessons in her memory. She knew the after-dinner stories told by her grumpy grandfather, and the skirmishes that took place near her home... she fearfully remembered the presence of the first adventurers that found their way to Tarapacá and Iquique searching for the new Gold Rush in the form of saltpeter. (14)

We also know that Cabello de Carbonera preferred reading and studying music, two areas in which she was very skillful, to practicing more domestic hobbies, like sewing:

Ella no cose a las caídas de la tarde, ni pasa rozando con sus manos las teclas del clavicordio. Hace estudio intensivo de música, y su gozo es dominio absoluto de técnica, apreciación de un metódico superarse diario.

Y si la cultura del colegio no era usual en las mujeres, ella tiene cultura de mesa de noche y de rincón de la huerta.

She does not sew when afternoon falls, nor does she spend the time passing her fingers idly over the keys of the clavichord. She studies music intensively, and her joy is absolute mastery of technique, the cumulative value of improving her skills methodically, day by day. And while classroom culture was not common to women, she had [her own brand of] night-stand and garden-niche culture. (Tamayo Vargas 16)

The end of the citation alludes to Cabello de Carbonera's desire to study on her own, whenever and wherever she could. From available sources we may assume that most of her education came from her voracious appetite for books; she was very well read for a woman of her time.

Cabello de Carbonera's intellectual development and self-education was facilitated through her marriage to a prestigious doctor who did not hinder her intellectual development. The couple did not have any children. Cabello de Carbonera was widowed young and never remarried. Thus, she was a single, independent woman of means at a young age. It is significant that all of these factors seem to have had to be in place to allow Cabello de Carbonera to be as prolific as she was in her writing career. Nonetheless, she was likely aware that

this type of independence was not the case for the general female public and that if women were to enjoy a degree of independence and development of their own identities, limiting stereotypes for women and oppressive ideals of virtue had to change.

The political situation, however, did not facilitate such modification of women's roles. In the midst of the focus on education and building up the new nation's infrastructure, Peru's disputes over borders with the more stable and better-equipped Chile intensified, erupting in war. The disastrous and expensive War of the Pacific (1879-1884) drained much of the wealth that Peru had acquired from *guano* and mining. The country suffered a humiliating occupation in 1881 during which Chilean troops pillaged Lima as well as towns in the interior. Peru and its ally Bolivia lost the war against Chile and in the process Peru was forced to turn over the rich mining region of Tarapacá.

Regarding women's roles in the War of the Pacific, it seems that the ruling class of the Peruvian Republic had significantly less interest in involving "el bello sexo" in the struggle than the pro-independence forces did during the revolution. The *rabonas* followed soldiers into battle and performed the same duties as during the war of independence. However this was not the case for women of the bourgeoisie, who were involved in the distribution of charity and worked with the

Red Cross rather than as spies and conspirators as they had done during independence.

A comparison of the language that García y García employs in her introduction to the wars of independence versus that of the War of the Pacific is indicative of the less active role women played in the latter. For the independence era, the historian speaks of women's "courage," "loyalty," "accomplishment of their designs," and "irrepressible fire" in their desire to battle, and that patriotism had awakened in them in "a lively and violent way" (García y García 207). In contrast, the vocabulary in the introduction to the War of the Pacific shows the marks of the Angel of the House: phrases such as "limitless abnegation," "tenderness," and "proverbial charity" characterize this section (351). For example, the historian characterizes Magdalena Ugarteche de Prado, a woman who organized the distribution of charity, by focusing on "su conducta de esposa solícita y ejemplar y de madre amorosa y abnegada" ("her solicitous and exemplary wifely conduct and her loving and selfless [role as mother]). Clearly during this national crisis women were extending their services in capacities compatible with the angel ideal.

Tamayo Vargas does not mention whether the literary salons started in 1876 by the Argentinean writer and long-time Lima resident Juana Manuela Gorriti (1818-1892) continue during the war, but he does tell us that Cabello de

Carbonera was still publishing articles under the pseudonym Enriqueta Pradel in El Album (The Album) and El Recreo (The Recreation; 35). Cabello de Carbonera also managed to publish her novel Las consecuencias (The Consequences) in Lima in 1880 during the war. However, she will write the rest of her novels in the aftermath of this national disaster: Sacrificio y recompensa (Sacrifice and Recompense; 1887), Blanca Sol (1888), and El conspirador (The Conspirator; 1892). I will now focus on the cultural movements that influenced her literary production during these years.

The Intellectual Climate of the 1880s: Naturalism and Positivism

If romanticism and French ideas of the Enlightenment were Spain's legacy to the colonies, naturalism and positivism (also European in origin) are the first literary and philosophical movements adopted by the new republic.¹¹ These post-colonial schools of thought facilitate the new nation's articulations of a national art and politics distinct from any expression that prevailed in the colonial years. This is not to say that romanticism disappeared; its influence would remain strong throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Nor can it be said that the republics were truly engendering their own cultural movements, since naturalism and positivism originated in Europe. Latin America would not see its own literary movement come to fruition until the birth of *modernismo* in the

1880s and its increased popularity in 1888 with Azul... by Rubén Darío (Nicaragua 1867-1916). Nonetheless, Peru's incorporation of naturalism and positivism were its first steps to developing a national literature and philosophy.

The influence of naturalism in literature and positivism in politics would serve to partially replace the metaphysics of romanticism imported from Spain (i.e., its appeal to the emotions, faith in God, and belief in causes beyond human being's grasp) with empirical and scientific logic (Zea 33). Cultural thought positions the universe increasingly under man's thumb. The mixture of a lingering romantic style of expression with scientific structure and argumentation would create a hybrid genre that Cabello de Carbonera identifies in her essay "La novela moderna" (1892) as the social realist novel. This compound creation would be Spanish America's first step toward artistic independence, and Cabello de Carbonera's vehicle for early feminist literary strategy.

Naturalism entered Latin America at the end of the century through the novels that Emile Zola (France 1840-1902) published in the 1870s and his 1880 manifesto "The Experimental Novel." Zola's naturalism was a reaction against the subjective idealism of the romantics. While romantic writers express ideas through the emotions of their characters and create a vision of the universe as a place where the mysterious forces of nature act unpredictably upon man, naturalist novels create an experimental space in which to diagnose and examine

social problems. Observation and deductive logic take center stage in place of emotions, exoticism, or patriotism. The settings for the naturalist novel do not showcase the beauty of nature or the grandeur of civilization, but rather the breeding grounds for society's ills: the brothel, the congested coal mine, and the slums of drunkards and beggars.

In regard to the subject matter, Hispanic writers who incorporate naturalist techniques modify Zola's model; few come close to representing society's horrors in such raw, grim detail as the French originator (the Puerto Rican novelist, doctor, and politician Manuel Zeno Gandía, whose work I will discuss at length in chapters five and six, arguably follows Zola's model most faithfully of the Hispanic naturalists). In addition to Zeno Gandía, the Argentinean novelist Eugenio Cambaceres (1843-1889) follows Zola's naturalism closely, but even his writing mixes naturalism with romantic elements; the overly dramatic ending of his novel Sin rumbo (1885), in which the protagonist disembowels himself by carving a cross into his gut, is one example. In general, Hispanic authors who write in a naturalist style tend to prefer a softened presentation of society's ills that was perhaps more acceptable to their readerships. This is true of Cabello de Carbonera, who chooses to use Zola's method and structure, as I will discuss below, while avoiding the urban gutters in favor of the elegant ambiance of Lima's high society.

Spiritual belief is another way in which Hispanic writers differ from Zola's naturalism: while Zola's view does not admit belief in any metaphysical force that cannot be empirically proved, writers such as the Spanish novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán (1852-1921) maintain their Catholic faith. In the controversial essay "La cuestión palpitante" (1883), Pardo Bazán gives her own interpretation of Zola's naturalism. Cabello de Carbonera is critical of some superficial practices of Catholicism, such as the way women in Lima's high society used religious festivals to show off their latest fashions, and the author critiques this false posture by making an example of the main character of Blanca Sol. The author also opposes clerical policy in her belief that religion should be limited in education and favors positivism over Catholicism (Zalduondo 162). Nonetheless, she never goes so far as to deny monotheistic belief.

Although critics have called Cabello de Carbonera a naturalist writer, she herself prescribes neither naturalism nor romanticism, but rather a mixture of the two. In her essay "La novela moderna" (1892) Cabello de Carbonera criticizes each movement for being too extreme: romanticism for representing an overly idealized perfection of humankind and naturalism for focusing disproportionately on its base and animal aspects. She therefore proposes her own mixture of the two, which she calls *realismo americano*, to properly address social issues of Peru in her novels.

Nevertheless, Cabello de Carbonera clearly incorporates Zola's method in the narrative structure of Blanca Sol. For example, her writing is naturalist in the way it describes at length the protagonist's psychological background and society's influence on her in order to account for her frivolous behavior later in the novel. This systematic character development is based on Zola's view of the novel, which he in turn bases on the principles of scientific experimentation of the French physiologist Claude Bernard (1813-1878). According to Zola's model, the novelist is the observer of his/her environment, forms a hypothesis based on these observations, and treats the novel as a laboratory in which to act upon his or her observations. Cabello de Carbonera uses this naturalist approach in Blanca Sol when she traces the protagonist's frivolous and materialistic upbringing (the social norm in high society) as the cause of her fall. Cabello de Carbonera presents the reader with a quasi-scientific experiment, in which mid-century Lima's detrimental symbolic order is the experimental environment. Within this controlled environment, the author shows how a potentially upright person (supported by Blanca's positive characteristics) can be capable of reprehensible behavior because of a misguided education that teaches women to value money, glamour, and social position above virtue, love, and family life. While championing these characteristics seems to support the angelic norm (possibly in

place to avoid critique), the embedded message in the novel is one that complicates this unattainable ideal.

Taking this scientific approach to literature into consideration is important in examining Cabello de Carbonera's sociopolitical agenda, specifically because of the degree to which this method authorizes the novelist to pass informed judgment on the symbolic order. Zola's conceptualization of the novel grants the author a tremendous amount of power, placing him or her in the role of both "objective" observer and social activist. The goal of the experimental novel's author is to "possess knowledge of the man, scientific knowledge of him, in both his individual and social relations," rendering the novelists "examining magistrates of men and their passions" (Zola 9-10). No behavior is mysterious, but rather conduct is dictated by specific genetic or environmental conditions. The experimental novel has the purpose of aiding in the reversal of this determinism: hence the role of author as social scientist whose work is meant to influence political decisions. Cabello de Carbonera's use of aspects of naturalism reveals her quest for textual power in the intellectual milieu. She uses naturalist techniques as a means of authorizing herself to critique the debilitating roles society imposes upon women.

Positivism also plays an important role in Cabello de Carbonera's political thought and agenda. Whereas naturalism is a form of aesthetic expression as well

as a social consciousness-raising literary movement, positivism is a political and philosophical school of thought that Cabello de Carbonera draws on to express her views on women's role in the nation's progress. As I mention in chapter one, it is based on the ideas of the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857), among others who followed him, like the English philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1920). The origins of positivism in Peru can be traced to 1850. However, it did not become popular until the end of the century (Trazegnies Granda 16).

Cabello de Carbonera's contact with positivism was most likely through the noted Peruvian poet and essayist Manuel González Prada (1844-1918), whose literary circle Cabello de Carbonera joined in 1887 (Denegri in Zalduondo 154). The scientific approach to social reform would prove invaluable to the author in her agenda for helping society to restructure the way people thought about women, most apparent in the scientific language of her essays. We can see an example of Cabello de Carbonera's use of positivist language in her "Influencia de la mujer en la civilización" (1874):

La instrucción y la moralidad de las mujeres ha sido en todo tiempo el termómetro que ha marcado los progresos, y el grado de civilización y virilidad de las naciones... Educad a la mujer, ilustrad su inteligencia, y tendréis en ella un motor poderoso y universal, para el progreso y la

civilización del mundo; y una columna fuerte e inamovible en qué cimentar la moral y las virtudes de las generaciones venideras.

Women's education and morality has always been a thermometer to mark progress, the quality of civilization, and virility of nations... Educate Woman, bring her intelligence to light, and you will have in her a universal and powerful motor for progress and world civilization, and a strong and sturdy column onto which to build the morality and virtue of upcoming generations. (qtd. in Villavivencio 65)

Cabello de Carbonera's discursive strategy here is pointed: she uses the charged lexicon of the forefathers of Spanish American nation building (i.e., "civilization," "morality," "virtue," "strength," "power," and "virility")—and goes beyond them by updating this rhetoric with scientific language (i.e., "progress," "thermometer," "motor").¹² Just as Barreda's anti-feminist essay used positivism to prove women biologically incapable of analytical thought, Cabello employs it to advance women's opportunities. In addition, the essay contains several digressions on advances in the sciences which are aimed at linking women's education with progress and modernity. Cabello de Carbonera's incorporation of nation-building language plays on the ruling class's fears; she formulates her agenda to become the answer to one of the most important political concerns of her day: educating

women, the mothers of future leaders and citizens, will prevent society from falling into the “barbaric” lifestyle that her fictional character Blanca Sol is forced to endure.¹³

The choice of expression and literary techniques seemed to have been popular with readers, since Blanca Sol went through two editions. The novel made enough of an impression on its readers to earn it a comparison with one of the most popular French novels of its day; it was praised as the Madame Bovary of Lima (Torres-Pou 251). According to Torres-Pou, the work’s brief but certain success among its audience, the Peruvian elite, had to do with the supposition that the protagonist was loosely based on an actual figure in Lima’s society (251). It is also probable that the naturalist techniques aided in creating interest in readers, who likely found it fresh and innovative. Whatever the reasons for its success, the novel seems to have accomplished part of its author’s aim: she had the ruling class’s attention.

Cabello de Carbonera’s Intellectual Strategy

One can hypothesize that Cabello de Carbonera saw in certain techniques of naturalism and positivism new and highly desirable means of voicing her concerns for women’s condition. I have already mentioned the empowering nature of naturalism. Second, from the perspective of the Peruvian intellectual,

naturalism and positivism were established and relatively respected (if not undisputed) means of expression. Finally, there was clearly a preference by the ruling class during the post-colonial era to emulate and appropriate *lo europeo* (that which is European) as a means of “civilizing” the nation and helping it to prosper; the visual dominance of French-inspired architecture in many of the capital cities and efforts to attract European immigrants confirm this. By voicing her concerns in the language and symbols of the new Peruvian Republic, Cabello de Carbonera was helping her country to distinguish itself from the mother country of Spain. She was a forerunner in the development of the Peruvian novel and was using it as a vehicle for her early feminist beliefs. She was ambitiously taking the initiative and using her position as a pioneer novelist (among the first to experiment with naturalist techniques) to advance a social agenda that places women’s plight at dead center. That is to say, she was consciously placing the nation one step closer to its “own” literature it so desperately desired, but with the implication that it must consider women’s education, social options, and development as individuals as a central concern.

However, Cabello de Carbonera’s outspokenness did not go without harsh repercussions, despite the subversive strategies she used in her narrative. Cabello de Carbonera’s unconventional vision of girls’ education and the feminist ideas in her writing inspired negative criticism from many Peruvian intellectuals of her

day, including the poet José Santos Chocano (1867-1935), the author of short prose narratives (*tradiciones*) Ricardo Palma (1833-1919), and the well-known educator Elvira García y García (1862 - 1951), as Glave points out (102-103).¹⁴ Besides insults and harsh criticism published about her in the most important newspaper of Lima, El Comercio, the novelist was declared insane toward the end of her life and institutionalized in horrible conditions, as Glave's research has confirmed. Glaves also believes that Cabello de Carbonera was unjustly confined.

The following chapter will focus on how women's education and autonomy are treated in a close reading of Blanca Sol, to suggest how she crafts a new version of women's place and possible identities in Peruvian society with her naturalist tools. I will also highlight the tactics the author used in an attempt to avoid the negative repercussions that eventually came from the society and intellectuals she attacked in her writing.

Notes to Chapter Three

¹ For further investigation on the general history of Peru in English one may see Peru: A Short History by David P. Werlich, and in Spanish Nuevo Compendio de Historia del Perú by José Tamayo Herrera.

² As María Zalduondo has noted, characters from the Amerindian, African, and Asian populations of Peru are almost absent from the novel. For this reason I will concentrate on outlining the situation of women from the Peruvian bourgeoisie (mostly of European origin).

³ This forty-four year time period is generally given because 1780 marks the rebellion of José Gabriel Túpac and emancipation was officially declared in 1824 when General Antonio José de Sucre defeated Spanish troops in the battle of Ayacucho. It should be noted that the major battles of independence took place between 1820 and 1824; San Martín proclaimed Peruvian independence from Spain on July 28, 1821, however Royalist troops did not surrender 1825. Spain, however, continued its struggle to win back its colony and did not recognize Peru's independence until 1879.

⁴ A most well-known example is found in the pre-independence rebellion initiated by Túpac Amaru and his wife, Micaela Bastidas, in 1777. Bastidas participated in the rebellion in military, political, and administrative capacities. Her intelligence, dedication, and ruthlessness in battle inspired an anonymous author in Melchor Paz's chronicles to proclaim of Micaela that "dicha Cacica es de un genio más intrépido y sangriento que el marido" ("the woman Indian chief they spoke of is of a bloodier and more intrepid nature than that of her husband" [Melchor in Guardia 42])

⁵ Two such studies are Jaramillo Flores's El otro rostro de América and Vitale's La mitad invisible de la historia latinoamericana.

⁶ An interesting side note to this history of women is that its author, the well-known educator and director of el Liceo Fanning (a school in Lima) Elvira García y García (1862-1951), did not agree with Cabello de Carbonera's untraditional views on girls' education. Upon hearing the novelist's criticism of religion and the clergy and her suggestion that girls learn about their bodies, García y García responds that "en su colegio se respeta mucho la religión, que no se tomó examen de fisiología sino de zoología" ("in her school religion is well respected and physiological exams are not given, but rather those on zoology" in Glave 103). This may explain the more traditional, romanticized, and, by extension, Angel-of-the-House-style prose used to talk about historical women here.

⁷ An example of this type of court-case argument is that of the upper-class *limeña* Fermina Godoy (Hunefeldt 326).

⁸ I emphasize the idea of *social perception* of chastity here because if a woman did not have a protector or someone to chaperone her (thus giving the appearance of living a sheltered life), she might not have been considered chaste by society, regardless of her moral caliber. Likewise, a woman who was not a virgin but who was able to be very discreet might have been perceived as virtuous by society.

⁹ Definitions for *liberal* and *conservative* in the context of the early Republic come from Werlich (67-68).

¹⁰ The only known book-length biography published on Cabello de Carbonera is Augusto Tamayo Vargas's 1940 study Perú en trance de novela: ensayo crítico-biográfico sobre Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera. Luis Miguel Glave's biographical article is another useful source on the suffering author endured at the end of her life, her alleged insanity, and to highlight the harsh criticism she suffered for voicing her ideas on girls' education and women's role in society. All biographical information on Cabello de Carbonera in this section is from Tamayo Vargas's work unless otherwise indicated.

¹¹ For introductory reading in Spanish on romanticism, naturalism, and positivism in Spanish America, I recommend the following texts: Carilla, Emilio, El Romanticismo en la América Hispanica (Editorial Greda, 1967) by Emilio Carilla, Dos etapas del pensamiento en Hispanoamérica: del romanticismo al positivismo (also available in translation by trans. James H. Abbott and Lowell Dunham as The Latin-American Mind U of Oklahoma P, 1963) by Leopoldo Zea (El Colegio de México, 1949), Las tres catedrales del naturalismo (Claudio García, 1943) by Víctor Pérez Petit. And in English: From Romanticism to Modernismo in Latin America (Garland 1997) Ed. and intro. by David William Foster and Daniel Altamiranda, The Naturalistic Novel of the New World: a Comparative Study of Stephen Crane, Aluisio Azevedo, and Federico Gamboa (UP of America, 1993) by Joao Sedycias, and Positivism in Latin America (D.C. Heath 1971) by Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr.

¹² The nation-building lexicon to which I refer can be found throughout the writings of revolutionary leader Simón Bolívar (Venezuela 1783-1830) and the noted Argentine essayist and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888). The noted essay Ariel (1900) by José Enrique Rodó's (Uruguay 1872-1917) also transcribes the fear of moral weakness and vulnerability to neo-imperialism that was circulating among the ruling classes in the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹³ I use the term barbaric in reference to the book-length biographical essay Civilización i barbarie: la vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga (1845) by the Argentinean essayist and politician Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888). Like Sarmiento, Cabello de Carbonera juxtaposes civilization and barbarism, but for the latter it is to promote women's education.

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the denigration Cabello de Carbonera suffered see chapter four of Zalduondo's Novel Women.

Chapter Four

Complicating the Angelic Model: Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera's Blanca Sol (1888)

My goal in this chapter will be twofold. First, I intend to show how the title character of the novel Blanca Sol (1888) by the Peruvian Mercedes Cabello de Carbonera serves to expand the definition of the feminine beyond the Angel of the House by embodying a complex female identity in terms of morality, gender, and agency. Second, I will examine how this characterization implicitly criticizes restrictive boundaries set for women in patriarchal society, hence pointing to the need for a change in the symbolic order to accommodate non-traditional (i.e., non-Angel-of-the-House) female identities.

This complication of the angelic standard is important to the greater context of women's condition in nineteenth-century Peru because it shows how to remove the ideal model from its privileged position as master signifier for female identity. The author's effort to subversively demote the misogynistic Angel of the House role speaks to the restrictive historical policies of enclosure (which stifled

women's agency) and self-abnegation that I have outlined in the previous chapter, and it builds a bridge to a new era, a new version of womanhood.

I will argue that the contradictions in Blanca Sol's identity that problematize her placement within the accepted norms are a call for society to accept women who do not fit the domestic ideal, but can be of great value to a social order that appreciates and cultivates their intelligence. Blanca Sol complicates easy definitions of the feminine by being neither virtuous nor a villain; she is very materialistic and selfish, yet at times shows charity toward those less fortunate; she is capable of a façade of rhetorical femininity, yet reveals the marks of a traditionally masculine characterization through her ambition and expert execution of political maneuvers.

Significantly, Blanca Sol, in many ways the anti-angel, is defended by the narrator and other characters and vindicated by the end of the story. So that the reader does not miss her point, the text exonerates Blanca Sol by showing that her punishment is unjust; the narrator explains that it is not her own fault that she suffers, but that of a society motivated by wealth. Lima's limited and flawed symbolic order creates unhealthy desires for wealth within Blanca, and the character exerts all of her energy and agency to fill this insatiable appetite, to the detriment of herself and others. To make this point credible, the author takes advantage of the popularity of naturalist technique to specify how Blanca Sol's

environment and upbringing are responsible for spoiling her development into a viable identity in the symbolic order. She places a large part of the blame on the existing hierarchy and its symbolic order is implicitly requesting rectification of its restrictive position toward women. Blanca Sol's dominant agency in the text insures that this indefinable female subject who occupies the gray areas of gender stereotype is, indeed, the image that the reader retains and is left to ponder.

Pointing out the need for acceptance of women who are intelligent and who, think, act, and have goals outside the home goes a step beyond the author's proclaimed social goal in the novel of pointing out the need for reform in women's education. In the third section of this chapter, I will discuss in more detail the ways in which the novel is transgressive and hypothesize regarding the strategy the author uses to express her views and at the same time attempt to avoid negative criticism for doing so.

The main body of the chapter will be a textual analysis to illustrate my thesis about the relationship between Blanca Sol's complex identity and social criticism, by outlining and interpreting the title character's subjectivity in several ways. First I will examine the contradictions that make Blanca Sol unconventional in terms of physical and personality traits, morality, and gender. Where applicable, I will emphasize which of these elements are the detrimental learned traits impressed by society and which are positive inherent qualities,

thereby establishing a basis for the critique of the symbolic order. In addition, I will examine how Blanca (much like the more angelic María in Barragán's novel) is the main agent of the text and masters the symbolic order within the fictional space of the novel, thus making a case that Blanca's identity is the one fixed in the reader's mind. Throughout this analysis, highlighting the narrative voice will play an important role, since the narrator comments extensively on events and characters.

Finally, I will show how the problematization of female stereotyping is synthesized in an embedded Cinderella subplot concerning two secondary characters, Josefina and Alcides (Blanca's seamstress and Blanca's bourgeois love interest). I will show how the author manipulates a fairytale that is already part of the symbolic consciousness in order to undermine the unrealistic vision of angelic virtue, traditionally epitomized by the long-suffering, thus ideal, Cinderella. On a deeper psychological level, I will show how the textual implementation of the fairytale replaces the Oedipal structure of the original Cinderella story with a pre-Oedipal revindication of the step-mother figure, represented by Blanca. These manipulations are all strategies that serve to propose empowered, less restricted, and more active guidelines upon which women may structure their own identities.

Synopsis of the novel.

The novel opens with a discussion of the protagonist's childhood, to set the expectations against which the main character will have to struggle. Blanca Sol is the daughter of a society woman who is not very wealthy but is skilled at using credit and her good taste to present the appearance of opulence. Although naturally bright, Blanca attends a school where superficial qualities like wealth and beauty are valued and cultivated to a much greater extent than intelligence or diligence. Eventually, Blanca falls in love with an attractive and well-born young man whom she eventually does not marry because he lacks an adequate fortune. Instead, her mother and others of her social class convince Blanca to betroth herself to the unattractive but rich Don Serafín Rubio. By making this choice, Blanca hopes to fulfill her dreams of becoming a "gran señora" (great lady), with all the markers of status prescribed by the symbolic order. Don Serafín is of low birth but, through years of sweat and avarice on the part of his late father, has inherited a sizable fortune and has become part of the elite.

Blanca marries Don Serafín and becomes a high personage of society. She is admired and envied by women and pursued by men of elevated social positions, but does not succumb to their advances. She is content with her elite profile (recklessly wasting Don Serafín's fortune to maintain it), until she falls in love with Alcides Lescanti, a wealthy and handsome nouveau riche immigrant

who frequents her soirees. However, out of pride and a desire to maintain her honor, Blanca gives no more favor to Alcides than to her other suitors, whom she universally treats with flirtatious sarcasm and disdain.

It is not until Alcides falls in love with Blanca's impoverished aristocrat seamstress, Josefina, that Blanca realizes the depth of her feelings for Alcides. However, it is too late. Scorned one time too many by the capricious Blanca, and in complete admiration of Josefina's virtue and modesty, Alcides rejects the cruel coquette in favor of the simple and virtuous seamstress. Blanca is devastated by this rejection and, moreover, discovers that she has succeeded in consuming Don Serafín's entire fortune and is financially ruined. To make matters worse, Alcides purchases all of Blanca's debts, so that she is not only rejected by her beloved, but also financially indebted to him. Don Serafín discovers Blanca's amorous attempt to seek Alcides's help, loses his mind, and is committed to an asylum. Bitter and enraged at her fall into such an abyss of poverty, and left to support her six children alone, Blanca prostitutes herself to her former suitors as her last means of survival. She swears to corrupt in turn the society responsible for her misery.

The Author's Programs: Text and Subtext.¹

One overt authorial goal is to present the reader with a quasi-scientific experiment in the vein of naturalism, in which the symbolic order of a society that

deals in false signs is the laboratory. Statements from critics citing Cabello de Carbonera as the first woman naturalist in Spanish America seem to be too general, based on essays written by Cabello de Carbonera herself, who instead claims to take elements from romanticism, realism, and naturalism to form a new genre (Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 97). This claim would help her be read as neither new nor old-fashioned, a kind of negotiation between the stylistic norms of Spain and the emerging Peruvian literary voice.

However, there does seem to be a naturalist experimental ambience created in the novel to show how society's structure has molded the protagonist. Within this controlled environment, the author shows how a potentially upright person (supported by Blanca's moments of generosity and warm-heartedness) can be capable of reprehensible behavior as a result of misguided education that teaches women to value money, glamour, and social position above virtue, love, and family life. Yet the text engages in a conscious mirroring, presenting Josefina as Blanca's alter ego (she bears a striking resemblance to Blanca; 89), and as a version of Blanca's potential, had her virtue not been corrupted. Thus, the coexistence of good and evil within Blanca is part of the naturalist experiment; in the manifest text the conflicting dualities show both Blanca's potential for good and her evil behavior that highlights where society erred in her formation. The author's public goal, then, in stride with the ends of naturalism and positivism, is

to critique society for the learned detrimental behaviors that prevent the protagonist from becoming a productive member of society.²

The author's words in the prologue support this identifiable objective:

Siempre he creído que la novela social es de tanta o mayor importancia que la novela pasional.

Estudiar y manifestar las imperfecciones, los defectos y vicios que en sociedad son admitidos, sancionados... será sin duda mucho más benéfico que estudiar las pasiones y sus consecuencias.

I have always believed that the social novel is of as much or more importance than the passionate novel. To study and manifest the imperfections, the defects, and the vices that are admitted and sanctioned in society... will without doubt be of greater benefit than studying passions and their consequences. (i)

Thus, the practical social goal in her novels (not just the emotional context of the romantic novel) will be to expose society's evils in order to better it as a whole.

As I have mentioned, improving women's education will be one target (a topic that has already been under discussion for several years when she writes her novel, as I outlined in the previous chapter). However, the more subversive goal

of eliminating the angelic standard will not be stated so directly *because it was not considered a social ill at the time*; on the contrary, making women the perfect domestic servants and mothers was believed to be of great benefit to society. Therefore, reading what Cabello de Carbonera built into the novel as a subtext will be important to uncover this message that she could not state directly. This attempt is justified by the author's own program. Cabello de Carbonera defends the writing of characters more complex than those typically found in romanticism or naturalism in her 1892 prize-winning essay on the modern novel, "La novela moderna," in which she compares the two contemporary literary movements. It is noteworthy that the author uses her knowledge of literary movements of her day as a vehicle for subversive strategies: in the case of Blanca Sol, I will argue it is precisely this complexity that allows her to present a transgressive female character to her audiences.

An important key to accurately identifying and interpreting the subversive text is deciphering the literary strategy for evading social censure that Cabello de Carbonera was likely to employ in her writing. Denegri offers informed support for this hypothesis. In her study on the first generation of women writers in Peru, El abanico y la cigarrera (The Fan and the Cigar Girl, 1996), she identifies Cabello de Carbonera as a woman who viewed her role as an intellectual with caution, and wrote with "la poética de disimulo" (the poetics of dissimulation;

49). Her analysis of a poetry review written by Cabello de Carbonera, in which the author criticizes the flowery, feminine verses in a very covert way, demonstrates this tactic (49). Denegri convincingly demonstrates that Cabello de Carbonera felt contempt for typically feminine writing, and that she herself wanted to participate in the male-dominated discourse that would enlighten and influence the reader, which she in fact did through publication of novels and philosophical essays.

The poetics of dissimulation that Cabello de Carbonera employs to communicate her ideas suggests also that she could not speak as bluntly as she might have liked in her fiction. Thus a necessary objective for today's literary critic examining her work must be to highlight the latent critique of society in the novel that is no longer readily visible to a twentieth-century reader, but which rests on the novel's engagement with its society's symbolic order.

The author's intentional, yet covert, writing of a mentally apt and dynamic female character who eludes stereotypes is a subtextual element present in the novel. While not an overt theme, it is inserted into the plot several times throughout the story. Especially lucid is a section in which the narrator questions Blanca's motives for remaining faithful to Don Serafín, the unattractive husband whom she marries for his fortune. The narrator states that Blanca's fidelity is not the result of morals, but of vanity or lack of a suitable lover, and concludes that

she is “indefinable” (undefinable; 71).³ This explanation is a gesture of refusal to participate in a dichotomous view of the sexes that proffers a generic feminine subjectivity: “Preciso es confesarlo: el tipo de Blanca aunque real y verdadero, se escapa á toda definición” (It is necessary to confess it: Blanca’s type, although real and true, escapes all attempts at definition; 71). It is noteworthy that the message of Blanca’s rebellious complexity is couched in terms of a topic so traditional that it was already established at the advent of Hispanic literature in the middle ages: woman’s honor. Part of the dissimulation, then, is to expose the protagonist’s nonconformity with the Angel of the House within an essential fixture of the patriarchal order.⁴ This would be an example of the sort of veiled messages that Denegri points out in her study, and which I will be highlighting throughout my analysis.

The text also implies disapproval of gender stereotyping in a more general sense. For example, in one passage denouncing society’s judgment of men whose wives flirt (such as Don Serafín) as easily-fooled buffoons, the narrator is quick to point out that women *frequently* suffer from this type of blind prejudice: “La sociedad que con tanta frecuencia es injusta para juzgar á la mujer, lo es también en un sólo caso para juzgar al hombre...” (Society, which is so frequently unjust when judging women, is also unjust in only one case when judging men...; 99). The author extends critique of gender roles to include their detrimental effects on

men. The author, however, is quick to add that women who endure prejudice on a regular basis, even though this latter criticism is expressed in a passing and unelaborated way. Once again, the author employs an indirect method of stating a reproof of patriarchy in a subversive subtext.

It is evident that the author was aware of the concept and dangers of stereotyping, as she uses this exact term as a verb, *esteriotipar* (*to stereotype*; 128), in a negative sense in the novel. In the passage where the verb is employed it is, once more, used in defense of Don Serafín, whom Blanca seems to be stereotyping as apathetic.⁵ The term appears italicized to draw attention to it, probably because it was new at the end of the nineteenth century. The insertion of the term *esteriotipar* points to an awareness of the negative consequences of making quick and superficial judgments based on society's standards for individuals' intended identities. There is a reproach of society embedded in the use of the term; the author stimulates new awareness of the concept that leads the reader to recognize that stereotyping women *or* men is damaging. Drawing negative attention to stereotyping is a way the author encourages society to broaden its definition of the feminine, to rewrite its symbolic order in new ways.

Cabello de Carbonera struggled with the narrow boundaries of women's roles because of her desire to study as profoundly and broadly as men did. Her

unusual knowledge earned her praise as well as gender-biased scorn for being a writer and an intellectual:

la figura de la marisabidilla o “mujer que escribe” se convirtió en “diabólica” y también en sinónimo de “masculinización”. La asociación que siempre se ha hecho entre “mujer fea” y “escritora”, o “mujer masculina” y “escritora”, la encontramos presente en todo momento.

the figure of the [female] know-it-all or “woman who writes” turned into the “diabolical woman” and also into a synonym of “masculinization.” The association that has been made between an “ugly woman” and a “woman author,” or “masculine woman” and “woman writer,” was prevalent at that time. (Portugal 8)

The author’s biographer, Augusto Tamayo Vargas, gives further evidence of an ostracizing attitude toward her when he writes that there was something masculine in her temperament, although she was considered physically attractive by her peers:

presentaba en los momentos, que podríamos llamar de prueba, una actitud hostil, una altanera energía que respondía a cierta masculinidad de su temperamento, en contraste marcado con su afán de agradar y su apariencia femeninamente afable.

she presented at times, what we might call a hostile attitude, a lofty energy that responded to a certain masculinity in her temperament, in marked contrast with her desire to please and her femininely pleasant appearance. (16)

This is a case when the symbolic order comes into conflict with itself; “masculine” is positive for a writer, unless that writer is female. Although it is true that a woman could sometimes be praised by saying that she thought like a man, a woman who took a step beyond this and published her work, it seems, could be deemed a bit too manly for a society in which women’s primary role was domestic. Publishing, indeed, was a public act, and the public sphere was off-limits to women.

The description of the author as having a “lofty energy” necessarily brings to mind the descriptions in the novel of Blanca Sol, who is called energetic, haughty, and proud throughout the work. Here again the words do not quite fit together. Haughty and proud are indeed the inverses of the modest and self-

abnegating Angel of the House, but by calling her energetic, usually a positive virtue (in the eyes of a masculinist ruling class), the whole dichotomy is called into question. This denigration of intelligent women who seek success outside the home might explain Cabello de Carbonera's desire to break gender stereotypes that strictly reserved extra-domestic endeavors for men, and sought to silence women who dared to break this convention. In Cabello de Carbonera's novel, Blanca Sol's agency, personality, and highlighted unjust punishment reflect a critique of public opprobrium against women who dabble in male spheres, such as writing for publication or politics. The passage that identifies Blanca as a survivor for enduring the scathing treatment administered by society seems to support this hypothesis:

A no haber poseído esa fuerza poderosa que da la hermosura, el donaire y la inteligencia, fuerzas suficientes para luchar con la saña envidiosa y la maledicencia cobarde, que de continuo la herian; Blanca hubiera caído desquiciada como una estatua para pasar oscurecida y triste al número de las que, con mano severa, la sociedad aleja de su seno.

Without having possessed that powerful strength that beauty, elegance, and intelligence provide to battle envidious rage and the cowardly slander that continually hurt her, Blanca would have fallen like a statue, to pass

into the dark and sad number of those who, with a cruel hand, society banishes from its bosom. (8)

Knowing that Cabello de Carbonera was the object of name-calling for her position as a woman intellectual allows us to better understand the narrator's vocalization of this same oppression inflicted on Blanca Sol in the novel. I am not suggesting that the novel is autobiographical, but rather that the author was addressing a contemporary problem for women in Peru (as well as in other Spanish American countries).

The parallel between the passage from the novel and the author's own experience with society's persecution of "powerful strength" in women, supports a reading of the title character as one through which she was conveying criticism to bourgeois Lima--not only to condemn women's poor and frivolous education and point to a need for a more serious academic formation for women, but also to express discontent with the limited definition of the feminine to which women were expected to conform. That discontent, in turn, should rewrite the descriptions of women, adding to Peru's limited symbolic order.

Embedded Contradictions, Textual Strategies: Conflicting Dualities in the Character of Blanca Sol

In this section, I will show how Blanca Sol embodies a series of conflicting dualities in her physique, personality, and morality that make her original and allow her to dodge stereotypes and categorization. Here again, I do not mean to imply that Blanca Sol is presented as a role model, but rather that she points out the need for a broader definition of the feminine. Although she is a capricious and fickle character who has her moments of benevolence, many of her traits contradict the prescribed model of the Angel of the House: she is not maternal, she is self-serving, industrious, and has political and social goals outside of the domestic sphere—she should be a “bad” woman, to a reader accustomed to gendered categories. Yet in these last two aspects of her personality, she also resembles the active bourgeois woman who enjoyed a relative increase in agency during the independence era.

It is possible that Cabello de Carbonera is engaging readers with this type of female character in order to resuscitate this identification of women with increased agency. What is certain is that the complexity of Blanca’s character confounds the dual categories of good and evil, Eve (fallen women) /Mary (Angel of the House), that have served as dichotomous models for women in Hispanic culture (and in societies worldwide) for centuries.

Analysis shows that the characterization of the protagonist is based on a multi-layered and realist character development employed by the author as opposed to the flatter, less developed feminine ideal, Josefina who, to a great extent, is the personification of the Angel of the House. Because of her complexity, it is possible that Blanca makes more of an impression on the female reader, who may identify more with Blanca than with the unrealistic self-abnegation of Josefina, no matter what society might prescribe.

Blanca's physical description shows a mixture of contrasts that exteriorize her complexity. In nineteenth-century fiction and up until today, it is common to present fictional characters' bodies as a reflection of their internal mental and emotional composition.⁶ This practice was influenced by physiognomy, defined as the study of divining character through physical states (Rivers 3).⁷

In the nineteenth century, many authors drew on the then-familiar ideas of physiognomy and incorporated them into their fiction. Rivers and Shortland refer to this phenomenon of the body reflecting the soul in writing as the "legible body" (Rivers 4). Their study analyzes the use of physiognomy specifically in works of well-known nineteenth-century French authors who were very popular in Spanish America, such as Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) and Zola. There is no doubt that Cabello de Carbonera not only read, but was knowledgeable about the works of Balzac and Zola, as she analyzes and compares them in "La novela moderna."

Besides Cabello de Carbonera's familiarity with authors whose works were influenced by physiognomy, we know that she was familiar with it because she makes specific reference to a physiognomist in Blanca Sol (45). Therefore it is probable that she was aware of the connections to be made from the physical complexity of the title character and her interior configuration.

Blanca's appearance reveals a captivating blend of the sensual and the refined, as well as mixture of racial elements in her complexion:

Sus rubios cabellos, y sus negras cejas, formaban el más seductor contraste, que el tipo de la mujer americana puede presentar... era el rubio... ambarino, que revela el cruzamiento de dos razas de tipo perfecto. Esta particularidad del cabello rubio y la cutis trigueña, dábale sello de originalidad, aun entre las mujeres limeñas, donde con más frecuencia se ve este raro contraste. (...) Para un fisonomista, Blanca hubiera pasado por la mujer esencialmente voluptuosa.

Her blonde mane and black eyebrows formed the most seductive contrast, that only the type of the American woman can present... it was... an amber blonde, that reveals the crossing of two perfect races. This particularity of blonde hair and wheat-colored skin gave her a stamp of originality, even among the women of Lima, where this contrast is more

frequent. (...) For a physiognomist, Blanca would have appeared to be the essentially voluptuous woman. (45)

This physical description contains contrasts that extend Blanca's inner originality to the surface. Her coloring is pointed out as a particularly distinguishing trait, although the "two races" mentioned are not identified. The symbolism in her surname also suggests that the mixture is that of Spanish with Incan qualities, as I will soon discuss.

Another contrast in the description above is the juxtaposition of her physical voluptuousness with the coldness and aloofness of her character; on several occasions there is mention of "el corazón de la señora Rubio, poco sensible al amor" (the heart of Sra. Rubio, not very sensitive to love; 42). Although she is portrayed as "el tipo de la gran *cocotte* parisiense" (the type of the great Parisian female libertine; 45), at the same time "en su conducta había siempre cierta nobleza y gallardía, jamás desmentidas" (in her conduct there was always a certain nobility and gallantry, which were unfailingly present; 44). Her manners are neither delicate, nor are they rough or vulgar (45). The author strives to create gray areas in terms of mannerisms connoting morality. The characterization of Blanca sometimes resembles that of the temptress Eve and

(less frequently) that of virginal Mary (in the way that she guards her honor through much of the novel), but do not fully enter into either.

Regarding both inherent and symbolic qualities of the protagonist, a conflicting duality is presented to the reader in the very first words that he or she reads: the title Blanca Sol. Blanca's contradictions continue to be expressed in terms of her name, because of the striking parallels between it and the elements that characterize her.

In traditional symbolism, Blanca (white) connotes purity, innocence, and simplicity, and is thus probably a reflection of Blanca's chastity throughout much of the novel. (It is not until her tragic ending that she relinquishes her honor.) "White" also connotes the inherent nobility of her character that society's emphasis on wealth has tarnished. For example, in the passage above we saw mention of her positive attributes, the "fuerza poderosa que da la hermosura, el donaire y la inteligencia" (the powerful strength that comes from beauty, an elegant posture, and intelligence; 8). Blanca's inherent refinement and grace imply a potential superiority which is expressed in the text, but which is always degraded by the evil behaviors that society's superficiality has taught her.

The following is a case in point. Blanca's invention of excuses as to why she no longer wishes to share her husband's bedroom serves as the context for the narrator's words: "La superioridad de espíritu de Blanca, se imponía en todas las

situaciones difíciles; aunque no siempre estuviera de su parte la verdad” (Blanca’s superiority of spirit imposed itself on all difficult situations, even if truth was not always on her side; 86). In this citation, we have the juxtaposition of superiority of spirit on the one side, and dishonesty on the other. Although the former can be interpreted loosely as possessing heroic qualities, or extraordinary vitality, the latter seems to contradict this loftiness with petty fibbing to avoid a disagreeable situation. In the context of the novel it is because of society’s creation of an unnatural desire for wealth that Blanca is in the predicament of being married to a man she does not love, and therefore has to lie in order to avoid his bed.⁸ Such are the two conflicting sides of Blanca Sol, always with her inherently good qualities undermined by society’s teachings.

The meanings are not only personal, however--Blanca’s surname, Sol (sun), evokes a series of historical meanings in the context of nineteenth-century Peru; it is both the central deity of the Incas and the name of the Peruvian monetary unit at the time the novel was written (Fox-Lockert 153). The use of sol in the context of the novel signals the irony of society’s materialism. The narrative clearly shows and criticizes wealth and status (symbolized by sol as monetary unit) as the new objects of worship (that replace the Incan deity) in Peruvian society—a post-independence society that is supposed to be educating its populace for its present and future nationhood (as my historical overview in

chapter three has shown). Blanca's is a case study, then, that the author hopes will prove that the bourgeois desire (even deification) of frivolous wealth blocks success on a national level.

In fact, all of Blanca's negative qualities, like greed, vanity, and egotism, stem from the unhealthy desire for social standing that has been consistently taught to her from childhood: "ella aprendió prácticamente muchas otras cosas... aprendió, por ejemplo, á estimar el dinero sobre todos los bienes de la vida: 'hasta vale más que las virtudes y la buena conducta' decía ella (she learned many other things in practical contexts... she learned, for example, to esteem money above all things in life: 'It is even more valuable than virtue and good behavior,'" she used to say... ; 4). In case there is any doubt in the reader's mind that Blanca learned from examples around her, the narrator then specifies to the reader that Blanca's models were the nuns at her school, who treated the privileged girls well, and the poor ones with disdain (4). Hence the contrasting elements of nobility (which we may suppose to be "natural") and socially-learned materialism, in their various forms outlined above, combine to complete Blanca's subjectivity. In the end social learning triumphs and leads to Blanca's moral descent.

Yet, the combination of the protagonist's first and surname together generates a fourth meaning, one that is less negative. "Blanca Sol" (something white that is singular and feminine, and sun) implies a very bright, intense light

and heat that is the center of the universe. The protagonist elegantly lives up to this particular meaning of her name during her glory days, as she is the center of high society, a “gran señora” (great lady), and all important personages in the elite circle revolve around her like adoring satellites. Thus, the two sides of Blanca Sol’s name connote a natural nobility and purity as well as a hedonistic vulgarity in her cult of wealth that are as dazzling as they are destructive. It is in this union of dualities within Blanca that we find a female identity that is full of potential— which is not actualized in a positive way in the novel.

The overt message in the characterization of Blanca Sol is that society’s frivolous teachings corrupt women and prevent them from cultivating their individuality in a way that is serviceable to society. The subversive message is that women do not fit into molds; they are dynamic and complex beings whose individualities must be cultivated at least as much as those of men. That is not to say that social expectations permitted men to develop their senses of self naturally without molding them to some extent: homosexuality, for one thing, was not acceptable, nor was a maternal man who wanted to stay at home with the children. However, it is certain that they had many more options than women, and so this novel points to the limited possibilities for the “weaker sex” in nineteenth century Lima.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the early post-independence period was an especially difficult time for women in respect to having to live up to the angelic standard, as social policies of enclosure and self-abnegation for women were strengthened at this time. It is this restrictive stance toward women that the novel challenges, and in so doing, hopes to influence the ruling class to make it acceptable for women to develop their individuality to a greater extent, thus allowing them to enter the symbolic order as viable social identities.

Blanca as the Main Agent of the Text

As my comments about vitality above hinted, agency emerges as a particularly important element for the protagonist in Blanca Sol because the narrative ascribes actions to the title character as a subject who claims these actions as systematic parts of her identity, as conscious desires leading to identified social agency. This activity manifests itself in Blanca's textual voice as well as in her narrated action. The protagonist's pervasiveness is apparent to the reader of the novel; however, for the purpose of this study, I have counted the number of times each character talks to demonstrate to what extent this statement is true.⁹ Blanca Sol speaks 257 times in the text--almost two and one half times more than any other single character. Incidentally, she speaks more than *seven times* more than Josefina, the Angel-in-the-House character who is presented as

an idealized role model. This textual predominance invites a reading of the title character as the central image of the text that embeds itself in the reader's subconscious, and is complemented by her pervasive agency in the story line.

Examining agency as enacted by the protagonist allows us to discover the creation of an alternative female identity by looking at how she is positioned in an imaginary fictional world, outside of the traditional order, as well as the motivations and consequences of her actions. Despite the fact that Cabello de Carbonera is careful to preserve proprieties by following up Blanca's overtly transgressive acts with "punishments" for her and others, these destructive outcomes can be explained by revisiting the primary naturalist goal of the novel: to show how an insufficient education for women ultimately leads to further corruption of the system and the people in it. The skill that Blanca demonstrates in this process, albeit deleterious, is worth attention. The subtext of these actions points to a woman's potential for being an asset to the symbolic order, and what is wasted when this capacity is actualized to the disadvantage of society.

Blanca's engagement with the public sphere recalls women's participation in the struggle for independence. In both cases, society dictates women's roles and actions. In the independence era, they rose to the call of freedom to help the pro-independence forces and played elemental and necessary roles as spies, co-conspirators, and writers of propaganda. In the fictional world of the text (a

recreation of the prosperous *guano* years in Peru), Blanca is, overall, a negative weight on society. It is a call for the ruling class to share its power with women in a more egalitarian way—to benefit ruling class men as well as women.

The protagonist's acquisition of the post of minister for her husband, a dull man with no experience, is arguably the most profound public gesture the character enacts. Blanca wishes to rid herself of something that irritates her substantially: "la pequeñez de su esposo" (her husband's insignificance; 35). As Fox-Lockert points out, Blanca and Don Serafín's union is representative of two social classes of the time: Blanca is part of the fallen aristocracy and Don Serafín is emblematic of the new bourgeoisie.¹⁰ Since Blanca holds an aristocratic name and Don Serafín does not, she wishes to procure a title for both of them, so that her husband will not be a "*don nadie*" (*Mr. Nobody*; 35).

Blanca's desire for a title points to an insecurity inherent in the condition of being part of the newly wealthy class as defined at the time. (Serafín's father was a lowly soldier and made his fortune as a merchant.) The wish to solidify a social identity with a label is bred from pressure to have some official designation in order to claim a place as close to an established elite class as one may come without being born into it. Blanca Sol thus uses her agency to cause several figures of the existing political structure to fall in order to procure the post of minister for Serafín. In the following dialogue between Blanca and Serafín we

witness her resolve in this matter: “Blanca sin desistir un momento de su idea, prometi6se 6 s3 misma, que su esposo ser3a Ministro... con, 6 sin su gusto (Blanca, without abandoning her project for a moment, promised herself that her husband would be Minister... whether he liked it or not; 36). On a subversive level, this act presents Blanca Sol as a female agent who would have great public potential if her desires were well guided. She manages, instead, to put an unintelligent, unprepared, and uninterested man in a position of power.

The fictional imagining of a capable and potentially great woman using her agency to wreak havoc in local politics results in two messages. The first is that women’s mental and social aptitude and agency are not to be underestimated (indeed, one may argue that Blanca would make a far better public official than Seraf3n), and the second, that the way that women are educated is not only important on a domestic level, but will affect the fortitude of the social system.

Cabello de Carbonera uses a covert strategy to express her views through the words of a character in the novel who is a friend of Alcides, and surely a representative for the upper-class male citizenry of Lima. This anonymous character intimates to the reader that: “Las mujeres pueden mucho cuando quieren” (Women are able to accomplish a great deal when they so wish; 59). His words, in the context of the story, sound like they could be an admonition of doom or a promise of hope—the interpretation seems to depend on what steps

society takes to empower women with the education and opportunities to realize their potential.

Manipulations of Gendered Power Structures

In addition to rewriting norms for women through her plots, Cabello de Carbonera critiques gender stereotypes through characterization. Although this reversal of gender norms at times seems to cast the female protagonist in a malicious and predatory light, it must be looked at in the literary context of its day to understand its points of reference. The practice of avoiding and/or blurring the boundaries for norms of masculinity and femininity is important for deciphering early feminist messages because it is a tactic that has been recognized as a tool to prevent the hegemonic power from placing women within a category so as to label and control them (Butler 6).¹¹ The awareness of the danger inherent in subscribing to patriarchally-produced notions of femininity is a topic that Cabello de Carbonera seems to implicitly broach in her novel. In addressing this theme, she touches on a feminist subject of such importance that it is still under discussion in gender and women's studies today, more than a century later.

One gender-based commonplace that the author reverses is that of the traditional order of objectification common in French and Spanish romanticism and in Spanish American *modernismo*, in which men are desiring subjects and

women are consumable and disposable objects of beauty. Monleón refers to this male subject-female object power structure in Spanish romanticism in the following citation: “el nuevo movimiento... seguía identificando a la mujer como objeto del deseo creativo, como receptáculo de la contemplación, mientras el sujeto creador se construía alrededor de un yo masculino, poseedor del deseo” (the new movement... continued to identify woman as the object of creative desire, as the receptacle of contemplation, while the creative subject was constructed around a masculine “I,” possessor of said desire; Monleón 23-24).

Examples of this order of objectification are prominent in literature of the period in male-authored texts. Some examples of the later masculine writings of this trope can be found in the *modernista* poetry of Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera (Mexico, 1859-1895) in "Para un menú" (Poesías 1896) and in the poem "El Faisán" (Prosas profanas 1896) by Rubén Darío (Nicaragua 1867-1916). In both poems, the women are reified as liquor that is consumed by the male subject of the poem. The following is an example from “Para un menú”:

Las novias pasadas son copas vacías;
en ellas pusimos un poco de amor;
el néctar tomamos... huyeron los días...
¡Traed otras copas con nuevo licor!

My past loves are empty glasses;
in them we put a bit of love;
we sipped the nectar... the days fled...
Bring more glasses with a new liquor! (274)

And in Darío's "El Faisán":

La careta negra se quitó la niña,
y tras el prelude de una alegre riña
apuró mi boca vino de su viña.
The girl removed her black mask,
and after the prelude of a joyous struggle
my mouth devoured wine from her vine. (45)

As the examples clearly show, women are converted into consumable items in this version of the trope: a glass of liquor and wine, which represent woman as the object of masculine sexual desire.

Significantly, there is already a tradition of resistance to these assumptions. Delmira Agustini (Uruguay, 1886-1914) contested these representations of women as objects in her poem, "Tu boca" (published 1927), in

which she takes the perspective of the woman who witnesses herself being devoured by the desiring male subject. In Agustini's version, she reinstates the woman as a speaking subject who protests her own consumption before the menacing abyss of the man's mouth, which probably represents the male authors who wrote women into their art as objects of pleasure and inspiration, rather than as subjects capable of producing art themselves.

Cabello de Carbonera's novel can be seen as a precursor to Agustini's response to this debilitating representation of women. In Blanca Sol the author rewrites the order of objectification to position Blanca as the subject who reifies men as tools to gain power and money. It is significant that wealth is her objective rather than physical charm or inspiration (commonly the objectives of men in male-authored texts). This emphasis on the material reflects a social reality; for the late nineteenth-century woman, money is the principal key for unlocking the door to a fixed social position. Therefore the reification of men as a means to a fiscal end is both a criticism of society for creating unhealthy material desires and an equalizing gesture; Cabello de Carbonera counters weak images of women that are commonly ingrained in readers' consciousness with ones that instate a woman as a desiring subject.

One example of this reordering of power positions comes early in the novel, after Blanca rejects her first suitor and finds the wealthier, and thus more

desirable, Don Serafín: “Al fin llegó el novio con dinero, ó como Blanca decía, el dinero con novio” (At last the suitor with money arrived, or as Blanca used to say, the money with a suitor; 12). In this sentence Don Serafín is reduced to a grammatical object and is reified as an adjunct commodity that comes along with the money, the latter serving as the focus of importance for the establishment of Blanca’s identity in the social order. In the following paragraph he is referred to as the “víctima elegida para pagar las deudas de Blanca Sol” (victim chosen to pay Blanca Sol’s debts; 12). Again, Don Serafín is disempowered as the passive receptor of Blanca’s wishes; to reverse the romantic and *modernista* gender dichotomy, he is the sustenance for her hunger for prestige.

Inverting the male hierarchy explicitly, Blanca takes advantage of many men throughout the story, using them like tools to achieve her financial and social goals, and the narrator gives us concrete examples of these inverted relationships of utility, where the male is the victim. We have seen how Blanca uses Serafín for his fortune, and how Alcides is the butt of her jokes and schemes to bolster her vanity. Another man whom she uses to serve her needs is Luciano, a handsome youth from her social circle: “Blanca se servía de Luciano, como se sirven los Gobiernos, de esa ralea vil que desempeña el oficio de la policía secreta” (Blanca used Luciano as governments use that vile type that carries out the job of the secret police; 56). The protagonist maintains contact with the youth solely to

learn of the latest gossip circulating among the elite, and employs his services to aid in her political maneuvers.

These objectifying gestures are not incorporated into the text as acts deserving a favorable reception by the reader; they would indeed have been interpreted as malicious acts. Nonetheless, the subjectification of woman reverses the gender roles hegemonic culture ascribed to men and women. What appear to be small linguistic manipulations are, as post-Freudian psychoanalytic views of language support, ways in which writing expresses the unconscious (as I discuss in the introduction to this study). By the same token, these textual images and gestures speak to the unconscious of the reader to reverse the order of objectification that was prevalent and harmful to women's growth as individuals.

Similar to the case of Barragán's character, whose name change connotes a deeper change in identity, Cabello's manipulation of traditional gender roles involves this symbolic part of our identities by which one is known to others. The narrator of the novel iterates a critical view regarding the custom of women changing their names after marriage, which leads to a reversal of the typical power structure of the man as subject and woman as his possession. The narrative voice states:

Hay mujeres, que al otro día de su matrimonio, pierden su apellido y pasan á ser la señora de D. Fulano, como si su pequeña personalidad desapareciera ante la de su esposo. Otras hay, que conservan toda la vida su apellido, sucediendo muchas veces, que el marido llega á no ser más, que la adición de su mujer.

There are women that, as soon as they are married, lose their surname and become Mr. So-and-so's wife, as if their miniscule personality disappeared before that of her husband. There are others that maintain their surname throughout their lives, and often, the husband becomes no more than an appendage unto his wife. (24)

In this passage the narrator presents both positions: that of the wife who takes her husband's name, and that of the wife who retains her own name. Neither of the above scenarios presents the institution of marriage in a particularly flattering light, since both options result in the usurpation by one spouse of the other's identity. The passage uses names as representations of one's identity, and how this identity is blurred and in danger of disappearing within the institution that perhaps most strongly upheld gender norms at the time: marriage.

This is, in fact, what comes to pass in Blanca's marriage to Serafín, as we are soon told: "ocurrió que al millonario D. Serafín, lo designaran con frecuencia,

llamándolo *el marido de Blanca Sol*” (it so happened that this is how people referred to the millionaire D. Serafín, commonly calling him *Blanca Sol’s husband*; 24). It also presents Serafín as Blanca’s possession, thus reversing the typical order of gender objectification by placing her as the subject in a position of control. What seems a small gender role reversal designated by the use of names (which, again serve as markers of one’s identity) is significant because it positions Blanca on a level of authority above her husband, despite his sizable fortune.

In light of the earlier passage that assumes the loss of one partner’s self in marriage, the narrator reveals that Blanca’s strength and will are not allowing Serafín to consume her identity. In addition, it appears that for Blanca, given the choice of usurping or being usurped, the former is preferable. These views, no doubt, represent a pessimistic perspective on the relationship between the sexes. However, this example allows the reader to see that the novel does in fact promote women taking a proactive approach to their existences; Blanca is never reprimanded in the novel for dominating her husband (thus retaining her sense of self), even though this choice implies the diminution of Serafín’s identity. Today, the message seems to be an equalizing gesture to counter stereotypical power structures detrimental to women that were widely visible at the time. It is a balancing of the symbolic order rather than a moral guideline.

This narrative gesture allowing for the preservation of the protagonist's self also serves as a reversal of the Angel of the House stereotype. In a superficial reading the character is a selfish woman. However, this is also the inversion of the debilitating self-denial and self-effacement of the angelic standard.

Another way in which traditional gender characteristics are renovated in the novel is by signaling them as artificial constructs. This becomes apparent when the protagonist exploits stereotypically feminine wiles to obtain her desires at certain strategic moments in the plot. This highlighting of feminine traits as capable of being fabricated on demand, and thus artificial or mask-like, is reminiscent of Butler's theory of gender as performance. Regarding acts that simulate elements of traditional gender characteristics in this way, Butler states that: "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (173).¹² Butler claims that exposing gender constructs as synthetic serves to deconstruct the grid work that is part of an "idealized and compulsory heterosexuality." In turn, this deconstruction "deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities," thus breaking norms created in a misogynist culture (172-76).

We can see an example of the performative nature of the feminine stereotype employed by Blanca when she is being courted by her soon-to-be husband. Blanca senses Don Serafín's suspicion that she is allowing his advances due to his fortune, so to convince him otherwise she enacts the following drama of emotional feminine rhetoric.

--Yo—decía ella—ambiciono encontrar por esposo un hombre que me ame apasionadamente, y que sea esclavo de mi voluntad.

--Nada más desea U.?—preguntó D. Serafín, trémulo de emoción y de esperanza.

--Y que más se puede desear? El dinero es metal vil, que brilla mucho en la calle; pero que en la casa oscurece el verdadero brillo del amor. [...]

--¡Ah! El mundo es tan ruin y las mujeres somos siempre víctimas de sus juicios!—dijo Blanca con tristeza y fingiendo enternecerse hasta el llanto.

"I", she said, "hope to find as a husband a man that loves me passionately, and will be a slave to my desires."

"You desire nothing more?" asked D. Serafín, trembling with excitement and hope.

"And what more could I desire? Money is vile metal that shines brightly out in public; but at home it tarnishes the true brilliance of love." [...]

“Ah! The world is so base and women are always victims of its judgments!” said Blanca sadly and pretending to be moved to the point of tears. (17)¹³

We see two manipulations of importance in the dialogue: an emphasis on Don Serafín’s naïve sincerity and Blanca Sol’s affected façade of virtuous femininity. Most importantly, this façade mocks the angelic standard. Much as Barragán’s María feigns obedience to her father to gain power, Blanca falsely dons the weak, emotional, self-sacrificing, materially uninterested stereotype. Knowing that Blanca is presented as a mercenary character within the symbolic order of the text, the reader easily recognizes the irony of her words. In the humor of this passage, the reader is indirectly coaxed to recognize the ridiculousness of the idealized standard of self-sacrificing virtue.¹⁴ Interestingly, Blanca cannot speak without some slippage as to her true personality: she wants a man who will “be a slave” to her desires.

The passage above serves as an example of Cabello de Carbonera’s reversal of a common literary scenario in the Spanish Middle Ages and Golden Age, which was revitalized by authors in the nineteenth century: that of the dishonored woman and the deceitful man, or Don Juan. The mythical figure of Don Juan often wears a false mask of the honorable and gallant lover (considered

women's ideal for a man) in order to seduce them, just as Blanca Sol disguises her true self to win over Serafín. There are many examples of this amorous trickery in Don Juan tales. One example comes from the hugely-popular nineteenth-century drama Don Juan Tenorio (1844) by José Zorrilla (1817-1893).

Pertinent to this study is what the revival of the Don Juan myth says about nineteenth-century Hispanic culture's perception of gender roles. Monleón recognizes the Don Juan literary image as one that defines a gendered power structure. He states that the Don Juan myth is:

una experiencia cuyos fundamentos se apoyan en una realidad concreta:
las relaciones de poder que asignan papeles sociales específicos al hombre y a la mujer. (...) ¿Qué define al donjuán? Qué le da vida?... Don Juan ese alimenta de sus conquistas, y sin la posibilidad de repetir su cruel rito, no existiría.

an experience whose fundamental concept is rooted in concrete reality:
the power relations that assign specific social roles to men and women.
(...) What defines Don Juan? What gives him life? ... Don Juan feeds off his conquests, and without the possibility of repeating the cruel ritual, he would not exist. (25 my emphasis)

As we have seen, this order of authority is reversed in Cabello de Carbonera's novel, where men take on passive, emotional, and romantic behaviors (those considered feminine at the time), while Blanca is the calculating, rational, pragmatic, and profoundly unromantic woman who takes advantage of them.

This image of what we might call the gold-digger is not, of course, a new concept in Cabello de Carbonera's novel, and continues up until today.¹⁵ Yet its structure ends up being profoundly different. An example of this reversal can be found in a scene where Blanca is breaking up with her first suitor. The author employs a change in the power positioning in regard to amorous relations in which Blanca plays the role of a *Don Juan*-esque woman while her suitor is the feminized wronged victim. Here the narrator speaks of the couple after the suitor discovers that Blanca is to marry Don Serafín:

Con tal cruel desengaño, el antiguo y apasionado novio de la jóven, se dió á la pena, y en el colmo de su desesperación, fulminó su cólera contra Blanca, con los más hirientes denuestos, y acerbos improperios...pero ella, que al tomar esa su firme resolución, había previsto la tempestad; rió desdeñosamente diciendo: --después de los rayos y los truenos sale el *sol color de oro*.

With this cruel trickery, the former, passionate suitor of the young woman gave himself over to sorrow, and in the culmination of his desperation, his anger lashed out at Blanca, with the most hurtful insults, and acerbic improprieties... but she, who upon making this resolution had predicted the storm; laughed disdainfully saying: “After the lightning and the thunder *the sun shines the color of gold.*” (10)

After Blanca Sol’s bold proposition, the young man is devastated and flees Lima, cursing Blanca for her dispassionate and calculating mentality. She tries to settle a debt that she had with him as a way of making amends, but he cares nothing for money and leaves heartbroken. (Again we see the importance of money as a facilitator of social arrangements.)

The reversal of the medieval/baroque roles of the “*engañada*” (deceived woman) and the “*engañador*” (deceitful man) in this passage consists of several elements, each of which speak to differences in the symbolic order of Spain and the Peru that Cabello de Carbonera wanted to create. In the baroque scenario, the man would generally dupe the woman (often of a lower social status) into having an amorous relation with him by promising marriage, and then, after taking advantage of her, fail to fulfill his pledge to legalize the union. The dishonored woman would then seek revenge and/or enter a convent.¹⁶ In Blanca Sol it is the

male suitor who, not being of sufficient financial means for his beloved, is tricked and denied the position of legitimate husband. Instead he is reduced to an inferior and dishonorable status; he is offered the role of the illegitimate lover. In addition, we later discover that the deceived suitor flees his own city to escape the torment of seeing his beloved belong to another, resembling the dishonored woman's escape to refuge and solace in the convent.¹⁷

While it can be argued that the beautiful and deceitful Blanca Sol resembles villainous women in male-authored texts who trick men *without* serving as early feminist female agents, the Peruvian character differs from these predecessors in several ways. Beautiful and malicious female figures such as the Sirens, Salome, and Dalilah demand blood as a prize for their sensuality and beauty or lure men to their deaths. While these women are agents within their fictional contexts, they are agents *at the service of* male fantasies and fears. Villainous women in male-authored texts serve as justification for patriarchy's control over women; because women are both enticing and dangerous, they must be limited and restrained. Blanca Sol never reaches the level of evil of the above-named women. Her flaws are her desire for material things and the Machiavellian tactics she uses to gain them. If we are to compare Blanca Sol to any "villain," it would have to be the significantly weaker Madame Bovary (from Madame Bovary 1857), the anti-heroine of the French novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821-

1880). However, the difference between Cabello de Carbonera and the male writers is that the former uses naturalist techniques to point out that hegemonic societal standards for women are to blame, thus absolving Blanca Sol, as I will show. In the examples I have given, Blanca Sol becomes a refined, more elegant version of the calculating gold-digger. However, she is able to transcend gender borders for women by liberating herself from the position of victim and reversing the traditionally limiting placement of women within literary stereotypes such as that of the dishonored woman, while at the same time being absolved from blame.

In all of the examples that I have listed the traditional gender roles have been reversed. However, the main character never becomes a positive role model. This view of Lima of the early post-independence era reveals that the symbolic order is extremely disadvantageous for women by showing that the protagonist is forced to define her identity by pursuing morally questionable financial goals. It exposes the mutability of the false constructions of gender that are imposed on both women and men, and the unrealistic nature of the silent and subservient angelic model. In the next section we will see how the author employs a fairytale that is part of national consciousness to further undermine the Angel of the House standard that is an integral part of the female gender identity construction.

Manipulations of the Imaginary: Cinderella and the Angel of the House

Cabello de Carbonera does not stop with her main character. To help readers follow her rescripting, she adds another element to her argument. She does so by manipulating myth explicitly. We have learned from history that existing images in the consciousness or imaginary of a culture or nation can be manipulated by a dominant class to achieve some social, political, or religious goal within that culture or nation. For example, the Spaniards colonizing the New World in the sixteenth century took advantage of the presence of cults of female deities (the Andean fertility goddess Pachamama is one example) to replace them with a cult of the Virgin Mary, thus facilitating the spread of Christianity. These pre-existing images and stories in the popular consciousness aided them in their conversion and colonizing. Sometimes this displacement occurred unwittingly, as when the Aztecs associated the arrival of Hernán Cortés from the West with the return of the bearded Aztec deity Quetzalcoatl.

In western culture, the Cinderella fairytale and its cycles (along with fairytales such as “Snow White,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “The Beauty and the Beast”) perpetuate the Angel of the House standard by focusing on an extraordinarily beautiful and humble young woman, who virtuously suffers abuse in silence and is rewarded for her subservience and beauty by marrying a prince. The child psychoanalyst and specialist in fairytales Bruno Bettelheim confirms

the stories' profound psychological effect: "fairytales proceed on both a conscious and an unconscious level, which makes them more artistic, captivating, and convincing" (268), and the deep-seated issues that fairytales address continue to affect us into maturity (250).

The immensely popular tale of Cinderella reinforces the main elements of the angelic standard (self-sacrifice, obedience, and enclosure in the domestic realm), while at the same time reproducing the patriarchal family model in which marriage is a woman's "reward" for meeting this standard and for her beauty. The vilified stepmother (who is portrayed as selfish rather than self-sacrificing) who does not meet the angelic standards does not receive any reward, and in some versions is punished. Hence the story also reproduces the two stereotyped roles for women: the purely evil woman versus the purely virtuous. Marcia Lieberman has noted that tales like Cinderella present a picture of sexual roles, behavior, and psychology, in such a way that good temperament, meekness, and beauty are rewarded, while ill temper and ugliness are punished. Intelligence for women simply does not play a part in the Cinderella economy (Lieberman 187-89).

The author's accommodation into the novel of a transparently veiled and critical Cinderella story is illustrative of Cabello de Carbonera's subtle effort to remove the Angel of the House from its privileged position and to place Blanca Sol as an intelligent woman with agency at the center of the narrative. The

changes in the story serve to blur the lines between self-abnegation and selfishness, humility and love of the material, and reward and punishment for the female characters in the symbolic economy of the text.

In Cabello de Carbonera's rewriting, the Cinderella figure's presence is diminished, while the figure of the stepmother is amplified and vindicated. The author's version of the Cinderella story challenges the reader to question the legitimacy and viability of the image of the Angel of the House as a realistic ideal for women. She simultaneously dilutes the roles of evil stepmother and virtuous angel to counteract commonly held stereotypes: that the beautiful and virtuous woman is always passive and that this same destitute, self-sacrificing damsel takes center stage. Like the complex characterization of Blanca Sol, the Cinderella figure Josefina eludes categorization as a purely virtuous woman, thus serving to break down traditional gender roles. Finally, the subplot rescripts a fundamental trope of bourgeois society by changing the Oedipal fantasy of Cinderella to a pre-Oedipal focus on the mother (similar to Barragán's retrieval and valorization of the mother in Hija).

The embedded Cinderella subplot is that of the rise of Blanca's virtuous and humble seamstress Josefina from a poverty-stricken waif to one of the wealthiest women in Lima through her marriage to the nouveau rich Italian immigrant Alcides Lescanti.¹⁸ The parallels in the general structure of the story

are fairly clear: the indigent and modest Josefina is Cinderella, Blanca embodies the would-be villain from the privileged class (a pseudo-stepmother), and Alcides is the handsome prince (desired by Blanca-stepmother) who saves Josefina-Cinderella through marriage and allows her an unrealistically steep ascension up the social ladder. Apart from this central structure, there are numerous minor details that reveal the allusion.¹⁹

Cabello de Carbonera manipulates various elements in her imagining of the famous tale that force the reader to focus on Blanca Sol (the stepmother figure) as opposed to Josefina (Cinderella). Josefina is not the protagonist but rather a secondary character who is not even a fully developed character, but rather an alter ego of Blanca herself (she bears a striking resemblance to the main character). The rewriting shifts the focus onto the “villainous” Blanca Sol, by granting her the dominant voice in the narrative--as I have mentioned, Blanca speaks seven times as much as Josefina--and by positioning her as the main agent of the plot.

Before the Cinderella allusion is introduced, we have a subtle passage, cleverly slipped into a dialogue among anonymous characters, that voices the criticism of the angelic standard for contradictorily demanding that women be self-sacrificing and virtuous, while also putting disproportionate emphasis on social status and beauty for the establishment of their identity and place in society.

In the scene in question, two men are speculating over the immoral means by which a woman may have obtained her elegant gown: “Amigo mío, nosotros rendimos homenaje más que á las virtudes, al lujo de las mujeres, y luego queremos que no sacrifiquen la virtud para alcanzar el lujo” (My friend, we praise women’s luxury more than their virtue, and then we expect them not to sacrifice their virtue for luxury; 48).²⁰ It is an announcement of upcoming messages in the text that invite the reader to reevaluate the ideals of virtue.

The narrative offers a more realistic, “morally flawed” Josefina in place of the idealized model as a means of diluting the self-abnegating standard to one in which the female character focuses on her own desires and does not tolerate abuse. This is apparent in certain moments when we glimpse the seamstress’s competitive side: “Josefina se sonrió pensando cuan súbitamente podría ese pobre y raído vestido, trocarse por el elegante y lujoso que llevaría, si por acaso llegaba el día, que ella fuera una gran señora, la señora de Lescanti” (Josefina smiled thinking how soon she could exchange that poor, threadbare dress for the elegant and luxurious one she would wear, if by chance the day came, when she would be a great lady, the wife of Lescanti; 148). Josefina is thinking of her intended’s fortune and the luxury it will bring, just as Blanca did. She even voices it in the same terms, with dreams of being a “gran señora.” Josefina, then, is a modified

Cinderella who, like the “stepmother,” is materialistic and recognizes wealth as the key to social mobility and power.

The narrative critiques Lima’s mutually exclusive social impositions (the expectation of perfect Angel-of-the-House virtue in a society breeds materialistic desire in women), while it rearranges traditional categories (Cinderella and Stepmother). The author, writing from beyond culture, creates diagonal vectors of meaning among categories, to borrow Arens’s terminology, to challenge and transcend staples of the hegemonic imaginary (“Callois” 237-48). That is, she has to go outside of all categories in order to see them clearly and create new ones.

The following passage shows that Josefina feels competitive with Blanca, and takes great pleasure in having won her mistress’s lover: “nunca se había atrevido á considerarse superior á una gran señora, á la señora de Rubio; pero hoy sí, hoy que era amada y respetada imaginaba estar á incomensurable altura, más arriba aún que la señora de Rubio” (never had she dared consider herself superior to a great lady, to Señora de Rubio, but today she did, today, as she was loved and respected she was imagining being at an unreachable height, even higher than Señora de Rubio; 144). The interested, envious emotions that the seamstress experiences offer a naturalist-realist view of human nature rather than the Stepmother and Cinderella roles in which simplified images of good and evil are

pitted against one another. In this respect, Josefina fits Cabello de Carbonera's literary theory of creating characters that are not black and white in terms of morality. Josefina is relatively virtuous because she works hard to support her grandmother, but she is not self-effacing and humble like Cinderella. Thus, we again have a problematization of the model of the Angel of the House by reinserting a more accommodating idea of virtue into the schema of the image. At the same time, this rewriting sheds a more favorable light on Blanca, since Josefina is the other against whom she is contrasted to establish her identity. I am hence arguing that the manipulation in the image functions to prevent any ideal from prevailing. The message is that neither men nor women should not have to fit externally conceived ideas about their sex.

Similarly, within the Cinderella fairytale allusion, Blanca displays an intricacy in her morality that the original stepmother lacks. While indisputably vain and superficial, Blanca never approaches the infliction of evil that the stepmother administers to Cinderella. In fact, when Blanca sees the desperation of Josefina's living conditions, she employs and lodges her, as well as supports her family (91). Cabello de Carbonera's rewriting twists the original Cinderella fairytale, not only by placing Blanca on a much higher moral ground than the stepmother, but also by showing that Blanca is punished far more ruthlessly than the evil women in the fairytale. While, in the most famous version of the

fairytale, the stepmother is invited to the court of the newly married Cinderella, Blanca is humiliated and soiled by a cloud of dust from Alcides's and Josefina's stately carriage as she walks on the side of the road (176).

As if this were not punishment enough, the disgraced queen of the elite class turns into a drunk and prostitutes herself, relinquishing her long-protected honor to support her children. A relevant detail is that, despite Blanca's late epiphany that opens her eyes to the importance of motherhood, she is left to suffer --along with her six innocent children, who are in danger of poverty. She is castigated to such a degree that the hopelessness of her plight is even indirectly communicated to the reader through Alcides's sympathy for her condition: "¡Desgraciada mujer! Hoy vive humillada, deshonrada, cuando en realidad ella no ha cometido sino faltas muy leves" (Unfortunate woman! Today she lives humiliated, dishonored, when in reality she has committed only very minor misdeeds; 176).

This defense of the main character is an essential element to the early feminist strategy of the author. By placing all of the blame on the symbolic order, Blanca Sol is absolved in the text as an active, intelligent female agent. The idea that Blanca is undeserving of blame, and that society is at fault, is repeated *five times* in an emotional apology on behalf of the protagonist given by the narrator,

which merits repetition in its entirety here to communicate the full rhetorical effect:

¿Qué culpa tenía ella, si desde la infancia, desde el colegio enseñáronla á amar el dinero y á considerar el brillo del oro como el brillo más preciado de su posición social?

¿Qué culpa tenía de haberse casado con el hombre ridículo; pero codiciado por sus amigas, y llamado á salvar la angustiosa situación de su familia?

¿Qué culpa tenía si, siendo una joven casi pobre, la habían educado creándole necesidades, que la vanidad aguijoneada de continuo por el estímulo, consideraba como necesidades ineludibles, á las que era forzoso sacrificar, afectos y sentimientos generosos?

¿Qué culpa tenía, si en vez de enseñarla, la moral religiosa que corrige el carácter y modera las pasiones, sólo la enseñaron la oración inconsciente, el rezo automático y las prácticas externas de vanidosas, é impías manifestaciones?

¡La sociedad! Qué consideraciones merecía una sociedad, que ayer no más, cuando ella se presentaba como una gran cortesana... la adulaba...

How was she to blame, if from infancy, since grade school, they taught her to love money and to consider the brilliance of gold the brilliance most prized in her social position?

How was she to blame, for having married a ridiculous man, but one coveted by her friends, and having been called upon to save her family's distressed situation?

How was she to blame, if, being an almost poor young woman, they had educated her creating needs that her vanity, constantly incited by stimuli, considered inevitable needs, the fulfillment for which it was necessary to sacrifice affection and generous sentiments.

How was she to blame, if instead of teaching her religious morality that corrects the character and moderates passions, they only taught her to pray unaware of the meaning: prayer by rote and the superficial practices of vain and impious manifestations of religion?

How was she to blame if the life lesson learned in school was to view domestic virtues with scorn, and to view the extravagances of vanity with admiration and covetousness?

Society! What consideration did a society deserve that, only yesterday, when she was a great socialite,... adored her... (181)

The criticism of society here is manifest, and is a vindication of Blanca Sol, redeeming her to a significant extent in the eyes of the reader (a benefit that the stepmother in “Cinderella” never enjoys). However, it is worth noting that, despite the intensity achieved through reiteration, the narrator still cautiously works within the boundaries of what could be acceptably criticized by women so overtly; the passage blames society for faults in Blanca’s religious, domestic, and sentimental education. All three areas were safe zones, where women were generally considered to have more experience than men and were expected to take a moral high ground to defend the standards of preparation in these areas. So, the use of rhetoric here allows the author to affix a traditional filter to the narrator’s words to avert negative criticism, thus enabling her to reprimand so harshly the patriarchal society that is the butt of her attack.²¹

I have spoken at length regarding how the Cinderella plot manipulates hegemonic standards of virtue for women, complicating them to a degree that serves to remove the Angel of the House from its position as master signifier for a women. Now I will address how the re-writing of the fairytale works on a deeper psychological level.

Maria Tatar has found that the Cinderella story and its many variants respond to the Oedipal fantasies of female children. The best-known variants are those in which the vilification of the mother prevails, however there are others

(“Donkey-Skin,” “Thousandfurs,” “The Goose Girl”) in which the father plays the role of villain for sexually pursuing his own daughter. The two cycles dovetail to form the Oedipal (in this case Electra) fantasy, in which the little girl’s desires are projected onto the father, while her vilified mother is the rival for the father’s affection (Tatar 150-53). In this model the male-identified woman rejects the mother to align herself with the father. Kristeva, who terms this Electra figure the homologous woman, does not believe that this is a solution for women to gain power in the symbolic order because it implies a denial of female *jouissance* (Chinese 156).

As I have demonstrated, Cabello de Carbonera’s Cinderella subplot centralizes and vindicates the mother figure. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Cabello de Carbonera’s version readjusts the focus to the pre-Oedipal maternal body and its impulses. So if the way that the patriarchal symbolic order can be transgressed is through the expression of female *jouissance*, the narrator’s final emotional plea on behalf of the mother can be read as an effort to achieve this. It is a step toward a renewed focus on the feminine.

To conclude this discussion, there are two main reasons why the Cinderella model is a strategic choice on the part of the author. First, as I have mentioned, it uses an image already in the popular imaginary to facilitate the communication of the early feminist ideas in the novel. Second, the inclusion of

elements of the Cinderella fairytale and the Angel of the House image provides a decoy focal point for the many critics of early feminist sentiment in public writing. As outlined in chapter three of this study, Cabello de Carbonera would not, however, escape denigration and negative criticism for her transgressions, despite her efforts to partially conceal her radical ideas with slightly more traditional packaging. A vocal *woman* writer who was focused on an agenda (and had success selling it) would prove too great a threat to the Peruvian intellectual elite to go unchecked.

Conclusion.

Through my analysis of the text I hope to have disproved that Cabello de Carbonera's characters are "feminine stereotypes," as some critics have claimed (Mazquiarán de Rodríguez 95), that they lack psychological complexity (Torres-Pou 248), or that the author only reinforces "el mito de la femineidad propiciado por la ideología falocrática de occidente" (the myth of femininity propitiated by western phallocratic ideology; Lucía Guerra qtd. in Torres-Pou 248).²²

While the scope of the present study does not permit me to assess the validity of these statements in other of Cabello de Carbonera's works, I have found that these criticisms are not applicable to Blanca Sol. In this novel we are presented with an image of what a woman is capable of accomplishing through

her mental aptitude and social skills. The novel presents a strong defense for a female protagonist who is brash and intelligent, and who independently controls her life and her affairs. The text invites the reader to consider the unjust punishment that befalls the woman who pushes the status quo set for her sex, to surge beyond the unrealistic standard of the Angel of the House to forge her own unique identity.

Blanca Sol answers the call of its historical context by reviving the image of an active female agent who has power in the symbolic order, recalling the politically engaged women of the independence era six decades earlier. Cabello de Carbonera writes the novel at a time when women are just beginning to rediscover their voices after years of using their agency only to serve others during the early post-colonial period.

The novel addresses political concerns of its day by playing on a principal fear of the ruling class: that Peru decline to *barbarism*, rather than *civilization* and progress (opposites wrought into Latin American bourgeois consciousness since the publication of Sarmiento's Civilización i barbarie: la vida de Juan Facundo Quiroga [Civilization and Barbarism: the Life of Juan Facundo Quiroga in 1845]). Although this message is implied in the novel, Cabello de Carbonera expresses it clearly in her essay "Influencia de la mujer en la civilización" (Woman's Influence in Civilization; 1874). The message from the novel, as in the essay, is

that educating the mothers of future leaders and citizens will prevent society from falling into the “barbaric” decadence and degradation that befell Blanca Sol. We are further invited to recognize that the hegemonic power structure will crush women’s potential, *as well as its own*, by neglecting to cultivate its precious resource.

The veiled early feminism in the text, once uncovered, reveals a strong message. It is an appeal for the ruling class to broaden its definition of the feminine and give women opportunities for education and personal growth. It also communicates a threat and an exploitation of hegemonic fears in its suggestion that the symbolic order can be negatively affected by creating superficial and material desires in women. Cabello de Carbonera formulates and packages her views on a new, revolutionary female subjectivity as the key to entering the twentieth century in a state of preparedness to face the challenges of new nationhood. However, these are changes that would also improve women’s lives as individuals by allowing them to focus on cultivating their intelligence, rather than focusing on others (as the self-sacrificing Angel of the House) or expending energy to live up to superficial social norms.

In the following section I will look at 1880s Mexico as a backdrop for Refugio Barragán’s response to the angelic norm and her radical vision of female agency in La hija del bandido.

Notes to Chapter Four

¹ I am using the term textual strategy to refer to the method that the author may have employed in writing the text in order to avoid criticism for voicing non-traditional views.

² My use of the word productive in this context is linked to the ideology of positivism popular at the time to which Cabello de Carbonera subscribed. It fits in with positivism because of its connotation of progression to that will benefit society.

³ Mazquarán de Rodríguez also notes Blanca's strange brand of virtue (100).

⁴ In medieval and Golden Age literature and society, women were seen as the receptacle of the male family members' honor (this general concept still exists in many cultures worldwide today). If this honor was threatened, the only way to repair the damage would be to kill the seducer or the woman, or both.

⁵ The exact phrase in the novel is "tiene el alma atravezada," which does not translate in current Spanish usage, but it appears to imply that Don Serafín was apathetic or did not care about Blanca (128). Regarding the term stereotype, according to the on line Oxford English Dictionary, it was first used in 1804 to speak of the means of reproducing a print.

⁶ The pseudo-science of physiognomy still flourishes today, evidenced by recent publications on the topic, such as the most recent pop-psychology version in 1999: Reading People: How to Understand People and Predict Their Behavior-Anytime, Anyplace by Jo-Ellan Dimitrius and Mark Mazzarella (Random House).

⁷ Phrenology is another popular topic of the nineteenth century that was related to physiognomy. Phrenology's originator was the Austrian anatomist Francis Joseph Gall (1758-1828), and it consisted in the study of the cranium to discover a person's talents and disposition (Gaussin 21). Scholars Colomar and Gaussin agree that, although ideas existed prior, the study became more formalized in the western world with treatises on physiognomy in the fourth century B.C. by Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). There was a surge in the study at the end of the middle ages, and later the writings of the Swiss Protestant pastor Johann Casper Lavater

(1741-1801) offered then-believed scientific conclusions to be drawn between appearance and character (Gaussin 17).

⁸ I say that it is clear that society is at fault for her marriage because Cabello de Carbonera sets the stage for Blanca's tragic decision to marry Don Serafín; Blanca learns to marry for money from an example told to her at school, as well as from her own mother's advice (5).

⁹ My figures regarding the number of times each character speaks come from tallying every time there is a dash, which denotes dialogue in Romance-language texts. At times this also applied to characters' thoughts, which I counted as speech: to give a hypothetical example, I counted "I should never have let Blanca leave angry –thought Serafín" as speech.

¹⁰ Fox-Lockert cites an uneasiness and discontent with the economic situation in late nineteenth-century Lima. She explains these socio-economic circumstances as follows:

While this [uneasiness] is only an opinion, it is confirmed by economical data of the period wherein landowners lost out to foreign investments, business came to depend almost entirely on *guano* and social upheaval was caused by complicated governmental and political systems which sought to control dwindling urban resources. (149-50)

¹¹ The following passage relates this message:

Foucault points out that juridical systems of power *produce* the subjects they subsequently come to represent. (...) The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one which must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination. (Butler 6)

¹² While it would be anachronistic to apply other aspects of Butler's theory of performativity to this particular study, such as her analysis of transvestitism and drag, the basic principle of the ability of an individual to arbitrarily take on gender qualities fits well here.

¹³ This citation is copied as it appears in the text, with original errors in punctuation and accents.

¹⁴ Other false words in this dialogue are less obvious and require some piecing together with other passages in the novel. For example, we know that it is not true that Blanca merely seeks a man's adoration, because she has cruelly broken the heart of her devoted first suitor without hesitating. Also, Blanca's purported fear of society's view of her is false; we see that one of the aspects of her personality that sparks the elite's wrath is "su despreocupación, y atrevida desenvoltura, para cuidarse del *qué dirán*" ("her lack of concern and impudent boldness in flouting public opinion" 39). In the passage above she merely pretends to be a simple, loving, disinterested, and devoted woman (in sum, a typically *feminine* woman) to ensure that Don Serafín will marry her and she will have access to his millions.

¹⁵ One need only watch Marilyn Monroe's 1953 comical depiction of the classic gold-digger in the film How to Marry a Millionaire, or pop singer Madonna's rendition in her mid-1980s "Material Girl" music video, to see that this female type lives on in fiction and popular culture.

¹⁶ These scenarios can be seen in many works of Spanish Golden Age literature in authors such as Calderón de la Barca, Lope de Vega, Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra, and are very prevalent in the works of María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590?-1669?). These works can be assumed to be well known in the Spanish-speaking Americas.

¹⁷ An interesting precursor to Cabello de Carbonera's manipulation of the character of the deceived woman can be found in the 1646 collection of novellas, Desengaños amorosos (The Disenchantments of Love) by María de Zayas y Sotomayor (Spain 1590-1660?). The scenarios parallel in an inverted fashion the previous selection from Blanca Sol; the feminist criticism in Zayas's work lies in the intense suffering that the deceived female character endures, which is far more intense than the pain experienced by any of the "engañadas" in male-authored texts.

¹⁸ The fictional character of Lescanti represents a real wave of immigration of Italians to Lima in the 1840s. Giovanni Bonfiglio has studied the Italian immigration in Lima in depth. He has found that it was a spontaneous

immigration, and that many Italians came from the city of Liguria and were merchants and sailors. They came during the Guano Age in the mid-1800s to amass fortune and return home to Italy, but many remained to make up an important economic and cultural segment of Lima society.

¹⁹ For example, in both stories the Cinderella figure runs away from the prince, and he must undertake a tedious search for her (In Alcides's case, he does not know Josefina's new address when she flees Blanca). In Cabello de Carbonera's novel, Alcides himself searches for his love, but he also hires spies to help him (136), just as the prince has his footmen help in the search for Cinderella in many versions of the story. In both the fairytale and the novel, the Cinderella character is destined to prevail because of her virtue. The narrator specifies the expectation that virtue prevail when she reveals Josefina's grandmother's thoughts on the former's union with Alcides: "...no le causaba á ella novedad, pues bien segura estaba de que, la virtud de su nieta, había de recibir el justo premio, que Dios depara á los buenos" ("...it was not a surprise to her, because she was sure that her granddaughter's virtue had to receive the just reward that God provides to good people" 147). Complementing the importance of moral decency is the insignificance of luxurious attire to winning the prince: Blanca, like the stepmother, is finely dressed, while both Josefina and Cinderella are in ragged garb when finally rescued by their princes.

Another detail is that both Alcides and Prince Charming recognize their brides-to-be by an unparalleled extremity: for Cinderella it is the tiny foot that fits the slipper among a slew of large-footed hopefuls, and for Josefina it is the delicate white hand discovered in a racially mixed crowd (136-38). The significance of the white hand is an interesting topic whose analysis does not fit into this study. However, an in-depth look at the lower class's comments about Josefina and Alcides is worthwhile for their equalizing value: the crowd's message seems to be that white people are guilty of the same moral lapses of which they accuse other races.

Finally, even the ornate carriage from the Cinderella tale in which the royal couple departs is present in Cabello de Carbonera's novel, carrying Alcides and his new bride in elegance (176). Based on the overall structure and the supporting details of the story, the similarities are strong enough to render the allusion easily recognizable.

²⁰ This quotation brings to mind famous *redondillas*, cited in chapter two of this study, of the baroque poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (Mexico 1648?-1695). In her verses that begin with "Hombres necios..." ("Foolish men...") the poetic voice

accuses men of placing blame on women for lapses which the men themselves provoke, from the patriarchal ideal of chastity. Here I am referring to the famous *redondilla* verse:

Hombres necios que acusáis
a la mujer sin razón,
sin ver que sois la ocasión
de lo mismo que culpáis (Cruz 109)
Foolish men who accuse
women unjustly
not seeing that you are the reason
behind the sins for which you blame them

²¹ Villavivencio points out Cabello de Carbonera's and other women authors' strategy of criticizing within accepted boundaries of domestic topics:

El discurso femenino fue tibio y se cuidó de no alterar lo que consideraba el fundamento biológico y social de la mujer. De allí que constantemente las escritoras, para defender su oficio, señalaran que sus actividades no se contradecían con sus responsabilidades de madres, hijas o esposas, las cuales reconocían como principales (59).

The feminine discourse was mild and it took care not to alter what was considered the biological and social foundation of woman. It was from this premise that women writers constantly pointed out, in order to defend their work, that their activities did not contradict their responsibilities as mothers, daughters, or wives, roles they recognized as fundamental.

It should be noted, however, that despite Cabello de Carbonera's effort to situate her commentary within the domestic and spiritual safe zones, she nonetheless suffered very harsh personal insults as a result of speaking out.

²² I would like to mention that although Torres-Pou labels Cabello de Carbonera's characters flat, he later points out the ambiguity in the characters, and the conflicting tension that I mention in my study:

Es precisamente la ambigüedad que hay en la rebeldía de estas mujeres que no dudan en ponerse en entredicho para alcanzar lo que desean, el

rasgo más atractivo de los personajes de Cabello, pues, como sugiere Lucía Guerra, en ellos se refleja la constante tensión de dos significados contradictorios: el que explícitamente muestra el crecimiento interior de la mujer que se atreve a llevar a cabo semejante acto (250).

It is precisely this ambiguity in the rebelliousness of these women who do not hesitate to put themselves at risk for what they want that is the most attractive trait of Cabello's characters, then, as Lucía Guerra suggests, the constant tension between the two contradictory meanings is apparent in them, which explicitly shows the internal growth of the woman who risks carrying out such an act.

SECTION III: PUERTO RICO

Chapter Five

Bourgeois Women in Puerto Rico: Medicine, Morality, and

Institutionalizations of Sexual Oppression, 1712-early 1900s

While the first two novels focused on female agency of a more public sort by showing active women protagonists who made staked claims for participation in public life and power, I will show how Ana Roqué's novel Luz y sombra (1903) publicly addressed the more private issue of female sexuality. Both liberal and conservative social policies of the nineteenth century in Latin America often focused on the female reproductive body as a symbolic and literal space where future generations of citizens could be molded to fit ruling class ideals of "whiteness" and morality, as Eileen Suárez Findlay, Nancy Leyes Stephan, Benigno Trigo, and other scholars have noted. While conservative politics often used religion as its vehicle for moralizing women, liberals used positivist medical discourse to voice and justify policies that oppressed women in the name of republican motherhood. Women's sexualized bodies were a central focus of medical theories that heavily influenced marriage laws, education, and other

social policies from mid to late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century with the politicization of eugenics.

Early manifestations of medical theories in politics, which included social whitening (discouraging *mulata* and white women of the lower classes from having children with darker-skinned men) and high moral and domestic ideals of motherhood for *criolla* women of the bourgeoisie, were echoed in the fiction of the times. Roqué's novel and the novel La charca (1894) by the medical doctor Manuel Zeno Gandía (Puerto Rico 1855-1930) are noteworthy examples that I will discuss in the next chapter. As Trigo puts it in his analysis of the Colombian Jorge Isaacs's widely-read novel María (1867), "the sexual organs of women's bodies are not simply *an* aspect of the political crisis each author seeks to describe, but its determining aspect" (49). Therefore defining, controlling, and limiting women's sexuality were present in literature and politics of the times, as Trigo points out, to create a healthy, virile nation vis-à-vis Spain, and, later, the United States.

In this chapter, I will outline the relationships among medical discourse, sexual mores, gender segregation (or "protection"), and women's education in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, as it related to Puerto Rican politics and history, to interpret their meaning to the early feminists of the bourgeoisie. While I will examine class and race where relevant, I do not mean to focus on them in detail;

class and race play subtle and essential roles in the political power structure of the era, and merit a more detailed study than can be provided in the scope of this chapter. Please see Suárez Findlay's Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920 for an intricate look at the sexual power subsystems of race and class among women and in relation to *criollo* masculine domination in the era.

This chapter will provide a social and historical background to the literary analysis in chapter six of Luz y sombra. In the previous chapters I have demonstrated how authors used the novel as a medium to critique and manipulate symbolic, legal, and social forces that were detrimental to women's intellectual and physical liberty. I have shown that Barragán's fiction addresses policies of seclusion for women and Cabello de Carbonera's novel focuses on advocating women's education and denouncing the angelic standard. In chapter six I will examine how Roqué's writing questions the sexual oppression of women through medical discourse denouncing politically or financially motivated marriages. Luz y sombra is a subtle exposé of these mechanisms of social control as well as a liberal reversal of their traditional implementation of the rhetorical use of medical language.

A Brief Outline of History and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico¹

Puerto Rico had been suffering economically for centuries due to scarcity of gold in its mines, attacks by Caribs, sackings from various European pirates and privateers, and trouble starting its sugar industry. Spanish restrictions on trade and the island's need to import many necessities created a perpetual negative trade balance. By the early nineteenth century, years of poor economic conditions were compounded. The loss in 1811 of the *situados*, a very important source of tax income paid by Mexico, augmented an economic decline that was already in progress. In an attempt to replace the loss of the *situados*, more money was printed, which led to an inflation that caused widespread poverty.

The Cédula de Gracias in 1815, which increased European immigration and provided industry incentives for sugar cultivation, however, aided the rejuvenation of the sugar industry in the second decade of the nineteenth century. During this time, the United States became a major importer of Caribbean sugar. These changes improved the island's economy and enriched the class of sugar plantation owners. The labor-intensive sugar industry demanded the import of additional human beings from Africa for unpaid work mid century, despite Spain's agreement with Britain in 1817 to terminate importation of slaves.² In 1850 the introduction of steam-run mills increased sugar production, but also

caused sugar prices to drop, contributing to a future decline in the economic viability of the industry.

When slavery was abolished, the industry could not withstand the absence of free labor; due to abolition and other factors, sugar was replaced with coffee as lead cash crop, starting roughly in the 1870s.³ Zeno Gandía's novel La charca is set during these years; the characters in the novel depend on coffee production for their livelihood. Similar to the situation portrayed in the novel, the industry was characterized by the exploitation of smaller farmers by large landowners, who seduced their less technologically advanced neighbors into incurring large amounts of debt to them (Scarano 468). A class of small and medium-sized growers, however, was able to resist the quasi-feudal takeover by large plantations.⁴

Despite the wealth that landowners accumulated during the coffee boom, the Puerto Rican peasants (*jibaros*) lived in miserable poverty. They suffered from common illnesses, epidemics (malaria, yellow fever, tuberculosis, etc.), nutritional deficiency, and lack of education. The prevalence of illness was precipitated by poor housing near swamps or other wet areas, as well as lack of medical care and hygiene education. Alcoholism, gambling, and promiscuity were ways to cope with the hardships. Women of this class were in a particularly difficult situation because they participated in agricultural labor, were responsible

for child rearing and domestic chores, and yet did not directly receive their own pay; a male family member received their wages, which the men commonly spent on alcohol or gambling (Scarano 474). La charca, in which these problems are vividly depicted, evidences the intellectual elite's concern over these social problems and their effects on the future of an independent Puerto Rico. I will speak more to the intellectual class's attempts to curb moral social ills in the sections that follow.

Politically the 1800s were characterized by tension over the future of the island's governance and its contemporary need for reforms. Conservatives (mostly Spaniards who were government officials or wealthy landowners and merchants) were staunchly faithful to the Spanish crown, while liberals (mostly educated men of the middle class) were divided regarding how much autonomy the island should have and the nature and degree of reform. From a political perspective, a cause for the poor social conditions had to be found and corrected. The historian Ribes Tovar voices the views of nineteenth-century liberal intellectuals who blamed the moral weakness of its inhabitants for Puerto Rico's problems:

civic irresponsibility, the enervating action of the tropical climate, ignorance, indolence, vagrancy, rampant sexuality, ignorance of physical

culture and the whole tone of community life on the island, which emphasized sensitivity and sensuousness at the expense of the intellect [were the causes of poverty and disease]. (85)

This general idea of social illness, frequently related in discourse of the times with physical illness, was at the base of policies that attempted to correct women's contributions to Puerto Rico's problems. In this passage there is a dichotomy between healthy, masculine traits (the intellect, knowledge, abstraction, responsibility) versus traits that were historically attributed to femininity (ignorance, sensitivity, sensuousness, irresponsibility). As Trigo has studied in detail, for liberal intellectuals, the metaphor for the literal and figurative diseases that plagued the country was the infirm female body that would give birth to a nation of enervated leaders. To cure this diseased nation, a segment of the intellectual elite focused on miscegenation, concubinage, and vagrancy in the lower classes, while bourgeois women and elite women were targeted for improving their motherhood skills and eliminating vanity (which was associated with flirtatiousness). The Catholic Church's policies to mitigate sexual promiscuity worked in line with the goals of the liberals, despite that the Church's impetus was moral reform in a religious sense rather than social reform with an eye on the future of a "healthy" independent nation. I will discuss these policies in

detail throughout this chapter. Not all *letrados* (lettered men) concentrated solely on women's motherhood skills; Tapia y Rivera and Hostos, for example, actively sought to improve women's education.

Power struggles between liberals and conservatives created a tense political climate. For almost three and a half centuries, Puerto Ricans did not have any say in choosing their local leaders, as all were appointed from Spain. In 1870, the first liberal political party was born: the *liberal reformista* (Liberal Reformist Party). As a reaction to this, the conservatives began the *partido incondicional español* (Spanish Inconditional Party), comprised of wealthy royalist Spanish landowners, officials, and merchants who controlled economic and political affairs of the island. With the formation of these two factions, political struggle intensified and liberals and conservatives were more polarized.

The 1868 Grito de Lares (named for the town of Lares, where it originated) was a significant moment in history because it was an organized, albeit unsuccessful, insurrection against Spanish rule. Mariana Bracetti (a.k.a. *Brazo de Oro*, Golden Arm) had an organizing role in the rebellion, and the respected poet and activist Lola Rodríguez de Tió was sympathetic to the cause.⁵ Bracetti was imprisoned for her participation and Rodríguez de Tió was exiled in 1889 (the second exile since the late 1870s), possibly for protesting the political

imprisonment of patriots during the *compointes*, a period of persecution against suspected organizers of boycotts of Spanish interests.

The late 1880s were a time of intense economic decline on the island and much anti-Spanish sentiment. In 1887 the Puerto Rican Autonomist Party formed in support of greater Puerto Rican representation in voting and decision making, a decentralized colonial government, and less restrictive trade policies with Spain. The founding members were liberals from the upper and middle bourgeoisie who hoped to also draw smaller businessmen and artisans to the movement.

The creation of the Autonomist party occurred at approximately the same time that some bourgeois liberals began organizing boycotts against Spanish interests on the Island. To crush the boycotts, the Spanish governor Romualdo Palacio began the *compointes*. Founding members of Autonomist party, known as *patriots*, were tortured and persecuted for confessions and information. Many patriots were exiled to New York during this time, where women saw the greater agency and freedom of female U.S. citizens (Ribes Tovar 181). The late nineteenth century was a time when proto-feminists such as Rodríguez de Tió and Roqué would begin to voice their critiques of women's situation.

After years of wavering commitment to allowing Puerto Rico greater self-rule, nationals earned some degree of self-government. In 1886 there was a vote for Puerto Rican representatives in the Spanish Congress and in 1897 Spain

approved the Autonomic Charter, in which it conceded political and administrative autonomy to the island. This success was halted in 1898 when the United States invaded and took official possession of Puerto Rico, judging that it was unprepared for any significant self-rule.

It seems that liberal reforms in public health and education were planned to take place in Puerto Rico regardless of whether the island was under Spanish or U.S. control. Toward the end of the nineteenth century before the U.S. take-over, liberals succeeded in obtaining support for education from the Spanish Republic. Ribes Tovar states that women of the island “sought to benefit from [liberal reforms], but the conservatives tried to keep them in a state of subjugation. In the press they carried on a subtle campaign against rights for women with poems extolling their beauty, the nobility of their life in the home, and on other topics” (181). While he does not give documentation for such a campaign, women’s magazines (generally directed by men) that concentrated almost exclusively on fashion, religion, domesticity, and feminine virtue were very popular throughout late nineteenth-century Spanish America. A general pattern of liberal reform, accompanied by a push for women to be domestic angels of the house and emulate the Virgin Mary, was common.

When the United States took over in 1898, women were anxious to continue development of education started in the nineteenth century and, under

U.S. influence, looked toward gaining more rights (Ribes Tovar 185). The United States improved infrastructure, education, and scientific research centers, with particular emphasis on the control of epidemics and teaching proper hygiene (Ribes Tovar 186).

**Clerical and Governmental Control of Sexuality through Popular Customs:
Dress, Dance, Leisure, and Public Space: 1700s-mid-1800s.**

I begin in the eighteenth century to show how moral standards for women regarding their dress, appearance, and customs intensified in the nineteenth century. Tracing these changes is one way to conceptualize the increased standards of morality and the ruling class's desire to contain female sexuality that become more prominent in the nineteenth century. That is not to say that there is a clear-cut shift from one century to the next in terms of social policy, but rather that the critique against women's "immorality" began early and led to changes in the 1800s.

In the eighteenth century the Church pinpointed five areas of sexual behavior for correction among parishioners: promiscuity, incest, extramarital sex, prostitution, and abortion.⁶ In order to correct these moral offenses, clergy supported limitations on social activities where members of the opposite sex met. These limitations were likely leveled at people of the working classes, as elite and

bourgeois women were more apt to have a select group of men from their social class from which to choose (or from which their parents chose) for marriage and were monitored and chaperoned very closely. There were likely many political reasons for limiting working-class extramarital relationships in addition to the religious motivation of minimizing so-called sins of the flesh. As I have mentioned, controlling female reproductive bodies in late colonial Spanish America was a tool the ruling class used to attempt to prevent miscegenation, to maintain wealth within racial groups and social classes, and to ensure a “healthy” population of virile citizens with a father/husband as the undisputed head of the family. In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, women were the focus of limitations on sexual behavior because they were held responsible for permitting or prohibiting men from seducing and impregnating them (Barceló Miller 70).

Women from the upper classes were controlled sexually in a number of ways. Strict surveillance and gossip within one’s social class regarding young ladies’ perceived virginity monitored and restricted their activities, behavior, and movement within social circles (Suárez Findlay 48-49). Parental and social conditioning pushed them into economically or politically advantageous marriages. Concubinage among people of the “white,” leisured class was very rare; the need for men with property to control their wives’ bodies completely

was important for inheritance and maintaining masculinist ideology through generations. After marriage, prison terms of up to six years were not uncommon for elite women who were convicted of adultery (Suárez Findlay 27). The affront to masculine honor and reputation is one way of explaining this strict sentence, but the doubt that infidelity cast upon the legitimacy of heirs was likely an important cause as well.

The moral reforms that religious officials prescribed in order to control and limit the amorous meetings of young people were broad. They enacted restrictions for society as a whole, as well as particular limitations for women. In an obsessive effort to minimize contact between young unmarried people, the Church disallowed festivals and activities. For example, in 1729 a Church mandate prohibited religious celebrations held at night in honor of the saints where young men and women could meet and enact “great offenses against God” (my translation; Pizarro in Barceló Miller 68). In 1787, the custom of singing the rosary was forbidden, because it turned into a night of “profane diversions” and in 1760 *fandangos* (dances where young people socialized) were eliminated for the same reason (Barceló Miller 69-70). Religious officials hoped that by controlling social customs and public spaces they could monitor the private sexual lives of its parishioners. The idea of exerting manipulating citizens’ lives overflowed into other areas.

The concern over what the Church saw as immorally overt sexuality was reflected in its critiques of women's clothing. Ribes Tovar has found that in the eighteenth century Puerto Rican *criollas* dressed in lighter attire than European women because of the hot and humid climate. Women's dresses in Puerto Rico exhibited lower necklines and less voluminous and shorter skirts than those of European women. This lighter apparel caused San Juan's bishop in 1712 to accuse *criollas* of dressing provocatively to "induce lustfulness in men" (Ribes Tovar 65). This critique highlights the belief that women's bodies were the site of control over promiscuity. The physical and visual restraint of female bodies through clothing became one way the church attempted to stifle sexual activity occurring outside of the church- and state-sanctioned bond of marriage.

Apparently the Church's admonishments against low necklines yielded some success because in the nineteenth century women's attire became more conservative. French influence brought "high-necked dresses, buttoned down the front, with pleats at the bust and lace collar and cuffs" better suited to European climate than to the tropics (Ribes Tovar 99). In addition to this ample costume, women wore black shawls to go out in public (Ribes Tovar 99). Hegemonic social policy succeeded in repressing the sexuality that apparently flowed too easily through Puerto Rican women's lighter garments.

Dance was another indicator of moral social climate and a means to gauge sexual mores in late colonial Puerto Rico. Like women's dress, bourgeois dance took on a slightly more conservative tone from the 1700s to the 1800s. In the eighteenth century *criollos* began to transform conservative traditional Spanish dances to fit the "Antillean environment": "the body was used to interpret intimate fantasies which expressed profound inner impulses" (73). That is, dances became more sensual and closer to embodying sexual urges. By 1832, however, the sensual aspect of dance was curtailed. The dance of preference at the time was the Sevillian-style contradanza, whose final step was deemed too provocative: "[after changing partners] the original couple briefly reunited in a symbolical amorous embrace" (Ribes Tovar 98). This last step "resulted in too many duels" and was thus eliminated (98). Although it is not clear from the historian's account who made the proclamation banning the dance, the important point is that the act reflects a conservative tendency in the nineteenth century in Puerto Rico, similar to those in the United States and Europe, aimed at repressing overt shows of sexuality in the national dances. Dances of the lower classes and those associated most with Afro-Puerto Ricans (such as the *danza*), however, remained erotic and were taboo for members of the so-called respectable classes.⁷

Cultural conservatism intensified in Puerto Rican society in the nineteenth century. In an effort to stifle patriots and prevent liberation movements, Spanish

governors enacted oppressive regulations on Puerto Rican society. Although the aim was to prevent national independence, personal liberty was taken away in the sense of freedom to conduct one's private life in regard to social activities and interactions with the opposite sex. While the church issued mandates for activities under its power, the government did the same. This excerpt paints a picture of the social and moral cleansing the government undertook in order to prevent insurrection and promote a hygienic society:

In 1824, with the closing of the houses of prostitution and a wave of arrests of vagabonds and criminal elements, the artisans who frequented the gambling houses were fined, and games, with the exception of chess, checkers, backgammon and *chaquete*, were banned even in private houses, which served as an excuse for police raids on meeting places. And other restrictions were imposed upon the population as fears of political revolt increased. Any person found on the street after 10 p.m. was fined, and all places of public entertainment were forced to close at that hour. It was forbidden to entertain house guests in private homes and penalties were imposed upon those who hid runaway slaves, minors or married women who left their legal owners, parents or husbands to live by themselves... (Ribes Tovar 108)

This excerpt demonstrates the invasion of public policy into the private spaces of citizens in order to impose a moral standard that was arbitrarily decided by local officials.⁸ It is particularly noteworthy that the above law enforcement favored a strong male head of the family; a father who let his wife or children wander from his home could be subject to fines.

Despite church officials' efforts to moralize sexual behavior in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, people of the working classes did not change their sexual mores.⁹ Church officials were especially concerned about the increase in premarital cohabitation, which was easier for the lower classes than finding time and money to marry. Suárez Findlay claims that concubinage and serial long-term monogamy without marriage were so deeply embedded in the culture of the lower classes that these incentives could not change people's behaviors. The church, nonetheless, sought to gain control over the moral formation of its congregation by reinforcing the importance of marriage and its vehicle was women's education. Marriage fees were also removed in order to make the institution more accessible to the lower classes, whose lack of concern for formalizing sexual relationships alarmed social policy-makers. Pronouncements on familial politics, as I will discuss in the following chapter, are apparent in Roqué's and Zeno Gandía's fictional representations of Puerto Rican

concubinage and marriage. Ironically, it would not be until the United States introduced divorce after the invasion that marriage would become more desirable to the population at large (Suárez Findlay 113-16). It was not financial incentive that would encourage couples to formalize their unions, but rather the legal possibility of dissolving the marriage if the partners were unhappy. One can speculate that women in particular might have viewed marriage as a more viable option once they had the possibility of divorce to legally separate from an abusive or indigent husband.

While some church documents from the nineteenth century portrayed women as temptresses to be avoided under most circumstances, María Barceló Miller has found that the church vigorously projected the moral ideal of the Virgin Mary as a corrective model. Barceló Miller coins a phrase to talk about this propagandistic shift in the characterization of women: “De la polilla a la virtud” (from moth to virtue; 78). The metaphor of woman as a moth—a pernicious insect that devours and ruins fine fabric (innocent men)—is taken from an 1864 ecclesiastic proclamation.¹⁰ Barceló Miller finds numerous examples in other documents issued by bishops and friars that contain strong warnings for men, particularly clergy, to guard against women’s seductive powers (78-79). In the 1860s there is also a marked exaltation of the cult of the Virgin Mary. Two major institutions were founded around this time to propagate the cult to the

virgin, La Primera Conferencia del Inmaculado Corazón de María (the First Conference of the Immaculate Heart of Mary) in 1859 and La Congregación de las Hijas de María (the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary) in 1870 (Barceló Miller 80-81). In addition, in 1861 religious retreats were organized for women from the capital (80). This impossibly self-sacrificing ideal set the standard for female virtue and sexual repression, survived, and gained momentum throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

Women's emulation of the Virgin Mary entailed, according to church documents of the era, the responsibilities of serving as a model of religious devotion (to "save" society), encouraging love for and obedience to father or husband, and performing the role of faithful and docile servants within the family. In return for these services, women, instead of being scorned by the church and patriarchy (as the devouring moth), would receive "protection" and remain sheltered (Barceló Miller 78-83). Protection, as I will discuss later in this chapter, had a double meaning: material comforts that men could provide as well as the oppression that came from living in a patriarchal system and receiving some of its conditional benefits.

Another factor that affected political decision-makers' manipulation of female roles in the nineteenth century was the decline in the economy and standard of living. This created a need for women of the lower classes to enter

the work force as maids, seamstresses, and day workers (*jornaleras*). From 1871 to 1880 the number of women who were housewives decreased from 5,520 to 3,844, (a decrease of 1,636) while the number of women in the work force increased from 299 to 2,184 (Barceló Miller 85). The church largely ignored this change in women's roles and continued to uphold Mary as the ideal model for all women. It is likely that women felt conflicted regarding the intensification of moral standards set for them with the promise of patriarchal "protection," when they were out in the work force earning a living for themselves. This clash between symbolic nation-building propaganda and real life was one of the circumstances that likely led women to begin and/or continue a process of questioning their circumstances.

Medical Discourse, Fear, and "Protection" through Sexual Segregation and Beneficent Institutions

One of the ways that medically-derived social outlook manifested itself was in a marked increase in institutions throughout Spanish America intended to confine individuals who "contaminated" a population with sexual deviance, vagrancy, or mental illness.¹¹ As Trigo has shown, medical discourse on so-called social diseases was inspired by intellectuals' fear of the Afro-Puerto Rican body and the lack of control over women's reproductive bodies. In turn, the social

policies that the elites adopted to control these perceived ailments played upon the fears of the population at large, by discursively connecting social diseases with imagery of vampires and medusas (Trigo 6, 69-89). Most of the institutionalized forms of social control were directed at the Afro-Puerto Rican population and lower classes for criminal or deviant behavior and prostitution. Bourgeois and elite women faced harsh consequences for asserting their sexual desires, e.g., for adultery, a topic Roqué broaches in her novel.

In nineteenth-century Latin America, as in Europe, the principal areas of university studies for men of the privileged classes were law and medicine. This meant significant overlap among professions in the ruling class: writers and politicians were sometimes trained as doctors or they had influential friends or advisors who were trained in the medical profession (Leys Stephan 40-42). Positivism (a philosophical approach that focused on science and progress) and eugenics are two examples of how medicine drove social and political thought and practice. These policies sexually oppressed men (in particular, Afro-Puerto Rican men in regard to white women) and women of the lower classes, and, to a lesser extent, women of the bourgeoisie in an effort to “whiten,” moralize, cure (to use Trigo’s term) and generally control the population. Despite the fact that bourgeois women were more likely to marry men of their own race because of social and class pressures, the symbolic effects of politicizing the female body (of

the peasant woman) through laws and medical discourse likely had an effect on how women of all social classes were perceived and treated. As Leys Stephan put it, in Latin America around the 1870s “science became a rallying cry for the modern, secular elite” (41). Science was, to a large degree, viewed as a panacea for Spanish-American social ills and a way to maintain the concentration of patriarchal power.

While there are many aspects of the employment of medical thought worthy of study, I will briefly speak, as preparation for my analysis of Ana Roqué’s novel, about the persuasive power of medical language in Puerto Rico.¹² The following is a passage in which Julio Camba, a Spanish humorist, reveals the vital importance of official-sounding terminology to the very existence of the masculine power spectacle (the duel):

Ya se sabe que en los desafíos no muere nadie; pero es *preciso mantener la creencia de que puede morir alguien, y para mantenerla es para lo que están los médicos*. Las espadas, los sables, las pistolas, todo esto tiene un carácter decorativo y de panoplia, y uno puede mirarlo alegremente; pero, ¿y el botiquín? ¿A quién no le asalta por un instante la idea de la muerte al ver a un médico con su botiquín debajo del brazo?

It is already known that in a duel no one dies, *but it is necessary to sustain the belief that someone can die, and for this reason doctors are present.*

The swords, the sabers, the pistols—all of this has a decorative character, of panoply, and one can look at it with amusement. But what about the medical bag? To whose mind does the idea of death not jump, for an instant, upon seeing the doctor with his medical bag under his arm? (my emphasis, in Arana Soto 11-12)¹³

This paragraph highlights the symbolic legitimization physicians lent to social and political displays of masculine culture by supporting social policies that necessarily sought to create a hierarchy based on virility (here manifested in the so-called physical combat among gentlemen of the ruling class).¹⁴ Camba calls to the reader's attention the discrepancy between real and perceived danger in the duel.¹⁵ These words reveal that the doctor's presence creates an irrational fear that perpetuates the myth of danger and virility of the duel. The threat of death, statistically unlikely, is dramatically emphasized by a glimpse of the doctor's bag, its sharp instruments comfortably stowed, awaiting their moment in the spotlight to extract a bullet or stitch a blade wound. Fear was the same powerful tool for social control that allowed doctors to influence policies of eugenics and sexual segregation later in the century.¹⁶ Medical discourse in the novels of the time

conveys some of this fear-inspiring official power exemplified by the doctor's presence at the duel. Thus authors hoped to use this same discursive power to convince their readers of their own viewpoints.

In this section I will talk about how the Puerto Rican liberal intellectuals used medical discourse to enact policies of gender segregation and "protection" to repress women sexually to show the conditions against which Roqué wrote. The concept of women's protection was a political remedy to the fear of disease that the ruling class artificially induced or amplified. As Findlay observes, women of the upper classes participated on both ends of patriarchal protection: they were founders and directors of charitable organizations to control poor women through education or confinement and they were benefactors of the wealth and privilege of their fathers and husbands. The price of financial security (as well as protection in the sense of isolation from "black" and poor sectors of society), however, was women's intellectual development, freedom to choose outside a pool of "appropriate" husbands, and adherence to an oppressive code of female virtue that limited women's movement and behavior.

There are several types of legislative and administrative action in the nineteenth century that indicate a greater concern for the control and confinement of female citizens, mostly of the peasant and working classes. These were the segregation of women from men in state institutions that housed various types of

social misfits (i.e. orphans, delinquents, the mentally ill), and legislative efforts made to facilitate marriage and limit concubinage. While sexual segregation in institutions benefited women because it greatly reduced the threat of rape, the driving factor was one of social control over women's bodies. Separating women from men was a manifestation of politics' focus on the movement and location of female bodies; by controlling where and when women and men could cohabitate, the ruling class believed it could control how the population grew.

In the nineteenth century public health and service institutions began to segregate facilities by gender. One hospital specifically for women called the *Hospitalillo de la Concepción* (The Little Hospital of the Conception) had existed since 1615 and in 1823 it was made municipal property (Ribes Tovar 95). In 1838 its administration segregated male and female prisoners. In 1872 the residents of the *Asilo de Beneficencia* (The Asylum of Beneficence, an orphanage, lunatic asylum, reform home for prostitutes and criminals, and old-age home) was categorized and divided by sex and condition (Ribes Tovar 96). Prior to this, inhabitants of both sexes shared latrines in the *Asilo*. These changes are the result of medical theories of disease and miscegenation that drove social change.

Social policies focused on women's sexuality logically manifested themselves in marriage laws. In 1805 "persons of recognized nobility" were permitted to marry people of "Negroid castes" (qtd. in Ribes Tovar 96). This

legislation was economically favorable to Afro-Puerto Rican women, because usually the person of higher social rank was a *criollo* man who married a woman of mixed or African origin; women of European descent were traditionally less likely to marry Afro-Cuban men.¹⁷ The impetus for this law was likely twofold: to whiten Afro-Puerto Rican women's offspring by allowing them to marry white men, and to legitimize cohabitation that carried on regardless of whether it was officially condoned.

While these social and political actions seem to have been aimed at protecting women by providing them with physical security in institutions and economic security through marriage to "whiter" partners, they also focus on women almost exclusively as reproductive bodies, rather than citizens with civil liberties. Few or no laws were upheld to protect Afro-Puerto Rican women from abuse by their white husbands, for example. The liberal policies the intellectual elites enacted carried as a subtext a strong desire to bring women's sexuality within bounds, whether by marriage or segregated spaces within institutions. So, social policies of the times had a double result: greater security, accompanied by social codes of seclusion aimed at limiting women's social agency and private lives.¹⁸ It is this social desire to contain and limit female sexuality without considering women's health and happiness that Roqué's novel highlights and criticizes.

Women's Education and Social Control¹⁹

As many scholars have recognized, women's education was used in nineteenth-century Spanish America as a nation-building tool. This was true in Puerto Rico, where "Puerto Rican women of whatever class, it seemed, were [accused of being] unfit mothers, a major cornerstone of Puerto Rico's weakness" (Suárez Findlay 59). Political treatises of the times touted the nation's future mothers' preparation in domestic skills, religion, hygiene, and basic literacy as a way to form a strong nation of intelligent and virile young men (future leaders and professionals) and obedient, prudent young women (future mothers). While for white Puerto Rican peasant women this meant a moral sexual education to "protect" them from mixing with "black" men, for bourgeois women it meant curbing their flirtatious and frivolous nature and transforming them into diligent and prudent matrons of their homes.

A discussion of women's education is relevant to the following chapter in that Roqué taught school and actively proposed broader curricula for women (especially of the upper class) to better match the academic formation of the men of their classes. I will trace some history of women's education in Puerto Rico in order to show how, in response to liberalism, "Puerto Rican bourgeois feminists began to articulate their own moral vision of egalitarian elite marriages... and the

white, wealthy women's right to intellectual and sexual fulfillment" (Suárez Findlay 15). As the tone of Suárez Findlay's quote indicates, early bourgeois feminists did not enfranchise their mixed-race sisters into these objectives. Instead bourgeois and elite women helped lower-class women through charity and beneficent institutions, but it is not likely that they did it in an attempt to grant them equal rights and privileges.

Like marriage laws, the national interest in women's education was to aid in the process of "whitening" the culture. The ruling class believed that women's education was necessary to "purify the island's unhealthy heterogeneity and move beyond the economic and political stagnation in which they believed Puerto Rico was trapped" (Suárez Findlay 53). As Suárez Findlay has noted, and as was true in other Latin American societies, it was not just the color of a Puerto Rican's skin that determined that person's social standing or "whiteness," but also his or her lifestyle and level of education. For instance, a white woman who had allowed herself to be courted by a man of mixed race could have been considered less "white," regardless of her family's social standing and the lightness of her skin. Educating women of all classes (with curricula guided by social status) would promote respectability (associated with socially desirable European qualities) and reduce men's adultery because they would esteem their wives more as partners.²⁰ The hope of liberal elites was that well-educated mothers "would

then raise the de-Africanized, disciplined laborers, on the one hand, and assertive, virile white citizens, on the other, who were necessary to form a newly prosperous Puerto Rico” (Suárez Findlay 59). This preference for so-called civilized, industrious citizens and the association of these ideals with white bodies of European immigrants was widespread in Latin America, where immigration laws provided incentives to these foreigners.

In the case of bourgeois women’s education, liberals focused on tempering flirtation and the threatening female passion that this implied. As Suárez Findlay notes, these “‘dangers’ [of female sexuality] threatened many components of elite identity: familial honor; the alleged link between class privilege, racial purity, and female sexual control; and male claims to exclusive ownership of women’s sexuality and sentiments” (62). She also points out that women’s definition as educated members of the elite class grew from the men of the ruling class’s visions of what the “proper” and “healthy” bourgeois Puerto Rican family should look like, *not* women’s own ideas of self- fulfillment (62).

Educated women of the bourgeoisie like Roqué, however, contested this limiting goal of education, arguing that women needed intellectual stimulation for its own sake. Educating women thus yielded a result male intellectuals had not anticipated, as Rodríguez de Tió pointed out in 1875: “Women’s education could be an obstacle to the ill-conceived ends of frivolous men, because a lettered

woman will not always have the flexibility that the male ego requires” (in Suárez Findlay 63). Early feminists were aware, then, that efforts to educate them were not intended to give them free will to speak their minds and enter a process of subjectification through actualizing their desired selves, if these self-forged identities contradicted male-authored notions of the new nation. In the following chapter I will further discuss Roqué’s literary participation in women’s struggles to move beyond molds set for them as building blocks of the ideal republican family.

Feminism in late nineteenth-century Puerto Rico grew out of this conflict between the liberal elite’s political goals and bourgeois women’s personal goals for self realization. In the face of a strong push for conservative curricula for girls that focused on domestic and religious instruction, a handful of men and women were actively pursuing a broader range of courses for women as well as more facilities and instructors to reach a greater number of students. According to Azize Vargas, early feminist ideas came to Puerto Rico through male intellectuals such as Eugenio María de Hostos, Salvador Brau, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, and Manuel Fernández Juncos.²¹ Although they did not support the social equality of women, these men envisioned education as a means of bettering women’s social condition and denounced their poor working conditions in the early 1900s (Azize Vargas 19). Tapia also directed a journal for women, La azucena (The White

Lily), and defended women's rights. Azize Vargas recognizes Roqué, along with Rodríguez de Tió, as the first women to defend women's rights to better education and more participation in extra-domestic spheres (19).²²

Public mandates to increase schools in Puerto Rico began in the eighteenth century, but efforts to include girls' education were greater at the end of the nineteenth century.²³ It was not until 1849 that the girls' school of the Hermanas del Oratorio de San Felipe (Sisters of the Oratory of Saint Phillip) opened (Ribes Tovar 93). Five schools of importance opened for girls between 1880 and 1886: Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1880), Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza (Institute of Secondary Learning, 1883), and the Sociedad Protectora de la Inteligencia (Protectorate Society of Intelligence, 1886), the last being an organization that awarded scholarships to students to continue their studies in Spain (Ribes Tovar 94-95).²⁴ Records show that during this time nuns also gave free instruction to a small number of female children from poor families (Ribes Tovar 94). Women's overall participation in the education of their sex, however, was limited and underpaid.²⁵

At the end of the century, bourgeois women in Puerto Rico took a relatively more active part in educating women from the lower classes by creating the above-mentioned institution to fund girls' educations. The 1886 pamphlet Reglamento de la Asociación de Damas para la Instrucción de la Mujer

(Regulations of the Association of Ladies for the Instruction of Woman) contains government-approved rules for the Proyecto de Reglamento (Project of Regulation), which was carried out by the Women's Association for Women's Education.²⁶ The organization was under the patronage of the Condesa de Verdú. It was a privately funded body, and the pamphlet seems to have served as a charter, with articles stating the goals, governing posts, sources of funding, and other rules for the association's actualization of funding and encouraging women's education.

The Women's Association's impetus for supporting education was the "notable desarrollo que va ganando en Europa y América la educación e instrucción de la mujer" (notable development that women's education is gaining in Europe and America). So a partial reason, from the elite ladies' perspective, was to keep Puerto Rico up to date with cultural norms in Europe and North America. The Association also recognizes the responsibility of "las más elevadas clases" (the most elevated classes) to take care of the education of "hijas de familia pobre o medianamente acomodadas que tengan vocación para la enseñanza" (daughters of poor or middle-class families who have a vocation for teaching; 5). The tone in these statements is noteworthy because it is not one of solidarity with women of the working classes, but rather one of paternal (or maternal) protection, not unlike the discourse of male liberal elites. While women

of the upper classes recognized a responsibility to educate those of the lower classes, fear of racial and class conflict and differences prevented any real enfranchisement of lower-class women into bourgeois women's early feminist imaginings.

The Asociación de Damas did, nonetheless, promote job skills and literacy for women who may have otherwise remained ignorant. The goal of the organization was to finance the education of women who wanted to be teachers and administrators, and a future goal was to finance the education of women in commerce, telegraph operation, typography, bookbinding, obstetrics, and other areas (6).²⁷ The social bond and common ideology between upper-class women and the male intellectuals who were their relatives and acquaintances is apparent in the Asociación de Damas's interest in promoting medical advances advocated by the ruling class. For example, the charter states that an individual could earn the title of protector if they actively participated in efforts to vaccinate the population and promote proper hygiene.²⁸ Elite women participated in medical discourse of the times, despite the fact that it functioned beyond controlling viruses and seeped into social policies that often oppressed and biologically essentialized them.

Scientific language, however, was not always used to promote an unrealistic and debilitating ideal of obedient republican womanhood; some men of the ruling class used positivist discourse to defend women's right to intellectual

development. In 1872 in Santiago, Chile, Hostos made a declaration against the inferior position of women in which he used scientific language to condemn women's traditional domestic and religious education (Ribes Tovar 113). He condemned society's pressure on women to be attractive (and little else) because it rendered them frivolous. Hostos denounced the government's neglect of women's education and its focus on them as reproductive bodies: "Woman has been reduced to the level of a two-legged mammal which procreates its kind, which feeds its biped offspring from its breasts, which sacrifices to the life of the species its own individual existence..." (qtd. in Ribes Tovar 113).²⁹ Since social degeneration was associated with the uncivilized, unevolved, and/or animalistic vocabulary with which Hostos imbues his speech, the word choice plays on a deep fear of the ruling class. The implication is that women pass these characteristics on to their children, thus breeding a degenerate and weak citizenry.

The U.S. presence after 1898 had a significant impact on education in Puerto Rico. Education was made universal, free, and available to children in rural areas whereas prior to this time schools were concentrated in the cities. It seems Puerto Ricans had control over many of the decisions that were made regarding curricula and planning, as seven of the nine members of the Junta de Educación were Puerto Rican (Rivera 126).

Another important change brought by the United States was a renewed emphasis on sewing classes for girls. This time, however, sewing was for neoimperialist economic and war aims rather than ideological control of women to stay at home and be good mothers; thus catechism and domestic arts were no longer the focus of women's curricula. With the onset of World War I and the inaccessibility to European markets to fulfill demands for clothing, the United States looked to Puerto Rico to produce this good. The Puerto Rican clothing industry was so successful that the courses continued to be offered for girls and became the means by which U.S.-owned factories in this lucrative industry were supplied with cheap female labor for the next three decades (Rivera 131).

Conclusions

The goal of this chapter is to show how women were reduced to reproductive bodies by hegemonic forces guided by gaining or maintaining power. Elites thought that by solving the population's numerous social "illnesses," i.e. racial heterogeneity, mental ailments, laziness, and other undesirable traits that were considered biological, they could begin to eliminate these problems in future generations of citizens. In an attempt to stamp out these negatives, they focused on women's sexuality because of their belief in the hereditary nature of degeneracy and delinquency on the one hand, and industry

and morality on the other. “White” women could thus be socially conditioned and educated to choose lighter-skinned partners and ingrain republican morals in their children. Liberal and conservative politicians as well as the Catholic church attempted to stifle or control women’s sexuality through marriage laws, education, recreation, and dress codes. Roqué’s representation of a young woman who marries an older European man for money and power, only to be miserable, sexually frustrated, and driven into the arms of another man, is a way of speaking to social controls that ignored women’s basic right to seek happiness.

Medical discourse played a central role in elites’ ability to enact social policies that limited women’s and men’s civil liberties. Medical language regarding disease and heredity lent official-sounding justification and it inspired fear of the unhygienic consequences of ignoring its imperatives. These consequences could be revolts from a growing population of oppressed Afro-Puerto Ricans (the fear was still lingering from the bloody Haitian revolt) or a nation unprepared for the independence it hoped to gain one day. In the following chapter I will discuss the ways that medical discourse oppressed women within the gender hierarchy. I will also discuss in more detail Roqué’s connection to science and education and how this led her to appropriate medical discourse in her novel.

Notes to Chapter Five

¹ Please see chapter one of Lydia Margarita González-Quevedo's study "A Postcolonial Approach to a Colonial Literature?: The Case of Puerto Rico" for a critical analysis of the problem of authority in the writing off Puerto Rico's history. Salvador Brau's Historia de Puerto Rico (1904) (which followed his Puerto Rico y su historia in 1892) was the history textbook used for many years in Puerto Rican schools and presents a paternalistic history that views U.S. occupation as a route to material progress (12-13, 23). She signals Fernando Picó as the historian who first "raises questions" about Brau's view and presents the U.S. invasion as an usurpation of independence and gives significance to the nationalistic gesture of the Grito de Lares (27). Blanca Silvestrini and María Dolores Luques Sánchez's Historia general de Puerto Rico: trayectoria de un pueblo (1987) is what González-Quevedo considers the first feminist history (16-19).

² The importation of slaves reached its maximum in Puerto Rico between 1825 and 1835, with between 60,000-80,000 slaves brought to the island between 1815 and 1845 (Scarano 405-6).

³ While sugar was the main cash crop from roughly 1820-1876, coffee replaced it from 1876-1898 (Scarano 461).

⁴ These, along with small tobacco growers and cigar makers, cattle ranchers, and fishermen, made up a middle class. People of the middle classes also worked in administrative positions, commerce, shipping, and skilled services. The lowest on the social ladder worked as farm laborers and domestic servants.

⁵ Lola Rodríguez de Tió (Puerto Rico 1824-Cuba 1924) was a distinguished national poet, author of Puerto Rico's national anthem "La Borinqueña," and fervent pro-independent activist. She was twice exiled from Puerto Rico (to Venezuela in 1877 and to Cuba in 1889) for her patriotic verses and for speaking out in defense of pro-independence political prisoners. In 1892 she was exiled from Cuba for independence activism and moved to New York, where she worked with the Cuban poet and revolutionary José Martí and a group of writers and intellectuals to actualize Cuban and Puerto Rican independence. When the U.S. took Puerto Rico she left New York in 1902 for Cuba, which was then freed from Spanish rule, and lived there until she died. Her husband was the journalist and independence activist Bonicio Tió y Segarra.

⁶ In 1526 Spain authorized, and the Catholic church approved, the first house of prostitution in America (Flores Ramos 84). This is an early example of the way that the church condemned prostitution as an immoral activity, while at the same time it had a hand in controlling it (and perpetuating it) rather than fighting solely for its abolition.

⁷ See Suárez Findlay for more on the elite's relationship to dances of the lower classes (56-57).

⁸ Ironically, starting in 1837 with the Spanish Captain-General Angel Acosta, Spanish governors in Puerto Rico *encouraged* gambling and base entertainment to keep its inhabitants' minds off of insurrection and even built many gambling houses in San Juan for this purpose (Golding 82).

⁹ Barceló Miller cites the development of the single-crop plantation economy as an impediment to the church's edicts; the decline in quality of life and the rigorous planting schedule of slaves and workers prevented them from participating in religious rituals and from formalizing unions through marriage (74-77).

¹⁰ The following is from an 1864 ecclesiastic edict "La polilla procede de los vestidos y de la mujer la iniquidad del hombre" (Moths come from dresses and from woman comes the iniquity of man; Fray José M. Fernández in Barceló Miller 79).

¹¹ Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason (Trans. Richard Howard, New York: Random House, 1988) is a book-length essay that offers reflections on representations of madness in historical documents and fiction. Among the many functions and faces of madness, Foucault traces the institutionalization of madness as a scapegoat to replace leprosy in the mid-sixteenth century, the necessity to marginalize the insane as a protection for reason, and subjugation of the insane. See also The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America : Essays on Criminology, Prison Reform, and Social Control, 1830-1940 (Ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre, Austin, TX: U of Texas P Institute of Latin American Studies, 1996). For an analysis of the medical profession's exploitation of power to marginalize hegemonically undesirable segments of society in Argentina, see Jorge Salessi's Médicos maleantes y maricas: higiene, criminología y homosexualidad en la construcción de la nación argentina: Buenos Aires, 1871-1914 (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz

Viterbo, 1995). For a history of modern psychiatry's abuse and oppression of women, see Phyllis Chesler's Women and Madness (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1997).

¹² Hegemonic powers in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico were the Catholic church, local and Spanish officials, and members of the wealthy landowning class and the bourgeoisie.

¹³ In the nineteenth century it was common for doctors to accompany opponents in a duel, ostensibly in the case of injury, although they were rarely called upon for their services. Note that although this passage is from a Spanish humorist, his opinion is supported by the Puerto Rican medical historian, doctor, and president of the Committee on History and Culture Dr. S. Arana Soto.

¹⁴ The reason I specify that the opponents are from the ruling class is because they could afford the display of arms and pomp mentioned in Arana Soto's study.

¹⁵ Arana Soto claims that the duel was often stopped by a relative or judge if one of the opponents was even lightly scratched from a sword. Many times the gun failed to work properly, or the participant did not shoot on target. In other cases, the time allotted for the duel ran out without either of the men being injured (15).

¹⁶ See Nancy Leys Stephan's The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America.

¹⁷ Benigno Sánchez-Eppler analyzes policies of social "whitening" or *blanqueamiento* in nineteenth-century Cuba that encouraged women of all races to find the whitest partner possible for reproduction, leading to the social "castration" of black men, to use Sánchez-Eppler's term. It can be assumed that a similar process was underway in Puerto Rico, a country similar in its interracial population produced from the trade of slaves. Another legislative act aimed at favoring marriage in lieu of premarital cohabitation of interracial couples was the 1881 abolition of a law that forced people of different racial backgrounds to obtain special permission to marry (Ribes Tovar 96). Its elimination did away with additional fees and delays that prevented couples from legitimizing their unions.

¹⁸ Félix V. Matos Rodríguez views the creation of institutions for women workers in the latter half of the nineteenth century as a way to perpetuate exploitative urban domestic labor after abolition.

¹⁹ For an overview of women's education in Puerto Rico from its origins to the 1980s see Marcia Rivera's article (in Works Cited). For a thorough history of education for both sexes, see *A History of Education in Puerto Rico* by Juan José Osuna (San Juan: U de Puerto Rico, 1949).

²⁰ Liberal elites perceived women of principally African heritage, however, to be too dominated by sensuality to reap the benefits of education (albeit the degree of perceived Africanness could vary depending on a woman's social status and lifestyle).

²¹ All of these men are well-known figures in Puerto Rican letters. Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903) was an educator, novelist, literary critic, and thinker with a broad humanist background in sociology and philosophy whose thought influenced related fields, such as political science and economics. He was also an activist for the abolition of slavery and for Puerto Rican and Cuban independence from Spain. Salvador Brau (1842-1912) was a poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, journalist, and historian who also wrote about public education for peasant women. Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1826-1882) contributed to Puerto Rican letters an extensive opus of poetry, prose, and drama; he is among the most important figures in Puerto Rican literature. Manuel Fernández Juncos (1846-1928) was born in Spain and moved to Puerto Rico when he was twelve years old. He was a poet, writer, and journalist who founded several important liberal periodicals on politics and the arts. He was active in education reform and in politics as part of the Partido Autonomista, a liberal party in Puerto Rico that attempted to work with liberal Spanish politicians, but later abandoned his political career over a fallout with the Partido, focusing instead on education reform.

²² Young ladies of the wealthy class were not left completely uneducated, even before the era of education reform. They were taught catechism, some literacy and social skills, and were expected to cultivate some special talent, such as painting, playing the piano, or embroidery.

²³ A mandate from Spain in 1783 called for the establishment of thirty-two schools for girls (Rivera 121). The results of this ruling were not seen until 1799

when four educational facilities for females were established in San Juan. The curricula of these first schools did not mandate reading and writing; they included catechism, needlework, and manners, while reading was only offered upon request (Rivera 121). Rivera finds in Osuna's records that not only were women instructors paid a lower salary than male instructors, but five years later, in 1804, they have still not been remunerated (Osuna 19 in Rivera 121). Women's formation was limited to domestic and moral instruction.

In the early nineteenth century, liberal ideas entered Puerto Rico with the successes of the independence movement in South America, which resulted in increased importance on public education for both sexes (Ribes Tovar 93). In 1820, a woman of modest means named Celestina Cordero y Molina founded a school for girls that included elementary reading and writing as well as Christian doctrine, sacred history, and domestic arts (Ribes Tovar 92).²³ Great emphasis was placed on manners and decorum; girls were taught to respect their elders and be still in public. It is not so surprising that this narrow scope of subject matter was taught in the first girls' schools; this follows the evolutionary pattern of women's education of Peru and Mexico. What is remarkable about this school is that Cordero y Molina needed the approval of so many religious and political officials in order to teach such a traditional curriculum; approval had to be granted from the bishop, the governor, the high police chief, and the deputies (Ribes Tovar 92)! This indicates an intensely conservative attitude toward even the most traditional and sanctioned teachings for women. In 1821 an educational facility for female citizens was founded by Vicenta Erickson (Ribes Tovar 93). Ribes Tovar claims that "[the] government of that period looked with disfavor on public education, since it counted upon ignorance as a protection for national integrity" (93).

According to a census from 1860, 40% of public schools and 36% of private schools were for girls, while 39% of all teachers were women (Rivera 121). By 1864, in San Juan there were eight public schools for girls and one private one, compared with twenty-four schools for boys (Ribes Tovar 94). The teachers were primarily *mestiza* (of mixed Spanish and Indian descent) and African-Puerto Rican. Ribes Tovar adds that the teaching staff was "usually composed of one lady of good family," which can be assumed to mean *criolla*--of pure Spanish origin (94). In 1878, however, the number of girls' schools dropped to eight for a population of 25,000 citizens (Ribes Tovar 94).

Between 1865 to 1880 the Spanish government began to see education as a means of crushing separatist sentiments (Osuna in Rivera 122). It seems that influencing education was an ideological battle between the conservative royalists and liberal intellectuals. In 1874 the Spanish governor José Laureano Sanz fired

all Island-born teachers from the public school system and replaced them with instructors from Spain. An 1880 Spanish decree on education limited public education for girls of the *nivel superior* (highest level of education) to classes such as design, drawing, sewing, and domestic arts (Rivera 124). Spanish decision-makers were even less interested in developing women's intellectual growth than were liberal intellectuals, who were driven by the ideal of republican motherhood.

²⁴ He does not, however, tell us anything about the curricula of these schools, other than mentioning that the first had the same curriculum as the Congregación del Sagrado Corazón in other countries.

²⁵ A survey from 1880 shows that women educators in girls' schools received, on average, only 67% of male educators' salaries in schools for boys (Rivera 124). This differential persisted in the surveys of following years.

²⁶ This was an organization officially recognized in 1885 by the government and the Teachers' Association (Asociación de Maestros).

²⁷ Article seven of the charter states that the funding will come from member's dues, "subvenciones" from the town hall and provincial government and other associations, personal or business donations, inheritances, proceeds from theater performances, conferences, sales ("bazar"), and scholastic expositions, and interest accumulated on the funds from local branches (8). In addition to these sources of funding, article ten sets down the different classes of members (fundadores, natos, de mérito, protectores etc.), which include material gifts of land, financing a young woman's education, lending one's professional services to the organization, writing essays propounding the merits of women's education or offering an award for such an essay, donating books, donating items to sell in the bazaar, etc.

²⁸ This is taken from the charter in article 10, number 4 (for the title of protector), item 7: "Las que procuren con todo celo y eficacia la propagación del virus vacuno y el cumplimiento de las disposiciones sobre la higiene" (Reglamento 12).

²⁹ Another man who rallied for the education of women and did so in terms of the importance of educating female citizens in order to achieve progress for the new nations was Tapia y Rivera (see Ribes Tovar 113).

Chapter Six

Sexual Agency in Ana Roqué's *Luz y sombra*: A Subversion of the

Essentialized Woman

La sociedad siempre tiene un anatema para el que delinque, y sobre todo para la mujer, *a la que no se le permite ni un mal pensamiento*; y es porque las ciencias que de la moral tratan no son aún las mejor estudiadas.

Las fuerzas físicas de la Naturaleza producen innumerables estragos; el rayo mata, el huracán arrasa... *Pues también en nuestra naturaleza existen fuerzas instintivas muy poderosas, que son los principales móviles de nuestras acciones*, por lo que ya son objeto de estudio para los hombres pensadores.

Society always has an anathema for those who are delinquent, and above all for women, *of whom nary an evil thought is permitted*; this is because sciences that concern themselves with morality are still not adequately studied.

The physical forces of Nature produce immeasurable damage; lightning kills, hurricanes demolish... *Then very powerful instinctual forces exist in human nature as well; they are the prime motors of our actions*, and for this reason they are the object of study for thinkers. (my emphasis Roqué 104)

The introductory citation expresses the basis for my analysis; in Luz y sombra Ana Roqué encourages her reader to accept female sexuality (“instinctual forces”) as a natural part of human existence, rather than the medical/moral problem reformists posited it to be. As Thomas Laqueur has shown in his study on the history of sexuality from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth century in Europe, the scientific, social, and cultural denial of female sexual pleasure was a problem women faced outside of Hispanic culture as well. In her study on alleged medical cases of nymphomania in mid-to-late nineteenth-century United States and Europe, Carol Groneman notes the severe consequences the medicalization of women’s so-called unnatural sexual urges (which included wanting intercourse more than one’s husband did) posed to women’s wellbeing.¹

As in other parts of the world, social codes in Puerto Rico and throughout Spanish America systematically discouraged and/or denied female sexual desire as part of the self-abnegating Angel of the House model; that is, women’s “selfish” actions of any kind should be repressed if they were to be obedient wives and daughters who put the family’s needs above their own. As I have shown in the cases of Barragán and Cabello de Carbonera, desires that served women as individuals (such as writing, traveling, or pursuing higher education), rather than as part of the family unit, were discouraged; sexual desire was particularly dangerous, since it could lead to unsanctioned unions (outside of the

church and state's approved union of marriage) or adultery if unchecked.

Roqué's narrator thus signals the unjust sexual double standard that, for a woman, even an "impure thought" provokes "anathema." The narrator also calls for further study in scientific theory in regard to morality, indicating an awareness of the profound restrictions on women's behavior that scientific and social thinkers were advocating, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

Roqué's words imply that Puerto Rican *letrados* studying women as essentialized reproductive objects err by failing to consider women as desiring subjects, with sexual needs equal to those of men. The title Luz y sombra today could easily lead to a facile interpretation of the novel as a didactic work whose intention is to teach right ("light" or feminine chastity) from wrong ("shadow" or female adultery)—that is, to reward good Angels of the House and punish sexually deviant women, as Jorge Chen Sham suggests. Critics such as Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert have shown convincingly that the novel contains strong early feminist messages about female friendship and solidarity, that it equates female and male sexual desire, and that the traditional ending is a way of avoiding critique from contemporary scholars and readers.

My reading of the work will show that the novel sets up a false dichotomy between ideal feminine virtue and female adultery that the narrator and characters deconstruct. I will also look at how the structure of the novel contributes to

rewriting feminine identity. That is not to say that the novel condones adultery, but rather that it locates a middle ground where female sexual fulfillment is not only natural for women, but necessary, and sexual impulses are significant forces in men *and* women. Significantly, Roqué's morally idealized character expresses these messages, indicating that the author envisions sexual desire *within* the angelic standard.

The early feminism of Roqué's novel, then, lies in her rewriting of women as sexual agents, which employs masculinist rhetorical tools of medical discourse and enlightenment imagery to defend female sexuality, rather than present it as the social problem that many *letrados* (members of the elite) portrayed it to be. In this way, the author embraces female sexual pleasure that social policy has suppressed, much in the way that Cixous ("Laugh of the Medusa"), Irigaray, and Kristeva have done. Kristeva speaks of this pleasure (as a counter-hegemonic force) in terms of *jouissance*: "The overt expression of *jouissance*, a pleasure emerging outside the structures of the social order, is, in these texts particularly, a sign of woman gaining her own identity and entering the sphere of the subject as opposed to that of the passive object" (Kristeva, Chinese 138-52). Similarly, for Irigaray the female libido is "one symptom of something outside that threatened the signs, the sense, the syntax, the systems of representation of meaning and a praxis designed to the precise specifications of the (masculine) 'subject' of the

story” (Speculum 43).² I will show that for Roqué, valorizing female sexual pleasure and forging new models for female identity are linked through agency, much in the way that these twentieth-century theorists describe above.

Roqué also includes a subtle critique of male promiscuity, which was not an ethical concern for policy makers fervently intent on minimizing female sexual permissiveness. I will discuss how her discursive act of bringing female sexual agency to the fore is a reversal of the objectified focus on the female body common in social and political treatises and literature in the early twentieth century.

This analysis is not an influence study; however, to show the general type of image against which Roqué wrote, I will juxtapose her dynamic yet ill-fated protagonist Julia, who transgresses social norms in her dialogue, thought, and actions, to the female characters in Manuel Zeno Gandía’s novel La charca (Puerto Rico 1894), which portrays them as biological commodities commented upon by an omniscient *letrado* narrative voice. In order to give a cross-cultural context to Zeno Gandía’s naturalist, material descriptions of essentialized women (who are often discussed in terms of flesh, breasts, womb, and hardships they endure as sexual objects), I will draw on the thinker Julia Kristeva’s theory of the abject and the scientist and literary critic Laura Otis’s membrane theory.

Theories of Feminine Contamination

Kristeva and Otis have noted connections between a social or psychological apprehension of contamination by the reproductive feminine processes such as menstruation and childbirth and a desire to subjugate women for social, psychological, or nationalist reasons. Kristeva's theory of the abject and Otis's membrane model are two theories that link an individual's or group's fear of feminine contamination to literature.³

In her study of how cultures and individuals repress images of forces, individuals, and problems that are unacceptable to it or which challenge the culture's self-identity (in the particular case she takes up, the Nazi experience), Kristeva shows how such images will necessarily return from the space to which the culture consigns them in an act of repression (a region of the cultural unconscious that she terms the abject).⁴ In a masculinist culture suppressing images of the female outside the Angel of the House, as I have been describing it for the Hispanic world, images of women depicted by their flesh and sex (ability to reproduce) are consigned to that abject. Because of the threat to social "cleanliness" (imagined or real) that women's biology presents, they may only be confronted by culture in a manageable form: first, as a kind of taboo, as images of bodily fluids and menstrual blood and then in other associated images that render the women's sphere cognitively and experientially off-limits to the dominant

culture. The emissions of tears and semen, which are gender neutral or masculine, are *not*, however, traditionally associated with the repulsion instinct produced by the abject. According to Kristeva, the “horror” of the inside of the maternal and feminine body has led society to “protect” itself from these wastes by separating women from men and placing them in a subordinate position as a means of preserving identity (e.g., the separation or exclusion of menstruating women in various cultures).⁵ Fear of the feminine abject thus harms women by amplifying sexual difference that manifests itself in a fear and subjugation of them (70-77). Embracing this region of abjected signification is the overriding project of the French feminists of the 1970s, especially as codified as a political project in Hélène Cixous’s seminal essay “Laugh of the Medusa” (1976) and continued in Luce Irigaray’s Speculum of the Other Woman (1974). In these texts Cixous and Irigaray point to how the male imaginary colonizes all parts of public representation, and how an embrace of the kinds of abjected images that Kristeva refers to would constitute a feminist identity politics.

While society shuns and marginalizes the abject as a corruption of social law, art and literature confront it; the writer is fascinated by the abject and “projects himself into it to pervert language” and, by extension, the whole symbolic order (Kristeva 15-16). Zeno Gandía, like many naturalists, confronts and writes about the feminine abject in La charca. His textual imaginings of the

subject are an attempt to control it by projecting feminine reproduction and sexuality into the pseudo-scientific experimental space of naturalist fiction. In so doing, as Kristeva has found, women are subjugated to a subspecies--worthy of reform and pity--but clearly on a lower level than that of men of the same social class who suffer comparable social "ailments."

Otis crosses the boundaries of science and literature to look at how, in imperialist countries during the nineteenth century, both fields sought to protect a whole and clean national entity from contamination by an exotic other; in science this unit is the cell, and in literature this "clean" or "whole" identity is expressed as one's sense of self as an individual, citizen, or virile sexual agent. Otis's membrane model examines how nineteenth-century culture feared that self-identity could be threatened and weakened by outside agents such as a foreign other, disease, and the feminine. She identifies a scientific apprehension of the penetrability or corruptibility of cells ("feminization")--and a literary anxiety toward the corruption of ideologies-- by mapping contemporary scientific discoveries to works of literature written by scientists. Female sexuality plays an important role in maintaining national purity: "The sexual paranoia inherent in the membrane model... has its basis in two interrelated cultural prejudices: (1) depreciation and misreading of female sexuality as passive penetrability, and (2) exaggerated esteem for the intact hymen, whose rupture initiates one into the

realm of the passive, the penetrated, and the impure” (7). In La charca, the text evokes horror and pity in regard to the female characters, in large part because of their vulnerability to rape and sexual unions not sanctioned (controlled) by the church and state. Like the horror of the feminine abject, anxiety over women’s penetrability is another cause for the ruling class to marginalize and dominate them.

The membrane theory is one way to look at the cults to virginity and obsession with chastity that were evident all over Europe as well as in Hispanic culture. Otis’s theory is also applicable to nineteenth century Puerto Rican culture in particular. In La charca and other literary works of the nineteenth century, as Trigo notes, the white female body has to be protected from miscegenation with Afrocubans (although this threat is never explicitly mentioned in Zeno Gandía’s novel). The ideal situation for a white peasant woman, in the eyes of *letrados* of the era, was to be part of a patriarchal family in which male children will have (a non-Afrocuban) virile example from their father and female children will become future Angels of the House like their mother. Zeno Gandía expresses his concern over the vulnerability of entry into the *jíbara*’s womb (probably because many were white and therefore considered truly “Puerto Rican”), and horror at the lack of control over whom and how she reproduces, in no uncertain terms in his novel, as I will demonstrate shortly. While Kristeva’s

abject gives a psychological explanation for this focus, Otis's membrane theory offers a nationalist and scientific interpretation. Their theories will aid in the analysis of Zeno Gandía's essentialized women and abjection of the feminine (two different literary strategies, as I will later discuss). It is against this type of ruling-class ideology that Roqué imagines female characters with voice, agency, and desires.

Puerto Rican Identity Politics: Roqué and Zeno Gandía

Roqué and Zeno Gandía are two figures, then, on each side of identity politics of the times in regard to women. Roqué fought for a change in the nationalist standard for women that would include education, a variety of career options, the vote, and (through her fictional representations of women in Luz y sombra) acceptance of female sexual desire. Roqué's conceptualizations of Puerto Rican female identity contradicted nationalist ideals of the Angelic standard for women by attempting to grant them agency and greater opportunity to develop their identities as individuals. This self-development, as it may be called, was dangerous to the traditional Angel-of-the-House standard because it would have meant that women spent time and effort for *their own sake*, rather than on self-abnegating activities for their husbands and families.

Zeno Gandía's identity politics for women, as they are presented in La charca, position women as objects and victims of masculine sexual abuse and corruption. His fictional representations of them depict a sex that lacks the insight to know right from wrong and does not possess the will and agency to exert a positive force on society. His social plan for women, then, is a patriarchal stance over an infantilized segment of the population; he advocates "protecting" white women from situations that lead to promiscuity and the reproduction of a downtrodden people.

Of the three women authors in this study, Roqué is the latest in the century and was likely among the most active women in Spanish America during her time in terms of her high degree of feminist advocacy.⁶ She dedicated a significant part of her life's work to promoting and financing women's education and forwarding the movement for women's suffrage; she was responsible for setting up many scholarship funds and programs for women's education and professional development. Roqué received for her numerous accomplishments an honorary Doctorate in Literature from the University of Puerto Rico.

Ana Cristina Roqué Géigel de Duprey was born on April 18, 1853 in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico and died October 3, 1933. When her mother died several years after her birth, she was educated and raised by her paternal grandmother, a teacher by profession who inspired the child's quest for knowledge in diverse

areas of study. Roqué was self-educated and founded a private school in her home at the age of thirteen after mentoring with instructors. In 1885, at the age of thirty-two, she attended the Civil Institute for Secondary Education in San Juan.⁷ Later she founded the Colegio Mayagüezano (School of Mayagüez), the Liceo Ponceño (Ponce Secondary School) in 1902, the organizations Liga Femenina Puertorriqueña (Puerto Rican Feminine League) in 1917 and the Puerto Rican Women's Suffrage Association in 1924.⁸ According to Delgado Votaw, Roqué estimated that she “granted degrees to 110 teachers, and educated 5,200 children in 23 years of public teaching, and 300 more in 10 years of private teaching” (76).

Roqué's early feminist activism manifested itself in her founding of women's organizations and publications. In 1894 she started a magazine about women entitled La Mujer (Woman).⁹ While in theory this publication was for the female population of Puerto Rico, it mainly addressed and was read by women of the bourgeoisie. This was an important step toward forming some solidarity among women of her class and providing a place for them to publish and exchange ideas. While other important publications of this time focused on education and roles for female citizens (e.g. Tapia's La Azucena), La Mujer was the only one edited and owned by women (Suárez Findlay 65). Later in her life she founded the women's rights organizations Liga Femenina (League of Women;

1917) and the Asociación Puertorriqueña de Mujeres Sufragistas (Puerto Rican Association of Women Suffragists; 1924).

Roqué's interest in science partly explains her incorporation of medical discourse in Luz y sombra. I have mentioned Spanish-American and European intellectuals' general fascination with mixing scientific theory with social theory and literature as a broader trend during the nineteenth century. Roqué likely knew the work of Salvador Brau and was a friend of Zeno Gandía (two men of science who were also authors and politicians) through her affiliation with the Ateneo Puertorriqueño, which she joined as the first female member, in 1878 (Paravisini-Gebert 153). As an avid reader and feminist activist, she was likely aware of the male elite's employment of medical discourse to denounce miscegenation and unwed unions and to control women's bodies for a moral, whitened nation with a strong male head of family (policies I discuss in chapter five in the section entitled Medical Discourse, Fear, and "Protection" through Sexual Segregation and Beneficent Institutions).¹⁰

Her interest in science as well as literature is evidenced by her published studies in natural sciences, in addition to her thirty-two novels and editing of five newspapers over the course of her life (Delgado Votaw 76).¹¹ Her books Geografía universal (Universal Geography; 1894), La botánica en las indias occidentales (The Botany of the West Indies, for which I could not locate a date),

and the essay “Estudio sobre la flora puertorriqueña” (Study on Puerto Rican Flora; 1908) are some examples of her work in the natural sciences.¹² Roqué was a student of meteorology and a member of the Astronomy Society of Paris and held star-gazing seminars in her home.

It is quite possible, then, that Roqué, an educated, well-read early feminist, was in subtle dialogue with the Catholic church’s and intellectuals’ essentialized representations of female sexuality, based on her fictional arguments in its defense.¹³ While Puerto Rican men of science made advances in overcoming disease and poor sanitation in a colony neglected by Spain and economically dominated by a small number of families, their treatises and fiction also had the negative effect of presenting a reproductively-focused subculture of femininity. It is not fortuitous, therefore, that Roqué’s novel innovatively rearranges and reinterprets traditional gender traits within the female protagonist, and commits the transgressive act of presenting the fulfillment of female sexual desire as a biological need.

Zeno Gandía represents the kind of intellectual that espoused essentializing views of women, based on scientifically-derived social policies of the times, that hindered women’s advancement toward social equality with men. The origins of Zeno Gandía’s employment of naturalism and scientific language in La charca lie in his background as a medical doctor and social reform activist.¹⁴

Looking at a chronology of his life, one notes a consistent overlap among literature, medicine, concern over the need for social reform, and politics. Zeno Gandía, the son of Spanish royalist sugar plantation owners, was born January 10, 1855 in Arecibo. He attended medical school in Madrid from 1870 to 1875, with a brief internship in France. During his years of medical studies, Zeno Gandía was already composing verses and writing plays.¹⁵ He also befriended the celebrated Cuban poet and nationalist José Martí during this time. In 1887 he published the prize-winning study Higiene de la infancia (Hygiene during Infancy); his concern with the health, nutrition, and hygiene of infants manifests itself in the descriptions of filthy conditions in which children are raised in La charca. After graduating and traveling through Europe, Zeno Gandía worked as a medical doctor in Ponce and later visited New York, where he met with expatriots Rodríguez de Tió and Martí.

From this point, around 1900, Zeno Gandía dedicated most of his time to politics and writing (Laguerra xviii). He became the President of the Education Committee in the Cámara de Delegados (House of Delegates) and accepted a post of Sanitation Inspector in Ponce, from which he resigned in 1902. Zeno Gandía worked in journalism; he founded various newspapers and in 1914 he founded both the Association of Journalists and the Association of Agriculture, which

attest to his continued interest in social concerns (from an elite perspective) and writing.

I spoke of naturalism's ties to science in chapter three of this study; here I will expand on the representation of women in the genre. Zeno Gandía likely knew of and read naturalist prose in its beginnings, since he was in Paris during the time that the originator of naturalism, the French novelist Emile Zola, was writing. In 1880, when Zeno Gandía was twenty-five years old, Nana (the widely-read novel by Zola that narrates the life and social climb of a prostitute/courtesan) appeared for the first time in its original French and in Spanish; the Spanish novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán, who adapted a Catholicized version of naturalism in her own writing, denounced its appeal to “lo que excita, lo malsano, y lo obsceno” (“things that excite the senses, are unhealthy, and obscene” in Laguerre xxv). Brau presented similar problems of promiscuity, apathy, alcoholism, and corruption in his essays “La campesina” (The Peasant Woman; 1886) and “Las clases jornaleras en Puerto Rico” (The Day-Laborer Classes in Puerto Rico; 1882) and then set these in a fictional setting in the short novel La pecadora (The Sinner; 1890). In La pecadora a feminized portrait of death is thrust upon the reader, as the main character is the cadaver of a woman whose story is narrated (Alvarez 70). Zeno Gandía's novel also links society's

mishandling of women (its failure to provide moral education) with death and the moral and physical decline of future generations.

Sexually charged scenes, which highlight the feminine abject linked to maternity are clearly apparent in Zeno Gandía's fiction, in the way the female body is sexually revealed, forcibly possessed, and abused by men. The most glaring example in La charca is a stormy night in which flooding forces members of the household to sleep in close quarters, and provides opportunity for rape, in the midst of other sleeping bodies. Similarly, Zola features numerous scenes of Nana's sexual exploits. His narrative describes in detail the filth and human odors of Nana's theatrical and courtesan world in lengthy medical and literary detail. A notable difference between the reception of the two works by the Spanish-speaking elite, however, is that Zola was criticized for its sexual obscenity, while Zeno Gandía's novel does not seem to have been deemed obscene or pornographic, even though his inclusion of sexually charged material is comparable to that of Zola. Zeno Gandía's work was not hailed as national literature until more recently, but early critique was aimed at the author's progressive social policies and for his negative portrayal of the *jíbaro* (who had often been idealized as a model for Puerto Rican national identity), rather than its sexual content.

If we are to look at how Roqué reverses the objectification of the female body (and women's sexuality), it is essential to the analysis at hand to hypothesize about how Zeno Gandía presents female objectification in an acceptable way. (La charca was not labeled pornographic in my findings.)¹⁶ I will do this by briefly juxtaposing the differences in Zola's sexualized female characters with those of Zeno Gandía to arrive at the latter's strategy of legitimization.

First, Zeno Gandía's female characters are too weak to be threatening and they are not primarily desirous subjects. They are the objects of sexual acts (by force or consent); never do they revel in the power of their perverse sexuality and appetites as Nana does. This is one possible reason that the novel was not considered pornographic—women as sexual objects in La charca are victimized and they lack agency, thus they exist within the parameters of social tolerance. In the context of the nineteenth-century Hispanic world, where bourgeois values similar to those in Victorian England and other parts of Europe dictated social policy, women's passivity and motherhood were encouraged, while social agency or ambition and overt sexual desire were controlled and discouraged, as I have shown in chapter five. In this light it makes sense that Zeno Gandía's inactive women are pitiful and unpleasant but not obscene (because they do not consciously challenge or transgress social codes), whereas Nana, the unhygienic

“golden fly” who aggressively and purposefully devours fortunes, reputations, and hearts, inspires ire.

The second literary gesture that likely insulated Zeno Gandía’s novel from reproof on sexual grounds was that the sexually explicit scenes are in a remote setting, intellectually and geographically removed from its educated, primarily urban readers. The peasants’ promiscuity, then, is not a threat to readers in Ponce and San Juan because it is exoticized and distanced. (In fact, Zeno Gandía’s images of downtrodden peasants were condemned more for breaking the romanticized urban ideas of the agricultural laborers and facing urban readers with harsh realities than for the sexual content of the novel.) Nana, conversely, preys upon men of her readers’ social classes in the cafés and theaters of Paris—a scenario that was much more threatening to ruling-class conceptions of who takes part in power (bourgeois and elite men) and who does not (women and working class men).

It is worth noting briefly that the character of Nana has textual voice and social agency, whereas Zeno Gandía’s female characters are completely flat; Silvina, the main female character, is literally reduced to her flesh—she *is* “pobrecita carne” (“poor little flesh” Zeno Gandía 108). So, in addition to plot agency and setting, textual voice is another factor that inspires quasi-censorship for Zola’s novel but not for Zeno Gandía’s. It is also possible that Zeno Gandía’s

ethos in Puerto Rico (his legitimizing status as a doctor, founder of various organizations, and government official in Puerto Rico) allowed him to report on women as objects of sexual consumption without eliciting the response that Zola's Nana evoked.

I present this juxtaposition of the negative reception of French naturalism to the social-reform perspective taken on Zeno Gandía's work as a way of highlighting the various dynamics of discourse and authorship that result in the Puerto Rican author's ability to present sexually essentialized material in regard to women in a conservative Catholic ambiance, despite the fact that both the French and the Puerto Rican novels present women who are sexualized to a degree that was shocking for readers accustomed to romantic and realist novels. (La charca was, nonetheless, unnerving to the ruling class from a social perspective because it pushed a myriad of rural problems into center stage.) The fact that portrayals of the passive reproductive female body such as those in La charca were read and considered relatively acceptable is important when considering these female characters as a focus for early feminist rewriting in Roqué's novel.

La charca

I will focus on two dichotomous elements of the novel to show the types of symbolic representations that fed identity politics of the times, much as Kristeva describes them: the enlightenment ideal of reason associated with men of various social classes and the animalized and/or essentialized representations of women (associated with earth and nature) that highlight instinct, body parts, and reproduction--the images that Roqué rewrites in her novel. The text systematically denies voice to women that even drunk, immoral, thieving, and murderous male characters have, and leaves a dehumanized portrait of them in the mind of the reader.¹⁷ While I use La charca as one literary example of debilitated women, I mean to suggest that social policies (as outlined in the previous chapter of this study), law, and other literary and journalistic sources also upheld passive maternal models for women and were used to attempt to control the circumstances under which women reproduced (meaning that they would choose the culturally or visually “whitest” possible partner and have children within marriage only, as Suárez Findlay has found). The passive biological representations of women in the novel are not the unique imaginary product of Zeno Gandía’s pen, but rather that they reflect a sociological and medical perspective on society and on its women that was very common in the late 1800s in Puerto Rico. That is to say

that Roqué did not necessarily write in response to Zeno Gandía's fiction in particular, but the popularly held views about women in general.

Before I begin the analysis of La charca, it is worthwhile to note that later in the twentieth century the novel became one of the founding texts of Puerto Rican literature and is currently read as an historical source as well as a literary classic. Wagenheim offers a sampling of comments by well-known literary critics about the text that indicate the general consensus that the novel depicts "great concerns of our people," that it is a "documentary of enormous value," and that it is one of the "best portraits of our society" (Francisco Manrique Cabrera, Enrique A. Laguerre, and Nilita Vientós Gastón in Wagenheim 10-11).

La charca is set in the coffee-growing highlands of Puerto Rico at the end of the nineteenth century. The narrative is divided into two levels: the story of a loosely-arranged *jíbaro* (peasant) family which is presented as a microcosm of the rampant social ills of the times, and the enlightened *letrado* landowners, clergy, and professionals who theorize social solutions to the peasants' debauchery and unhygienic habits. The novel is mostly naturalist in its fictional depiction of society as an experimental space in which to analyze problems, as well as in its vivid, yet scientifically distanced descriptions of rape, mental illness, alcoholism, disease, and murder. La charca strays from the objectivity of naturalism in the way nature is anthropomorphically presented as an accomplice to the story and by

linking imagery of abstraction and effusive metaphorical language to the male *letrado*.

The story line mainly focuses on the household of Leandra, her thirteen-year-old daughter Silvina, and her infant son Pequeñín. The women live in a squalid shack and wash clothes to support themselves. As this income is insufficient, Leandra depends for survival on sexual liaisons with male “protectors.” She feels fortunate to form a union with Galante, a prominent landowner who has other lovers, but keeps meat and staples in the household. When Galante desires the adolescent Silvina, Leandra facilitates the rape of her own daughter, admonishing her when she resists: “*Hija, no seas tonta..., no seas tú causa de que nos muramos de hambre*” (*Child, don’t be stupid..., don’t you be the reason we starve to death; italics in original* 5). Galante then marries Silvina to the much older, physically repulsive, and abusive Gaspar. Rather than sending Silvina away after her marriage, Gaspar is installed in Leandra’s shack, so that Galante may also continue to have sexual access to the girl. Silvina loses any possibility of marrying her beloved young suitor Ciro.

Silvina’s hardships seem to know no limits; she is forced to witness a murder, abandoned, and abused throughout the novel. When Gaspar is forced to flee the country to escape conviction for murder, she is free to reunite with Ciro, who, soon after, is killed by his own brother in a drunken brawl. In the aftermath

of a subsequent abusive relationship, she is overcome by an apparent epileptic attack and takes a fatal fall down a cliff to the riverbed, where Leandra, washing clothes in the river, discovers the corpse of her daughter.

The passages in which Juan del Salto, a local landowner who voices Zeno Gandía's social policies, speaks about his son Jacobo are perhaps those in which there is the most imagery of thought, abstraction, and reason. These characteristics are exclusively associated with men in the novel, just as they were considered male traits in nineteenth-century Spanish America in general.

An example of the masculine model against which the feminine is plotted is Juan del Salto's son Jacobo. He is the twenty-four year old law student in Madrid and the focus of del Salto's love and attention; the young man's social class and education indicate that he represents the new generation of Puerto Rico's elite. He is an excellent student and del Salto remembers him as a child: "vivo, dispuesto, de mirada inteligente, de juicio robusto" (lively, prepared, of an intelligent gaze and sound judgment; 75). When del Salto tries to warn his son of the poverty that he will witness upon his return to Puerto Rico after years in Spain, he uses the following metaphor: "*te pasaría lo que al ave que viera un jardín retratado en un espejo: volarías hasta chocar bruscamente con el cristal*" (the same thing would happen to you that would happen to the bird who sees the reflection of a garden in a mirror: you would fly until abruptly crashing into the

glass; italics in original 77). The image of crystal reemerges shortly after, this time meaning glass rather than mirror: “Juan le consideraba con amor infinito, como si Jacobo hubiera sido de cristal bohemio, fragil y quebradizo” (Juan thought of him with infinite love, as if Jacobo were Bohemian crystal, fragile and frail; 78).

The association with glass evokes the visual images of lucidity and transparency, which are related to intelligibility, clarity of thought, and reason.¹⁸ This fragile crystal is not meant to imply physical vulnerability, but rather the fragility of Jacobo’s hope and the optimism of youth in the face of Puerto Rican reality; this was the case of del Salto and the local medical doctor, who are both jaded after fruitless years of trying to change the *jibaros*’ lazy and pleasure-seeking ways. The metaphor of Jacobo as a bird associates the young man of Zeno Gandía’s class with open air, altitude, flight, new horizons, the upper regions of the body, and thought. The reality with which he will collide is the falseness of the beautiful earthly garden that he believes his home to be.¹⁹ This masculine imagery of effervescence of thought, abstraction, good judgment, and reason sets up a dichotomy with feminine stagnation, lack of will, physicality, and instinct that subjugates women to men.

One way that women are juxtaposed to this enlightened ideal is through the representation of nature as a maternal body and, in particular, the river that

flows through the mountains as a stream of menstrual blood. The horror at the feminine abject is channeled into a metaphor of nature because it is too threatening to the cleanliness of the *letrado*'s self to write into the female characters. The association of blood with the contaminated water the people in the area are forced to drink is expressed in a conversation between Juan del Salto and his priest friend, Father Esteban, in which they discuss whether religious faith or proper nutrition is the solution to social ills. The "cleansing" of problems is communicated in terms of the "necesidad de una gran espumadera que depurase el corrompido ménstruo de las cordilleras" (need for a large skimmer to cleanse the menstrual rot of the highlands; 34). This vivid metaphor stands for the need to weed out general corruption (alcoholism, crime, gambling), but the reference to menses reveals that the root of these problems is the threatening fertility and animalistic sexuality associated with the *jibara*, who copulates (and reproduces) out of survival. A central problem for the *letrados* is the vulnerable womb of the *jibara* who continually reproduces infirm and immoral offspring. In this context, the literary link between the menstruating mountainside (signifying an enormous female body) and the *jibara* is not as much of a leap as it may appear; the problem of the vulnerability of the white peasants' wombs and its consequence in regard to the controllability of population seeking independence (in the eyes of the elite) was, indeed, a gargantuan one.

The analogy between menses and hereditary social illness is carried through and developed in a later scene, in which a severe storm has caused the river to flood. The muddy waters are described in terms of blood:

El torrente parecía sangriento, como si habiendo recibido una estocada la cordillera se desangrara por aquel cauce, por aquel canjilón iracundo por donde corría la muerte, poblando de rugidos la montaña y sacudiendo el caudal contra los obstáculos; una muerte de rojo semblante que descendía de la cordillera barriéndolo todo.

The torrent appeared bloody, as if having received a stab wound the mountain chain bled down through that riverbed, through that irate gutter through which death runs, filling the mountains with rumbling and beating the voluminous water against obstacles; a death with a red countenance that descended from the mountains, sweeping everything away. (83)

The reference to a red face is also a foreshadowing of the bloody murder of an escaped convict (Deblás), as the passage just before it lays out his and Gaspar's plan to rob the former's store-owner cousin (Andújar), but it is also linked to the maternal body. Later, when a young boy falls into the flooded river and several *jíbaros* jump in to rescue him, the symbolism of the female metaphor is clearer:

“El monstruo líquido tuvo que romperse para dejar penetrar en su seno a algunos jirones de Humanidad ennoblecidos por la grandeza de los héroes” (The monstrous liquid had to break open in order to allow some shreds of Humanity, ennobled by the greatness of heroes, to penetrate its breast; 84).²⁰

As various scholars have commented, bodies of water are often associated with the feminine and amniotic fluid. Here the choice of vocabulary and imagery is populated by men entering the breast of this liquid mass. The feminized, penetrable body of water is a senseless animal, a “monster,” while the men risking their lives inside of it are associated with high-minded heroic spirit. This dichotomy relates back to the division between woman (instinct) and man (reason) that will be deconstructed in Roqué’s novel. For the skeptical del Salto, the laborers’ action to save the drowning boy is a “*rayo de luz en la noche de su pensamiento, una flor nacida entre ortigas, un ágata en un pantano*” (*ray of light in the nighttime of his thought, a flower blooming among nettles, a piece of agate in a swamp*; 84). Like the literary language associated with Jacobo (glass, transparency, flight), the “ray of light” and the reflective, semi-precious surface of agate (mirror or crystal) are images that are repeatedly associated, most obviously with enlightenment and reason, but also with lofty thought or heroic action. Del Salto’s shining ray of hope is that the *male* peasants may overcome the cyclical reproduction of morally and physically flawed offspring in the maternal body

(symbolized by the dangerous red river). In this way, maybe, just perhaps, they can rescue Puerto Rico's youth (symbolized by the drowning boy) and thus break the generational cycle in order to achieve social change.

The closing image of the flooded river includes an explicit reference to the maternal body and is loaded with references to the fertile swollen belly of an expectant mother—the monster who will give birth to future generations of monsters:

Era una noche tétrica: el cielo, negro; la tierra, negra; el vacío negro también, como si todo se enlutase por la ausencia del sol. De la tierra levantábanse húmedas condensaciones; *la gran esponja terrena henchida por la lluvia, devolvía con hartura en invisibles nubes de riego fecundo.* La Naturaleza reposaba de los desastres del día, *elaborando en sus senos recónditos los primores de su materna gestación.*

It was a gloomy night: the sky, black; the earth; black; the open space was also black, as if everything were in mourning for the absence of the sun. Wet condensation rose from the earth; *the great earthy sponge, swollen from the rain, abundantly spewed invisible clouds of fertile irrigation.*

Nature was resting from the day's disaster, *fashioning in her hidden breast the feats of maternal gestation.* (my emphasis 85)

The earth as the fertile female body symbolizes the bodies of the women in the novel; it serves to reinforce the power, mystery, and danger of women as a social problem, just as the swollen river has almost devoured one of the community's young boys. While the feminized river scene is rife with powerful language (the water is capable of devouring and destroying the men it encounters), the female characters are passive to an extreme. It seems that the abject power of horror that Kristeva describes flows freely in Zeno Gandía's fictional representations of nature, but must be suppressed and controlled in the female characters; that is, even in a fictional representation the abject is a threat to the clean wholeness of the masculine self. This perhaps explains why the two main female characters are powerless and objectified.

While the novel is full of examples in which women almost completely lack voice, will, and reason, and are essentialized to their sexual and reproductive capacities, I will present only a few for the sake of space. Leandra and Silvina are the most obvious examples. The former was forced into sexual unions out of hunger, conceived nine times, and gave birth to seven children, each from a different father. All except the last two left home on their own, died, or were

sexually abducted (4). Silvina does not know her father, a “patán acaso, que en la libre poligamia de los bosques aprovechó una hora de ocasión” (perhaps some hayseed, who availed himself of an hour in the free polygamy of the forest; 4). Leandra’s body is disassembled and described in terms of its sexual parts. In this description she is dressed for a local dance: “Por encima de la cintura, más oprimida que de costumbre, amontonábanse sus senos enormes, dando al busto apariencia deforme, de engañosa turgencia, de falsa morbidez” (Above the waist, which was more constricted than usual, her enormous breasts were piled up, giving her bust a deformed appearance of deceptive turgidity, of false softness; 60). The description is fragmented and objectified into waist, breasts, and bust—the parts of the “horrible” female body associated, in this context, with the reproduction of weak elements of society. In addition to this scene, the opening of the novel describes Leandra’s wet skirt clinging to her thighs as she wades out of the river after washing clothes, a very sexualized image for a time when even a woman’s calf or ankle was considered highly provocative.²¹

In some passages the objectification is expressed in terms of consumption; women’s main function is to be consumed for pleasure. This is true for Silvina, whom Gaspar devours, “como si hubiera apurado una copa..., empañándola con su aliento brutal” (as if he had drained a wineglass..., sullyng her with his brutal breath; 6). Writing the female characters as passive recipients

of sexual acts minimizes their power and thus reduces their threat to the reader's or author's sense of self by oppressing the carriers of the feminine abject. The model for presenting women as food items was very likely a literary device taken from *modernista* poetry, as I note in chapter four of this study, in the section entitled Manipulations of Gendered Power Structures. Although the reader sympathizes with Silvina's plight (not the case with the women "devoured" in the poetry I cite earlier), this female character is, nonetheless, a feeble being; she helps make a case for the need for patriarchal control over women's personal lives and sexual choices.

Powerful Women as the Immoral: A Second Social Subject

The more potential a woman has to act upon society in *La charca*, the more likely she is to be assigned guilt; for this reason, Leandra and particularly Silvina are not culpable for their sexual unions outside of wedlock. While the novel frequently presents uneducated women who are vulnerable to random sexual penetration (outside of the church- and state-sanctioned bond of marriage) as an obstacle to a "healthy" society, the narrator is sympathetic to Silvina's plight; she is a victim of abuse caused by poverty and immorality that the *letrados* must solve through proper moral education.

That is, the novel is not overtly misogynistic in the sense of condemning women as inherently evil beings. The villainous horror associated with female reproduction mainly manifests itself metaphorically in the fictional representations of nature, as I have shown. Silvina, like Leandra, merely exists to survive without physical and emotional trauma and is too passive to be capable of wrongdoing; she is essentialized to “pobrecita carne,” as I mentioned earlier. She almost completely lacks the will to act according to reason. This is apparent in her husband’s and the convict Deblas’s scheme to rob Andújar’s store. When Gaspar drags his unwilling wife up the mountainside to be his accomplice, she is “una masa inerte que iría donde la llevaran” (an inert mass who would go wherever they took her; 103). Even when she musters enough will to refuse her husband’s order that she commit murder to aid in the crime and is able to flee the scene, she does not drive herself by her will, but rather, “corría como *lanzada por una fuerza propulsora*” (she was running as if *launched by a propelling force*; my emphasis 105). Silvina, representing a typical *jíbara*, is an object, tossed among and consumed by Galante (her mother’s lover), Gaspar (her abusive husband), and even Ciro (her beloved), as a commodity within a cruel fictional world dominated by greed, lust, and corruption. Zeno Gandía’s naturalist space is a microcosm of the real Puerto Rican countryside where the laboring classes

lack the work ethics, sobriety, and reason that the *letrados* hope to someday instill in them. Woman is a problem because of her capacity to reproduce more like her.

The narrator assumes a more ambivalent stance toward Leandra's innocence in terms of her contribution to an infirm society (presumably because she has been possessed by numerous lovers and reproduced ill offspring), but ultimately absolves her from responsibility for her immoral actions, as those without will cannot be held accountable and therefore cannot be criminals. She, like her daughter, exists on an animalistic level of survival devoid of thought and contemplation beyond keeping food on hand for her and those she must care for; thus she is "la víctima... la pecadora sin pecado, la culpable sin culpa, la criminal inconsciente, la que, habiendo recibido al nacer el abyecto empujón, había también empujado a los seres que de ella nacieron" (the victim... the sinner without sin, the guilty one without guilt, the unaware criminal, she who, having received upon birth the abject shove, in turn had shoved those beings she bore; 163). That is to say, women are not presented as thinking and acting agents of depravity; rather, they are passive and penetrable victims.

While the passive women escape blame, the female character whom the narrator reproaches most harshly is the one with the most potential for interacting in male-dominated spheres in the novel. Like Zola's morally condemnable Nana, Marta, the avaricious grandmother of a young boy, has economic power in the

form of land and money that she has hoarded over the years. She is so tight fisted that she starves her grandson to death by not feeding him properly. She is presented as the most dastardly female character in the novel because she has the means, yet does not use them to nurture and rear her charge properly. She is a property-owning woman, yet she is a selfish anti-Angel (the opposite extreme of the self-sacrificing and generous Angel of the House)—and this transgression must be condemned. When the doctor comes to the house to examine her grandson, he discovers that the child has not been fed milk or broth, but rather boiled plantains:

El enfermo... dirigía tristes miradas al concurso. Sus ojos parecían dos lucecillas brillantes en el fondo de una cueva. Era una ramilla tronchada del gran árbol de la vida, un ser con derecho a vivir que la pasión y la miseria pisoteaban. Si hubiera podido resistir, si su organismo hubiera triunfado la avaricia de Marta, aquella doliente infancia habría servido de base al hombre futuro.

The patient... was aiming his sad gaze at the onlookers. His eyes looked like two little bright lights in the depths of a cave. He was a little branch broken off from the great tree of life, a being with the right to live, upon whom passion and misery were trampling. Even if he had been able to

resist, if his organism had triumphed over Marta's avarice, that painful childhood would have served as the base for the future man. (133)

The image of the weakened, skeletal child juxtaposed to the maniacally greedy grandmother is charged to evoke the reader's hatred of the old woman. The comparison of the child's eyes with lights in the depths of a cave repeats Juan del Salto's metaphor: the heroic peasants were "a ray of light" in the darkness of his thought. That is to say that Marta did not kill just a child, but also the *letrados'* hope for an enlightened (Europeanized) future. The female agent is a scapegoat for the elite's problems: Marta is blamed twice, for even if the young boy with glowing eyes survived, he would have inherited the weakness of character and body from her example (133).

The metaphor of the child's head as a cave and his eyes as lights within it is likely a reference to Plato's cave metaphor. This Platonic "darkness," the black cave, for Irigaray, is the maternal womb (*hystera*), so that the black space is a metaphor for feminine ignorance and bodily primitiveness, while light is analogous to masculine enlightenment (243-46). In Plato's metaphor, a line of prisoners faces the interior wall of a cave with a light source behind them. They are only able to see the shadows cast upon the wall of objects that are projected from behind them, but they cannot see the actual objects (what Plato calls the

forms). In the context of Zeno Gandía's novel, Puerto Ricans are the prisoners (represented in the novel as the "onlookers") who do not see the reality behind the "shadow" (the false, euphemistic impressions of the *jíbaro* as the happy and simple peasant). Zeno Gandía, then, takes on the role of a philosopher trying to enlighten his readers to the true nature of their misperceptions. Part of this "truth" is that women like Marta (as well as Leandra and Silvina) are the dark, barbaric entities (womb/cave) in which the small, flickering light of hope is stifled.

The examples above reveal that the moral economy of the story posits that female agents with any degree of social power are culpable, whereas passive victims earn the privilege of the *letrados'* pity and "protection." The novel projects female reproduction into the marginal space of the abject by associating women with their (impure) biological functions and essentializing them to their reproductive parts. These symbolic gestures of subjugating the feminine to fictional space of the abject, in which an enlightened narrator comments upon women and the maternal essence of their femininity, was the ruling classes' way of imposing their power upon a potentially uncontrollable and emasculating situation. Thus an impetus for these sexually oppressive discursive gestures was to reassert patriarchal control and virility. Another potential threat to the *letrados'* virility was the symbolic contamination of masculine gender characteristics.

In regard to many Latin American intellectuals' fear of breaking down traditional gender boundaries, Molloy argues that mixing gender traits was one of the features of European *fin de siècle* literature that Latin America *did not* appropriate ("Too Wilde" 5). Although Latin America was under the influence of the new literary styles of France, its elite felt threatened by new European models that challenged traditional gender roles, and thus the image of a strong nation. Molloy bases her ideas on a reading of Martí's and Nicaraguan *modernista* writer Rubén Darío's malaise in the face of the threateningly effeminate figure of Oscar Wilde, who "weakened" the potency of the masculine norm (2-5). She posits that blurring boundaries between the masculine and the feminine would have denoted a weak national identity in the face of a North American threat.

Showalter locates one source of this fear of emasculation in a quote by Theodore Roosevelt, who turned an imperialist eye toward Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Panama: "There is no place in the world for nations who have become enervated by the soft and easy life, or *who have lost their fibre of vigorous hardness and masculinity*" (my emphasis 10). The consequence of this masculinity crisis, to borrow Showalter's term, tends to be a suppression of the female body and the exaltation of a strong masculine figure (9).

While Kristeva finds that women are subjugated out of a psychological fear of contamination, and Otis recognizes the perceived "feminine" weakness in

invasion and contamination as an impetus for the suppression of things womanly, Showalter's idea points to another form of oppression: the creation of a virile masculine image by emphasizing and reinforcing gender boundaries between men (rational, enlightened) and women (instinct, body). All of these theories are subtly different ways of understanding misogyny and gender oppression as means of maintaining masculine power. Roqué seems to be reversing *letrados'* struggles to maintain a "clean," whole masculine identity untainted by the female abject or feminine gender traits by emphasizing reason in her female protagonist and defending her sexuality as natural and gender neutral.

Luz y sombra

The kind of reversal that Roqué specifies as a necessary identity politics runs throughout the novel. As we shall see, a well-read intellectual and early feminist activist like Roqué used other such discursive tools and strategies to reverse or correct masculinist notions of the feminine. I will argue in this section that she was very mindful of the political need to stake a claim on a small part of the symbolic order, while attempting to also avoid a harsh critique and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of bourgeois women and liberal men. It was important for her not to be perceived as overtly radical because she would alienate women who

were part of the organizations she founded and men with whom she associated in the *Ateneo* and at her literary soirées.

Roqué navigated the waters of power, legitimacy, and subversion carefully by creating an outward fictional shell that appeared to uphold the status quo, for example, “deviant women are punished,” while deconstructing the essentialized images of women like those in *La charca*. She did this by manipulating literary commonplaces already familiar to the reader, such as the reason/emotion dichotomy and the medical discourse was employed. Zeno Gandía’s novel, and naturalism in general, laid the foundation for Roqué to be able to talk about female sexuality in a positive way because they already opened the topic, albeit with a negative emphasis on sexual impulses and deviance (e.g. prostitution, promiscuity, etc.). The sensuality of some *modernista* writers, such as Julián del Casal (Cuba 1863-1893) and Darío, also aided in opening the door to write about sexuality in the conservative literary circles of Latin America.

Roqué then takes Zeno Gandía’s essentialist and objectifying reproductive focus on women, which nearly reduces them to instinct and wombs, and defends female sexual desire as a normal part of a healthy existence. In so doing, she converts what Zeno Gandía writes as the dangerously contaminating abject into the “clean” or “hygienic,” whole identity of the feminine self. In this way, she also serves to reverse the horror of the feminine abject in the naturalist novel by

normalizing, rather than marginalizing, women's sexuality. I will add that the act of "normalizing" the feminine is a loaded term because, in the contexts of the novels in the study at hand, it acquires the meaning of "valorizing the feminine traits as its parallel masculine trait is valorized" but normalizing also means "equating with the masculine," where "normal" *equals* "male." That is, women authors' views of equality often follow a masculine standard rather than creating alternative standards. In this sense, early feminists are not yet developing a sense of different but equal; nonetheless they are clearly placing gender inequality in the center of intellectual ambiances and offering explanations and solutions to remedy the gross imbalance. Roqué's acts of signaling and rewriting social gender inequality in regard to sexuality was an important step for future generations of feminists.

Returning to the literary strategies involved in rewriting power, as I mentioned in the introduction to this study, Zavala recognizes the act of building upon accepted literary norms to voice opposition to traditional ideology as a common strategy of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authors:

it is important to identify the oppositions used to organize the... discursive field, the politics behind a style of writing... *the reverse discourse, the polymorphous exploits of tropes to exercise critical power. (...) The*

already spoken and already written triggers the imaginary to re-write the same narrative, with different images, portraits, expressions, idiolects.

(179)

Zavala identifies how authors write against an existing power structure by taking literary commonplaces from it and using them in an altered form to make a statement, to "ring changes" (179). In the above citation, she is referring to the handling of anti-colonial sentiment in Puerto Rican literature. She observes the re-accentuation of Spanishness, the dismembering and carnivalization of North American traits in order to create an alternative reality, to emphasize alternatives to U.S. occupation, to "dissuade of the siren's song and the music of the centaur's flute" and to show that the acceptance of the unacceptable is tragic (179). Roqué criticizes the restrictive borders of gender roles in a way similar to that which Zavala has signaled: by offering the reader's imagination an alternative reality, one in which sexuality and rationality are not mutually exclusive, nor are they characteristics that men alone possess.

Molloy has recognized that women authors engage in critique by appropriating male language and using it to lend authority to their discourse:

More than excluding women, that [phallogentric] language assigns women to a subordinate place, and, from that position of authority, deauthorizes woman's word. That is, it includes that word but in a position of weakness. (...) *What women can do and, in fact, have done is establish a new praxis, subverting the authoritarian language that puts them 'in their place' dislocating it in different ways depending on the time period.* (my emphasis Interview 143)

She recognizes the use of language to empower when she points out that the exploit of certain tropes can be polymorphous, encompassing various features of writing (Interview 179). In Roqué's novel, an example of pirating male language is using a medical-doctor character and medical discourse to voice her social critique.

I will now turn to a brief summary of the novel and analyze some of the examples of Roqué's rewriting of the feminine self. The story of Luz y sombra sets up a false dichotomy between two friends: Julia is rational, worldly, positivist, and materialist, while her friend and confidante is sentimental, maternal, self-abnegating, and domestic. While Julia is tempted to the brink of adultery (presumably representing "sombra"), Matilde is the ideal of the spiritual and moral Angel of the House, and, one assumes, represents "luz." The

dichotomy is carried into each woman's choices of residence and spouse. Julia is an elite urbanite and Matilde lives on a small farm in the countryside. While Julia marries Sevastel, an older, handsome, and distinguished military general, for his fortune and social status, Matilde weds her simple caretaker cousin Paco for love.

The main plot revolves around Julia's unsatisfying marriage and subsequent near-adultery. Not only is Sevastel significantly older than his wife, but he is also drained of spirit and vigor from carousing in his youth; he is not able to satisfy Julia's need for physical love and passion. This lack in Julia's life leads her to desire Sevastel's young and handsome friend Rafael. Despite temptation and a growing sexual awakening, Julia is determined to maintain her honor and resist Rafael's advances. She takes a trip to Spain with her husband, hoping the distance from Rafael will cool her feelings.

The second part of the novel resumes after Julia's stay in Spain, which did not mitigate her desire for Rafael as she had hoped. She finally agrees to meet him for an amorous encounter in his country home. She hesitates to go through with the affair, but succumbs to Rafael's pleas. Once at his home, the lovers are surprised by Sevastel and two other soldiers. Sevastel recognizes his wife and threatens to kill her; his companions do not realize the woman is Julia, instead assuming she is one of Rafael's conquests disputed between the two. Sevastel and Rafael agree to play along and pretend Julia is their mistress, and to duel over

the “lover” the following day. The dishonored husband administers a fatal wound to his opponent, who, before dying, assures Sevastel that he never consummated the affair with his wife.

Julia becomes delirious when she hears of Rafael’s death. Sevastel calls on a young, handsome Guatemalan medical specialist, Dr. Bernard, to help his wife regain her health. The physician prescribes a bizarre treatment to cure her: he reasons that, as the patient is dying from lack of love and passion, the only cure is seduction. Because her husband is not able to administer the prescription, the doctor claims that the only way to cure her is for he himself to do the job. The doctor assures an uneasy Sevastel that he is a happily married man and has no impure intentions with Julia. The unconventional seduction/medical treatment is successful; Julia regains her strength, and later gives birth to a daughter.

(Although the doctor’s seduction is supposed to be based on courtship rather than physical intercourse, there is some ambiguity in the mind of the reader as to the identity of the baby’s father.) Sevastel later dies of a “strange disease,” a “general weakening that slowly turned him into a cadaver.” Julia then dies of tuberculosis and finally her daughter dies of an unspecified illness (138).

Matilde’s is a secondary narrative that supports Julia’s plot line; her words mainly express concern for Julia’s wellbeing and voice the joys of humble living in a marriage filled with love and honest work. This simple and idyllic country

life is juxtaposed to Julia's tormented but luxurious life of leisure in the city.

Matilde's one drama is the death of her infant son Paquín from diphtheria.

The epistolary structure of the novel lends itself to a reevaluation of feminine identity because of its intimate tone and the metafictional effect that reading the correspondence between the two women creates. The exchange of missives is mainly between Julia and Matilde, although some letters circulate among them and their spouses as well. (For example, Sevastel corresponds with Matilde in regard to Julia's health.) In a collection of studies that considers the question of feminine style and themes in the epistolary form in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, Christine Planté finds that letters were an appropriate space for individuals to disregard conventional gender norms; e.g., women wrote about politics or men wrote on sentimental themes (17). This is true in Roqué's novel, as Julia transgresses gender norms by talking openly about her desire for Rafael and by describing her rational nature in terms considered masculine at the time.

In Roqué's novel the epistle creates an intimate, private ambiance that makes the reader feel as if he or she were spying into private lives of strangers. (I will discuss this voyeuristic effect in more detail later in my analysis.) As the letters progress, the reader becomes familiar with the characters in this personal mode and he or she is drawn more deeply into the plot; we are witness to their

innermost desires and conflicts *as the female characters tell them*—not as they are related by a third-person narrator. Vivienne Mylne has noted the epistolary novel's ability to grant verisimilitude to fiction to assuage eighteenth-century France's distrust of the untruth of fiction (in Gurkin Altman 6). Psychologically, the blurring between fiction and reality that one experiences upon reading a novel composed of letters aids the re-writing of the female identity; the characters/authors of the letters seem to become the reader's acquaintances as the story progresses. The epistolary form is a way of convincing the reader that transgressive women like Julia exist in one's society, while it also draws him or her in as a witness or accomplice to this transgression, thus implicating the reader in the feminist rewriting at hand.

In an epistolary novel, then, the reader experiences the text more interactively than when he or she reads fiction with a central narrator's voice because of the illusion that one is discovering private documents and also because of the added verisimilitude. The reader's psychological investment in the story is an effective authorial strategy for presenting subversive symbolic material. Modern psychology's theory of cognitive dissonance poses the questions "What happens to a person's private opinion if [one] is forced to do or say something contrary to that opinion?" (Festinger and Carlsmith 1). For the literary study at hand, the question could be: What happens when a reader with patriarchal views

on gender unwittingly “spies” on letters in epistolary fiction that defend transgressive behavior for women? According to the theory of cognitive dissonance, “the private opinion changes so as to bring it into closer correspondence with the overt behavior the person was forced to perform” (Festinger and Carlsmith 1). That is, even if a spectator or agent mistakenly or by an indirect path views or engages in an act against his or her beliefs, he or she will shift the belief to be in line with the behavior, thus creating harmony between act and thought--and avoiding an uncomfortable cognitive dissonance. So, one may argue that when a reader becomes a party to fictional transgression, as is the case in the epistolary novel, he or she begins to sympathize with the feminist sentiments contained in the letters.

Another important function of the epistolary structure is that most of the textual voice comes from the female characters Julia and Matilde. In Roqué’s novel, *women are the subjects of their own narratives*; they present and analyze their own problems and each other’s dilemmas, provide comfort to one another, and criticize oppressive aspects of their society. This is radically different from Zeno Gandía’s novel, in which the only characters who have prolonged dialogue are the *letrados*: the plantation owner Juan del Salto, a priest, and a doctor, all of whom represent various facets of the power structure. The women characters in La charca are the focus of the plot, yet speak less frequently than even secondary

male characters of their same social class. The story of their existences is filtered almost exclusively through the voice of an omniscient narrator with a distanced and objective tone typical of the naturalist style. This narrative technique, combined with the linking of women to instinct and nature, objectifies and subjugates the female characters to the elite narrator and male characters of the ruling class, whereas in Roqué's novels women author their own biographical narratives. That is, the female characters are read as the authors of their own identities. By using their agency to fulfill their desires (albeit accompanied by negative consequences, in the case of Julia), they are engaging in their own subjectification.

Luz y sombra includes an omniscient narrator in the second part of the novel; however, Roqué's narrator often speaks in the first person plural to continue the intimate textual voice from the letters, a strategy common in nineteenth-century fiction generally. The narrator's use of "we" continues the invitation from the first part into the private sphere of the two female characters and is an extension of the familiar tone of the epistolary structure. The narrative voice is an important addition to the letters, because it serves as a sympathetic voice of authority that judges and emphasizes what the various characters in the novel have to say. As I will show later, the narrator reinforces the feminist messages that are spoken by various characters.

Roqué's manipulation of gender stereotypes is channeled through two literary mechanisms: redistribution of male and female characteristics and defense of woman's sexual desire and sexual agency. The mixing of masculine and feminine characteristics mainly concerns male objective logic versus female romantic sentiment and masculine sexual love as opposed to feminine emotional love. Roqué, like Zeno Gandía, uses her descriptions of nature to buttress messages in the novel, but nature reflects Julia's sexual needs, rather than representing the feminine abject as it does in the latter's novel.

Comparable to a typical educated male's outlook (the example of Juan del Salto's son Jacobo comes to mind), Julia faces life with a clear, rational, and analytical outlook. She says of herself "creo soy yo la que estoy en el terreno firme de la vida; pues con mis diecisiete años precoces, me inclino siempre a lo práctico, a lo que me reporte utilidades positivas; y dejo o ahogo los sueños vagos..." (I believe I am the one on life's firm ground; at the precocious age of sixteen, I am always inclined toward that which is practical, those things that bring me positive earnings, and I abandon or smother vague dreams; 31). Julia determines, in her rational and dispassionate way, to follow society's prescribed route and marry the wealthiest and most prestigious suitor.²² Her goal is to lead a comfortable and luxurious life and hold a high position in society; she is not concerned with what she considers ephemeral and sentimental love. She disdains

the “feminine” language that Matilde uses in her letters; in response to her friend's flowery proclamation of love for her cousin Paco she writes “¡Oh, qué idilio, amiga Matilde, es tu carta de ayer! ¡Cuánto me he reído al pensar de que manera tan tonta te has enamorado de... el amor!” (Oh! How idyllic, Matilde my friend, is your letter from yesterday! How much I have laughed upon thinking in what a silly way you have fallen in love... with love!; 39). Another time she gruffly taunts Matilde for “hacer el oso” (engaging in traditional courtship) with her fiancé (62).

This objective, logical outlook and derisive stance toward the weak, emotional response is not unlike the response of literary critics of the era to the so-called effeminate *modernista* poetry of Julián del Casal or Rubén Darío, calling their writing *preciocista* and criticizing them for being overly focused on aesthetics, rather than on practical nationalist themes. While my goal here is not to develop such a comparison, I use this example to show that Julia describes herself and interacts with Matilde in terms that were considered virile for the times, as opposed to an emasculated femininity often perceived in contemporary poetry and prose written by men. For example, the pages of José Enrique Rodó's 1900 book-length essay *Ariel* are filled with references to the importance of rational judgment and virility for the future of a strong Latin America. The pages of the Mexican positivist Barreda's essay on women in the early twentieth century

(addressed in chapter one of this study), in turn, seriously questions women's capacity for intellectual (masculine) thought. Thus Roqué's creation of Julia's rational, positivist character was likely an attempt to enfranchise women into the ruling class's ideal of masculine power.

Renouncing Angelic Self-abnegation: Roqué's Claim on Female Sexual Desire

In addition to logical intellect and disdain for the sentimental, sexual desire is another typically male-dominated sphere that Julia boldly enters. Choosing women's sexuality for her critical re-definition of gender norms put Roqué in dialogue with a significant issue of her time; as I discuss in the previous chapter, heavy emphasis was placed on chastity for women as Angels of the House, to the point of restricting women's social movement and limiting women to modest styles of clothing.

There are many passages in which Julia's need for sexual fulfillment is expressed in a direct manner. For example, in one passage, the narrator plainly states Julia's right to physical satisfaction within her marriage:

Dios y el mundo le habían concedido un esposo para que satisficiera los sueños de su mente, las aspiraciones de su alma, y los impulsos de su

ardiente temperamento. Tenía, pues, derecho al amor, tenía a los goces legítimos de su estado, y de casi todo eso estaba privada por una burla sangrienta del destino. ...la esposa se abrasaba de pasión mientras el marido dormía como un bendito.

God and the world had granted her a husband to satisfy her mind's dreams, her soul's aspirations, and her burning temperament's impulses. She had, then, the right to love, she had the right to the legitimate enjoyment of her married status, and she was deprived of almost all of this because of a cruel hoax of destiny. (...) the wife burned with passion while the husband slept the sleep of the just at her side. (76-77)

The narrator blames Sevastel for denying his wife her "right to love," which, to add legitimacy to the narrator's words, is sanctioned by God. The word choice ("right") lends quasi-legal status to a woman's privilege to sexual satisfaction within marriage, which minimizes Julia's responsibility in her moral stumble with Rafael. The author's mention of Sevastel sleeping the "sleep of the just" is clearly ironic, since the narrative mentions that Sevastel was a carouser in his youth.

In another scene, Julia is the subject of this legitimating narrative. She intimates to Matilde the frustration she experiences in Sevastel's bed:

Las caricias frías y convencionales de mi esposo me exasperaban, me enardecían: me abrasaba, una desesperación sin nombre se apoderaba de mí, y después de dar vueltas en mi lecho solitario, y de despedazar a mordiscos los encajes de mis almohadas, o de mi pañuelo,... por fin el sueño, sobreponiéndose

sobre mi naturaleza exuberante de juventud, rendía mi materia...

My husband's cold and conventional caresses exasperated me, they enflamed me; I was burning up, an unknown desperation took hold of me, and after tossing and turning in my solitary bed and biting the lace on my pillowcase or handkerchief to shreds,... finally sleep, overcoming my exuberant and young nature, subdued my flesh... (65)

In this scene Roqué overtly represents a young woman of the dominant social class as the subject of sexual desire. In this way, the narrative reverses the suppression of extramarital, or even extra-reproductive sexual behavior advocated by the Catholic church.²³

The narrative strategy in the passage above is noteworthy. Roqué leads the reader three levels deep into the text. The first level is the narrator's level observing from outside, the second is the first-person stories of the letters, and the

third is Julia's narration of a scene within the epistle. The reader is a voyeur/euse to this scene not only because he or she is allowed to "spy" on Julia's letter, but also because the reader gains entry into the intimate area of her bed chambers. Rather than reading a scientific-esque narrator's account of aphasic women who are continually victimized and sexually violated, as in La charca, the reader is the witness to a woman expressing her need for passion. Roland Barthes, who likens the reader to a "spectator in a nightclub," recognizes as an authorial strategy the act of rendering the reader voyeur: "the text is a fetish object, *and this fetish desires me*. The text chooses me, by a whole disposition of invisible screens... : vocabulary, references,... etc. and, lost in the midst of the text... there is always the... author" (11, 27). As participatory witnesses to this desire, the reader, to quell the cognitive dissonance between accepted social norms (women are self-abnegating and men are desirous), may begin to sympathize subconsciously with the subversive message (women are as desirous as men). He or she is lured into the spectacle of the text, and is thus psychologically invested in its content. Julia gives voice to this physiological sexual lack, which is causing her health to deteriorate visibly to friends and acquaintances, who comment upon her sickly appearance (65-66). Her apparent symptoms of frustration are dark circles, pallor, and weight loss. By assigning visually detectable evidence to Julia's problem, Roqué is "rendering the invisible visible," to use Fernando Feliú's phrase; the

protagonist's problem takes on greater importance when it seems to fall under a label created by and maintained by medical doctors (154). The terms "enardecer" (enflame) and "abrasar" (burn) clearly suggest the physical nature of her dissatisfaction with Sevastel, and if that is not clear enough she states that sleep finally conquers her "materia," (matter) the physical source of her suffering.

The chaste Angel of the House Matilde, rather than dismissing Julia's problem, is devastated to hear of such suffering, when she herself experiences all the pleasures and comforts of love with Paco (69). The epistolary style implicates the reader in this exchange as a third-party confidante to these problems; he or she gravitates to sympathize with Matilde's compassionate position toward Julia, since she, after all, is the shining example of virtue. In addition to the structural fixtures of the novel, Roqué uses the characters dialogues and the narrator to voice critique of the oppressive symbolic order where self-abnegation was universally prescribed for women.

Justifications of Female Sexual Desire

In order to make her case to the bourgeois readership of Puerto Rican society, Roqué has various unlikely characters in the novel rally for the legitimacy of Julia's physical desire. Rafael, the doctor, Matilde, the narrator, and even Sevastel all recognize in some way that Julia's unreleased passion is unhealthy

and morally debilitating. Rafael is the least convincing of the group to defend Julia's sexuality, because he has selfish motives for his argument (his desire). However the dialogue between the two as he is trying to convince her to submit seems to serve as a general message to the reader. This is suggested through an interesting use of italics in the dialogue between Julia and Rafael:

[Julia, about Sevastel] No puedo amarle a él, pero tampoco *debo* amar a otro.

--¿Y por qué? ¿No sabe Ud., señora, que la naturaleza tiene sus leyes, y que *nadie* puede contravenirlas sin que le traicione su propio corazón?

[Julia, about Sevastel] “I cannot love him, but neither *should* I love another.” “And why not? Do you not know, Madame, that nature has its laws and that *nobody* can contravene them without cheating one’s own heart?” (101-102)

The italics on nadie draw the reader’s attention to it for a closer analysis of the statement. Nobody is a relevant choice for emphasis because it is genderless, implicating both men and women. When Rafael says that *nobody* can go against nature’s laws, he is equalizing women and men. While we cannot assume that Roqué was condoning adultery, either for men or women, in the context of the

novel the reader gets a clear message that when women are tempted by adultery, it may be because they are not sexually fulfilled in their marriage, rather than because they are deviant or malicious. Men were not usually considered malicious for committing adultery. As I mention earlier, local law called for prison terms of up to six years for elite women who were convicted of adultery, but this was not the case for men (Suárez Findlay 27). Thus Roqué's message could be read as a way of bringing this injustice to the attention of her readers.

While the idea of sexual equality is implicit above, the narrator is daring in her explicit communication of this view. The narrator's use of the word angel in this context is ideologically loaded; it is a deliberate attempt to wipe away the artificially pure and perfect façade of the Angel of the House, acknowledging that this model is the basis for gross inequality between the sexes:

Hay que convencerse de que la mujer no es un ángel; es un ser lleno de pasiones lo mismo que el hombre; y no basta a veces la buena educación moral que en teoría se les da, para preservarlas del desvarío que le imponen sus propias pasiones... . Y no atendiendo a estas leyes poderosas que dominan nuestro organismo... se las expone a todos los peligros de la imprevisión, a luchar como heroínas, y pocas llegan a la cúspide sin

*mancharse en el camino, aunque sea con una leve sombra, su blanca
vestidura*

One must convince oneself that *women are not an angels; they are beings filled with passions just like men* and at times the proper moral education that, in theory, we give them is not enough to save them from the whims their own passions impose upon on them... . And ignoring these powerful laws that dominate their organisms... they are exposed to all the dangers caused by this lack of foresight, abandoned to struggle like heroines, *and few arrive at the cusp without soiling their white dresses on the way, even if it is with a trivial spot.* (my emphasis 103)

The metaphorical soiled white dress that nearly every woman must wear is a deconstruction of the dichotomy of the virginal white of a wedding gown and the marring spot of the moral slip, light and shade, or female virtue versus deviance. Here the dichotomy is deconstructed; light and shadow are inextricably mixed within women, as in men. The narrator stresses the moral equality of men and women and that it is just as difficult—and unrealistic—for women to maintain an impeccable moral record as it is for men.

This is a groundbreaking statement for early feminism for two reasons: first, because it takes away the ideological crutch of female moral superiority—a

claim that many educated women used or implied in order to lobby for power and rights in the 1800s across Europe as well as in the Hispanic world (Groneman 226). Second, the statement is relevant because it is performing reversals of masculine discourse, while giving place and prominence to female sexuality, much as French post-structural feminist critics perform in the 1970s.²⁴ As Parivisini-Gebert points out, Roqué is innovative in Spanish-American early feminist fiction in that she recognizes that writing female sexuality as a healthy component of human existence forcefully undermines patriarchal control, by removing women from the Virgin Mary pedestal and placing them on equal moral footing with men.

To buttress this stance, the angelic Matilde, who is idealized as a perfect nurturing wife, mother, and friend, reiterates it. When Julia becomes ill after Rafael's death, Sevastel is shocked to learn of her passionate nature, thinking that her "proper upbringing" would have dampened her desires. To this the Angel of the House replies:

Eso sucederá, le repliqué yo, si la mujer fuera un ser distinto de los demás seres, y la educación pudiera sustraerla a las leyes propias de nuestra naturaleza imperfecta. *Pero desgraciadamente estamos formadas de la misma sangre y con los mismos vicios de organización que ustedes.* No

somos seres distintos de los demás, y por lo general se nos exige que seamos como las conveniencias sociales nos quisieran, y *no como Dios o la naturaleza nos han formado*.

That would happen, I replied to him, if Woman were a different being than the rest of the beings, and education could separate her from the very laws of our imperfect natures. *But unfortunately we are formed from the same blood and with the same physical organization as you*. We are not beings different from the rest, and in general we are required to be the way social conventions want us to be, *and not the way God or nature have formed us*.
(my emphasis 122)

Although the words are subversive because they equate the sexual physical needs of the sexes, they are tempered because they are spoken by a character who upholds all of the most highly valued patriarchal qualities of female citizenship and motherhood. Matilde is self-abnegating, adores her family, works diligently on her small farm—but she also happens to believe that women have the same temptations and urges as men. For Roqué's character and the narrator, God and nature are the authors of this equal desire; the reader may thus infer that the ruling class (social conventions) is *unnatural, unhealthy, and ungodly* to deny this truth.

Taking an elite discourse used to legitimize the words of characters in naturalist writing, Dr. Bernard (the doctor Sevastel calls upon to cure his wife) justifies Julia's suffering from a medical standpoint. A popularized form of medical discourse started to appear at the end of the nineteenth century and was used to diagnose the illness of the marginalized classes and contained as part of its subtext a transfer of contemporary bourgeois values (Trigo, "Función" 134). As I discuss in the previous chapter, female chastity was one of these values. Roqué reverses this particular use of medical discourse by employing it in the service of her subversive character: "Bien dice el sabio doctor: 'Había mucho fuego en los ojos de Julia, y no había rendido aún tributo a las leyes naturales, gozando de la vida del amor con la fuerza de sus veinte años, para que estuviera ya hastiado de todo'" (So says the wise doctor: 'A fire burned in Julia's eyes and, not having yet rendered tribute to natural laws by enjoying life's love with the force of a twenty year old, she was now completely weakened'; 122). The doctor repeats this diagnosis, emphasizing the biological reasoning behind Julia's behavior: "Esta joven no ha tenido expansiones en la edad en que la naturaleza impone como ley ineludible los dulces goces del amor..." (This young woman has not experienced recreation at the age when nature imposes the sweet pleasures of love as an ineluctable law; 131). Once again, the message is expressed in medical but also

legal terms (“law”), likely to speak to the two areas of expertise of the ruling class: law and medicine.

Roqué’s representation of nature has an early feminist function, as opposed to an essentializing effect in which nature is an untamable and threatening fertile female body. We saw that in Zeno Gandía’s novel, for example, this feminized nature was capable, on a symbolic level, of drowning the island’s future. In Roqué’s novel, descriptions of nature are used to emphasize the intensity of Julia’s unfulfilled passion as a sexual agent. After years of marriage to the icy Sevastel and pent-up passion for Rafael, Julia becomes very ill. Finally, she is tempted to accept Rafael’s invitation to a secret meeting. The chapter preceding the lovers’ meeting closes with references to Julia’s desperation, rapidly circulating blood, and fiercely beating heart that “waste her organism” (110). The following segment opens with a description of the dark night, with resplendent stars gleaming behind black clouds that would not yield drops of rain. Note the negative inversion of the soiled-dress metaphor that marked the deconstruction of the light/shade dichotomy; the dress was white with a dark spot, but here it is a black cloud sprinkled with white stars. The mixing of black and white is repeated to emphasize the mix of virtue and vice within everyone.²⁵ The narrator continues with the description of this storm that threatens to erupt but maintains itself on the threshold of fruition:

Ese cariz tempestuoso es muy común en nuestros veranos. Mas la tempestad suele resolverse en relámpagos sin ruido, a las que acompaña un calor asfixiante que hace decir a los más: “¡Oh y qué cargada está la atmósfera!” cuando lo que pasa es que está demasiado enrarecida a causa de la absorción del vapor de agua por las nubes, y la respiración se hace difícil, sintiéndose una anhelosa sensación de angustia.

This tempestuous appearance is very common in our summers. Moreover the storm tends to dissolve in silent lightening, which is accompanied by an asphyxiating heat that makes everyone exclaim “How stuffy it is!” when what is actually happening is that the air has expanded owing to the clouds’ absorption of the water vapor, and this makes one experience difficulty breathing and a breathless sensation of anguish. (111)

The analogy is between the natural phenomenon of the suffocating summer heat, produced by a brewing storm whose energy is held prisoner within the clouds, and Julia’s physical decline and anguish produced from her brewing passion.

Given, then, the numerous voices sympathetic to Julia’s plight and the messages, both embedded and explicit, regarding women’s human and imperfect character (which is even tolerated by God), she is not as guilty or as castigated as

she may appear on a superficial reading of the novel. Sevastel, however, does not escape as unscathed. He is arguably a better candidate to represent “sombra,” or punishable vice, than is Julia; it is because of his promiscuous past that he is unable to satisfy his wife:

Si Sevastel hubiera sido un hombre apasionado, que hubiese podido apagar la sed de goces de aquella naturaleza sensual, al menos, dominada la materia, sólo el espíritu divagaría falto también de satisfacciones.

If Sevastel had been a passionate man who had been able to quench that sensual nature’s thirst for pleasure, at least, with the body sated, only the spirit would wander lacking satisfaction. (76)

This quotation is emphasized by the image of Sevastel’s saintly sleep (*bendito* means saintly, holy, or blessed), while his wife “burned with passion” by his side—with an ironic usage of biblical morality symbols, here used to describe a former carouser (77). His punishment is emasculation; Sevastel is sexually impotent, at least to the extent of not being able to carry out his husbandly duties of attending to Julia’s desire. He is also emasculated by Rafael’s conquest of his wife (although he does clean this stain on his honor with Rafael’s blood) and by Dr. Bernard, who literally must publicly court his wife back to life, as Sevastel is

incapable. This scene, perhaps the most perplexing of the novel, is worth a closer look:

[Dr. Bernard a Sevastel]: --...Para despertar esa alma dormida, aletargada, es necesario hacerla sentir, y yo voy a intentar la prueba.

---¡¡Ud!! Dijo aún más admirado Sevastel. ¿Se va Ud. de enamorar de mi mujer?

--Enamorarme, no. Voy a curarla. [...] voy a hacer el amor a Julia [...] a fin de conmover las fibras más sensibles de su alma enferma.

[...] Sevastel bajó la cabeza hondamente preocupado.

[Dr. Bernard to Sevastel]: "...In order to awaken that sleeping, benumbed soul it is necessary to make it feel, and I am going to carry out the experiment.

"You!!" said Sevastel, even more bewildered "You are going to fall in love with my wife?"

"No, not fall in love with her; I am going to cure her. [...] I am going to make love to Julia [...] in order to stir the her infirm soul's most sensitive fibers."

[...] Sevastel bowed his head, deeply concerned. (132)

This must have struck a very sensitive chord with contemporary readers; to have a medical doctor, a pillar of society, engaging in one of the most condemnable acts among gentlemen—dishonoring an elite officer by seducing his wife—and justifying it medically! In the novel the doctor and Sevastel devise a plan to fool society so that the husband is not publicly humiliated; however, the reader has already witnessed Sevastel’s double dishonor. This doctor-of-love tangent of the narrative is a very strange addition that toys with the reader’s expectations for morality of the elite class. One subtle message could be that believing every “cure” that science offers without questioning its implications could not only be unwise, but foolish.

Conclusion

The ending of Luz y sombra may seem anti-climactic for contemporary feminists because Julia, her baby, and Sevastel all die and the traditional female prototype Matilde is exalted. However, the early feminist messages lie in the treatment of Julia's character and others' positions in relation to her. This circuitous manner of questioning ruling-class ideals was one way in which criticism was executed in Roqué's time, as Zavala and Molloy have pointed out. Although Matilde is the ideal domestic Angel of the House, she changes and molds national discourse in regard to women from within this superficial shell of

the “perfect” hardworking, modest, and self-sacrificing woman by defending female sexual desire, rather than condemning Julia. The wayward protagonist is forgiven by her husband, who blames himself for her moral slip. In light of these major rewritings of hegemonic identity politics in regard to women’s sexuality, Roqué’s novel challenges the power structure by encouraging women to attend to their happiness rather than maintaining wealth through marital ties.

Another question to consider is that, if the death of Julia’s child is meant as a punishment (Chen Sham 174-75), then why does Matilde’s child also die, seeing that she is blameless of any transgression? One explanation for the deaths of Julia and her family could be that Roqué was borrowing a plot fixture of naturalism, which incorporated death (often vividly and medically depicted) as one more part of life just like birth, eating, working, and loving. A naturalist depiction of death generally differs from a romantic demise in that the latter typically appeals to emotions, is sanitized, is described with spiritual language, and is much further removed from the way fatal illnesses or accidents look in the real world, whereas death in naturalism is studied as the result of hereditary illness, accidents caused by poor working conditions, or socially-derived disease. Death is a very common physiological (rather than spiritual, or moral) phenomenon in Zola, Zeno Gandía, Brau, the Argentinean Eugenio Cambaceres, the Spaniard Emilia Pardo Bazán, and many other naturalist writers of the era, in

which characters' deaths are common. It does not necessarily indicate that a character is being punished, but rather that he or she is the victim of a violent society, hereditary illness, environmentally-caused accidents, or poverty. Another explanation could be the many deaths in Roqué's immediate family (which was common for the times): her mother died when she was a child and two of her own children died at a young age.

If the language, characters, and structure of the novel are studied in the context of contemporary texts and how women were written into fiction, and if we consider Roqué's intent and constant advocacy of women's rights throughout her life, we cannot conclude that she advocates a patriarchal standard. Based on the text, in which Julia's error is blamed on social norms and Sevastel's frigidity by three different legitimizing voices (the omniscient narrator, the virtuous Matilde, and Dr. Bernard), we can hardly conclude that Julia dies because she "soils and distorts the sacrosanct institution of marriage" or that the ending "figures perfectly into a patriarchal logic: the defense of matrimony and the condemnation of adultery" (Chen Sham 175-76).

Luz y sombra presents a logical, intelligent female character who is both sexually desirous and justified in her sexuality by several supporting characters and the narrator. In so doing, Roqué is rearranging in a new way the traditional scripts of scientific discourse that presented women as passive objects requiring

society's protection. The narrative strategy, similar to Arens's reading of Cixous's strategy in "The Laugh of the Medusa," engages in critically "violating 'customary' assumptions of her culture rather than exploring two 'natural' categories [male and female]" ("Callois"; 238-39). In so doing, Roqué's Julia "renders herself visible; she is no longer engaged in the mimicry of disguise," but is poised to make her own mark in the symbolic (244). Casting female sexuality as a necessary part of an intelligent and vocal woman's mental and physical health was an answer to literary texts like La charca that were densely packed with dangerous and oppressive stereotypes. This was a step in the right direction to gain ground for the social change, to attempt to re-define gender boundaries and in so doing, equalize women's right to social freedoms and agency to those of men.

Notes to Chapter Six

¹ According to Groneman's research, nymphomania in the nineteenth century encompassed a very wide range of behaviors, from bestiality to wearing too much perfume to attract men, and its "cures" ranged from bloodletting to confinement in a mental asylum.

² The "story" to which Irigaray refers here is Freud's Oedipal myth to describe the process of adult heterosexuality. One of the many aspects of the Oedipal model that Irigaray critiques is the absence of focus and explanation of the female libido: "Woman would thus find no possible way to represent or tell *the story of*

the economy of her libido” (43). For Irigaray, Freud’s idea of the libido may be neuter or masculine, but never female (43).

³ All of the citations from Kristeva in this chapter are from Powers of Horror.

⁴ For Kristeva’s definitions of abject see Powers of Horror pages 1-2 (as impure organic matter), 6 (as an individual’s memories), 16-18 (as expressed in that which is considered socially taboo and in writing).

⁵ Kristeva links the abject to formation of self-identity by claiming it a precondition of narcissism; that is, the beautiful, whole human image one beholds rests upon abjection—it can only exist in its clean state if we place the abject outside ourselves (13). By focusing on the identification process’s link to the abject (I must repel abjection in order to feel like a pure, whole subject), instead of the Oedipal identification with the father in the mirror stage, Kristeva locates subjectification in the tie of the mother to the child and the pre-linguistic stage (54-55).

⁶ While I do not have space to go into other women of Puerto Rican letters of the nineteenth century in the body of this study, I would like to present a chronological abbreviated list for reference. María Bibiana Benítez (1783 Aguadilla-1873 San Juan) was one of the first poets to become known in Puerto Rico. Also wrote a drama called La cruz del morro. Her literary background is classical and romantic; she was self-educated and made use of the well-equipped library in her home. See Ribes Tovar 115 for titles of her works.

Alejandrina Benítez de Arce y de Santier (1819-1879) was an orphan and niece of María Bibiana Benítez, who raised her. Benítez de Arce was a poet in the romantic style and hostess of literary reunions attended by the island’s most important intellectuals. She is known for her prize-winning poem “La patria del genio.”

Carmen Hernández Araujo (1832-1877) was a poet, playwright, and novelist. According to one historian, her work for the theatre was “subject to severe censorship” (Rives Tovar 116). She was the mother of romantic poet José Gautier Benítez (1848-1880). Other women writers of the nineteenth century include poet and educator Fidela Matheu de Rodríguez (1852-1927); poet and novelist Estela Mangual de Cestero (1865-?) who wrote the novel La muñeca in 1895; poet and short-story writer Trinidad Padilla de Sanz (1868-1957); and poet and novelist Carmen Eulate Sanjurjo (1871-?). In addition to writing prose and poetry, women distinguished themselves as musicians and composers; at the end

of the century, several women earned advanced professional degrees in law, pharmacy (see Ribes Tovar 121-126).

Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843 San Germán, Cuba 1924), whom I mention in chapter four, is among the most important women of the nineteenth century in Puerto Rico. Rodríguez de Tió hailed from a well-educated family and married the liberal patriot Bonicio Segarra; meetings at their home are said to have resulted in Lares (an attempted insurrection against the Spanish) in 1868. She took active roles (the details of which are disputed by historians) in three revolutionary movements: two in Puerto Rico and one in Cuba. She and her husband were exiled three times for participation in propaganda for freedom from tyrannical Spanish rulers: to Caracas, Cuba, and New York. Tió's verses were praised by such notable Caribbean writers and intellectuals as José Martí, Rubén Darío, and the Spaniard Don Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo. One historian includes a description of Tió's uncommon appearance: "This strange woman, with her radical thoughts, wore a skirt of a very peculiar design, like an Amazon's, and wore a blouse with a high neckline and a wide bow tie, and her hair was cut short like a man's" (Ribes Tovar 121-22). Rodríguez de 's major works include: Mis cantares (My songs), Claros y nieblas (Fair weather and fog), Mi libro de Cuba (My book on Cuba), and Claros de sol (Sunshine).

Luisa Capetillo (1879-1922) is a key figure in the history of the struggle for women's freedom from sexual oppression in the early twentieth century. She fought for labor reform, socialism, women's rights, and condemned the Angel of the House ideology as a model for women and the sexual double standards set forth by the church and state. Her book Derechos de la mujer como compañera, madre y ser independiente (The rights of woman as a partner, mother and independent being; 1911) "could be considered as the first women's rights manifesto in Puerto Rico" (Delgado Votaw 24).

Some exemplary women later in the century deserve mention, although their influence extends more solidly into the twentieth century than the other women mentioned here. María Cadilla de Martínez (1886-1951) was a writer and a professor of history and literature at the Instituto Universitario de Santurce in 1914. She later earned a Ph.D. in Madrid and was a member of Asociación Femenina de Puerto Rico and a member of the Liga Cívica de Mujeres Votantes (Civic League of Voting Women). Trinidad Padilla de Sanz (1868-1957) was a poet, short story writer, and pianist who published book of *modernista* poetry in 1943 entitled Cálices abiertos (Open chalices). She also hosted literary and musical soirées and was a women's rights activist (Ribes Tovar 126).

⁷ Roqué married Luis Duprey when she was nineteen and they had five children, three of whom survived to adulthood. Although the couple did not remain together physically (her husband lived with several different women during their marriage), they never divorced (Paravisini-Gebert 154).

⁸ Roqué strongly opposed the U.S. policy of teaching basic courses in English in public schools. She published articles in educational journals voicing her disagreement with this policy (Rivera 129).

⁹ Ribes Tovar sets the date for La mujer at 1897 (103).

¹⁰ With the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico in 1873, miscegenation was a particular threat to the “white” peasant population because of racial mingling with freed slaves, primarily in rural areas (Trigo 6). The medical doctor Francisco del Valle Atilas is one Puerto Rican thinker who expressed the fear of contamination of the white race by Afro-Cubans (whom he believed to be immune to the disease under consideration, anemia) in The Puerto Rican Peasant, published in 1887 (Trigo 81).

¹¹ The following information is from Delgado Votaw’s short biography on Roqué (76). Roqué’s books include Explicaciones de gramática castellana (Explanations of Castilian grammar; 1889), Geografía universal (Universal geography; 1894), La botánica en las indias occidentales (The botany of the West Indies; date unknown). She also edited and founded the periodicals La Mujer (Woman; 1893), La Evolución (Evolution; 1902), La Mujer del Siglo XX (The woman of the twentieth century; 1917), Album Puertorriqueño (Puerto Rican Album; 1918), and El Herald de la Mujer (The woman’s herald; 1918).

¹² The introduction of the printing press in 1806 made possible the publication of newspapers, magazines, and books in Puerto Rico (Ribes Tovar 103).

¹³ For further information on essentialized conceptualizations of women by defining them in terms of reproduction (motherhood), see chapter five of this study (the section on Clerical and Governmental Control of Sexuality through Popular Customs: Dress, Dance, Leisure, and Public Space: 1700s-mid-1800s), Barceló Miller’s study “De la polilla a la virtud: visión sobre la mujer de la iglesia jerárquica de Puerto Rico,” and Suárez Findlay’s Imposing Decency: The Politics of Sexuality and Race in Puerto Rico, 1870-1920.

¹⁴ Biographical information on Zeno Gandía is from Laguerre’s introduction and biographical chronology (ix-xlix, 165-275).

¹⁵ He wrote the reflections Horas de soledad (Hours of solitude; 1872) and the plays Un matrimonio a oscuras o El demonio son los celos (A marriage in the dark, or jealousy is the demon; 1873) and Eran las diez y las doce (It was ten o’clock and twelve o’clock; 1875). He also published the medical study Influencia del clima en las enfermedades del hombre (The influence of climate on man’s illnesses; 1873).

¹⁶ Although Zeno Gandía’s two novels about the *jíbaro*, which exhibited the heaviest influence of naturalism, were not published in a second edition for many years (Laguerre xxxviii), I did not find any information to indicate that his naturalist fiction was harshly critiqued from a sexual standpoint the way Zola’s was. Laguerre speculates that Zeno Gandía’s novels did not enjoy reprinting because government officials did not want to face the social problems of poor people living in the highlands (xxxviii).

¹⁷ Zeno Gandía’s preference for giving voice to male peasants shows gender bias in that agricultural workers are not generally known for gender stratification; both sexes work side by side in the field.

¹⁸ Ochoa notes the connection between the novella written by the Spanish author Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) “El licenciado vidriera” (“The Glass Graduate” 1613) and Spanish-American thinkers’ self-reflexive and ironic depictions of the intellectual (83). In Cervantes’s novella, the protagonist, a young wanderer turned scholar, falls into a type of insanity that makes him believe he is made of glass. In this state, the knowledge he has acquired during his years of studies flows freely. Typical of common beliefs about madness during the renaissance (as Foucault finds in his 1961 study Madness and Civilization), the madman reveals truths about the world as he sees it. The metaphors of glass as a prism through which to see the world, or the mirror as a means to view life from a new perspective, were common in the Hispanic renaissance tradition (Ochoa 85). In the context of La charca, Jacobo could be read as a “wise fool” of glass, like the *licenciado*, because although he has gained knowledge through book learning, he lacks the real-life knowledge of the Puerto Rico highlands in order to interpret these facts in a way that can be applied to the *jíbaros*’ reality.

¹⁹ The biblical references in La charca are ground for future study. Some areas for this reading are the Puerto Rican landscape as a dangerous and exotic garden of Eden, the muddy, flooded river as an inverse of the biblical flood (connoting a muddied version of the biblical fresh start or rebirth of the race), women as Eve or the downfall of a strong patriarchal fatherland.

²⁰ Cixous in “Laugh” and the U.S. feminist scholar Dorothy Dinnerstein in The Mermaid and the Minotaur both reclaim the so-called monstrous female body by focusing on women’s sexual power (the reason they claim male thinkers’ need to repress it).

²¹ See the section entitled Clerical and Governmental Control of Sexuality through Popular Customs: Dress, Dance, Leisure, and Public Space: 1700s-mid-1800s in chapter five of this study for conservative social codes in regard to clothing in Puerto Rico.

²² Although Julia is somewhat similar to Cabello’s character Blanca Sol in her rational way of following society’s example in regard to a marriage of convenience, there are some significant differences. Julia is not interested in social climbing; she is already a member of society’s elite. Also Julia marries an elegant man with some possibility of the development of a romantic awakening for her husband, while Blanca Sol’s husband is a buffoon. The result is that Julia’s choice is through a more logical reasoning that fits her social class, whereas Blanca Sol is more malicious toward her clumsy bourgeois husband, her malice being the fault of the superficial society misguided her. Julia is not malicious, but rather dispassionate about the prospect of love; Blanca Sol disregarded a love she had in favor of social climbing.

²³ See chapter five of this study, Clerical and Governmental Control of Sexuality through Popular Customs: Dress, Dance, Leisure, and Public Space: 1700s-mid-1800s.

²⁴ For example, in Speculum of the Other Woman (1974) Irigaray reverses the symbolism of dark versus light in her reading of Plato’s cave as the mother’s womb. However, it is important to note that, unlike post-structural feminists Luce Irigaray (and Hélène Cixous in “Laugh of the Medusa”), Roqué does *not* celebrate what masculine discourse sublimates as the abject. That is, while these twentieth-century feminists celebrate women’s reproductive bodies and fluids as a way of reclaiming them from the marginalized spaces into which masculine discourse

projects them, Roqué's novel provides a new discourse of women's sexuality for her time, that *omits*, as a political gesture, the essentialized representations of masculine notions of female reproduction.

²⁵ A reading of the deconstruction of the dichotomy between black and white obviously lends itself to a racial reading of the symbolism as well. This would be particularly relevant given Roqué's fight for humane treatment of the slaves on her husband's plantation in 1872 and her support and celebration of their emancipation in 1873 (Paravisini-Gebert 154).

CONCLUSIONS

The idea that identity is constructed outside the individual (and the grave social consequences this idea of subjectivity entails) drives the narratives of the three pioneering novelists in this study: Barragán, Cabello de Carbonera, and Roqué. Like some of their contemporaries (the writers Georges Sand [Amandine-Aurore-Lucile Dudevant; France] and Emily Dickenson [United States], to name two), they were keenly aware of the veritable crusade of religious, literary, social, and scientific rhetoric that propounded women's innate domesticity and forcefully advocated female citizens' concentration on motherhood and morality. Female identity was (and is) a fiercely disputed territory solidly occupied by hegemonic cultural forces, but one to which these early feminists were effectively laying their claims. To conclude this study, I will point to some of the similarities and differences among the three women and their works as a way of synthesizing the preceding analyses and reiterate how the authors, basing themselves on the Angel of the House, worked to expand how their readers viewed female identity.

The particular weapons that Barragán, Cabello de Carbonera, and Roqué used to wage the war for women to take part in molding their own identities and present alternatives to the Angel of the House were a mix of rhetorical strategies

(the artistry and persuasive techniques of the text that delight while opening the mind) and ideological focal points (the issues that the authors brought to scrimmage). In all three authors, literary techniques (narrative voice, imagery, symbolism, characterization, and thematic, historical, and geographic foci) function to weave provocative and entertaining tales, but they also counter damaging images of desirable womanhood that flourished in the symbolic order of their day. As I have shown, the ideal of the Angel of the House was an intrinsic part of the plans for Spanish American progress and, as such, the secular elite and, in some cases, Catholic leadership, expended energy in journals, novels, essays, and social policies to reinforce its viability and presence as a social determinant. It is only when the works are read in their context, and the words are registered by an informed reader, that the artistry of the novels women wrote to participate in the conversation about ideal womanhood can be fully appreciated.

My goal in this study, then, has been twofold: to bring to light the importance of these authors' voices in the early stages of a women's movement that would take shape slowly in Spanish America over the next century and to reveal the relevance of their novels within a broader picture of the cultural production of turn-of-the-century Peru, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. I present their works in their historical contexts as a first step to their inclusion in the canon of the literature of Spanish-American modernity. This canon, with few exceptions

(such as the Cuban novelist, dramatist, and poet Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda and the Uruguayan poet Delmira Augustini) currently lacks the production of women writers at a time when, in fact, a small but active group of women writers were knowledgeable of literary movements and discussions of their day and were weaving relevant tales of subversion. In so doing, they were participating in the nascent literary culture of the newly-independent nations. Like the previously underrepresented indigenous voice of the Popol-Vuh, these women authors will find a place in the canon as scholarship works to value them and my work is part of this process.

As we have seen in the case of Porfirian Mexico, the social and political disruption characteristic of the first steps of modernity (e.g. the shift from religion to science, women's tentative but steady entry into the workplace, the beginnings of higher education for women, and the new rhetoric of progress itself) lent themselves to questioning social mainstays such as the Angel of the House. This critique through the pens of early feminists, however, could not be overt. The authors whose work I have analyzed realized the reifying and essentializing effects of following the selfless and submissive model of the Angel of the House—yet all address or incorporate discursively this ideal, using it to disguise a more liberated self, as a starting point from which to develop a more complex self, or as an irreproachable voice box for a critique of patriarchal policies. They

necessarily grapple with the seemingly unyielding and idealistically perfect model hegemonic culture employed to attempt to keep women's minds on the areas that they believed would help raise future generations of good citizens: religion, domestic affairs, and family. Their narratives present ample evidence that their authors were aware that, under these conditions, women were less likely to have time or sufficient education to become conscious of their place as disempowered individuals within their societies.

To some degree, working from the Angel of the House allowed the authors to avoid critique by anti-feminist contemporaries, as well as to avoid alienating readers or provoking ecclesiastic censorship. *All of the novels here present—and glorify—a woman who, at least superficially, resembles an Angel of the House.* Although this conservative message in the form of the Angel of the House is contradicted in the narrative or in the actions that the character performs (Barragán's María), or is put to the task of serving as the voice of morality that defends the transgressive character (Cabello's Josefina and Roqué's Matilde), it must be there as a decoy for fending off negative reactions. Considering that the middle decades of the 1800s was a time when suffrage was not yet on the table as a substantial claim to power for early feminists (although later in the century Roqué was a fervent suffrage activist) these authors' symbolic world was not ripe

for presenting subversive messages that were not couched, at least partially, in a discourse that could seem somewhat acceptable to the ruling elite.

The authors themselves share similarities in their backgrounds. All three women witnessed the disruptions of power in the post-independence era of new republics. Although Roqué did not witness independence in Puerto Rico, anti-Spanish sentiment and pro-independence uprisings were part of her historical setting. Thus, just as post-independent enlightenment reform such as that found in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man “seemed relevant” to early feminists in France, Britain, and the United States (Rendall 32), so did the attempts at building republics—and the rhetoric of equality that went along with it—likely inspire women like Barragán, Cabello, and Roqué to question women’s inequality.

Unlike the majority of women in Spanish America of their time, all of the authors here had some formal education (although this is least documented in the case of Cabello) and continued to read and think critically beyond formal instruction. Two of them (Barragán, Roqué) were educators who actively participated in reforming and advocating girls’ education. Cabello took on women’s insufficient and superficial education as an overt social problem in her novel by linking her protagonist’s wasteful behavior to her frivolous formation. Although all married, two were widowed at a young age (Cabello and Barragán),

while Roqué lived apart from her husband for much of her adult life. We may assume that the absence of a husband (and his legal and social control) facilitated their success in pursuing their literary goals and also emphasized to them, on a personal level, the need for women to break free from a model that defined the female self in terms of her service to male relatives, rather than as an individual who forges an identity through her agency. It is not surprising, then, that female agency, desire, and voice enjoy a privileged space in their writing, thus distinguishing their works from male-authored texts of their contemporaries.

Although all three novelists rewrote, critiqued, and addressed multiple aspects of the Angel of the House, each one concentrated on a particular angelic facet to highlight its importance and each chooses a different literary style to transmit her message while entertaining. All three include some features that have made their work desirable to the reading public of their era and beyond. If their stories were not read, published in various editions, and enjoyed, the authors' early feminist messages could not work themselves on the readers' subconscious to begin to change their feminine ideals.

For Barragán, the focus is a critique of seclusion by presenting a heroine who travels and a narrator who vocalizes her desire to roam (and her recognition of inability to do so). By handicapping the father figure, Barragán's protagonist engages in a level of agency about which the vast majority of the population of

Porfirian Mexico, not to mention her women readers, could only dream. In Hija we may point to *costumbrismo* and sheer action-packed entertainment--replete with murders, robberies, intrigue, love, and drama--that earned the novel success.

In their fictions, Cabello and Roqué choose to set up false dichotomies through character development (Blanca/Josefina in Cabello and Julia/Matilde in Roqué) to then show how each model sets an unrealistic standard that their characters cannot achieve as real, un-angelic humans. While Barragán's novel opens the reader's mind to a dynamic ideal of the Mexican woman whose sharp moral compass is in perfect harmony with her subversive agency, Roqué and Cabello call into question the super-human moral standards that women were expected to follow. The moral downward spiral that the deviant characters suffer, then, is read as a humanizing representation of women who suffer under the artificial demands society makes upon them.

In addition to the domestic ideal of the Angel of the House, female morality was doubly signified in the image of the Virgin Mary, whose popularity as a social model for women I discuss in chapter five. Cabello's focus, then, is on deconstructing the dichotomy of virtue and vice (i.e., virgin/whore, Mary/Eve), while Roqué, bolstered by a longer tradition of early feminism by 1903, tackles the onerous task of defending women's sexuality as a natural part of her whole identity as a person. Both discursive efforts speak to the imposition of

unachievable moral standards that set women up to fail and also made them self-abnegating, rather than self-actualizing, members of society.

In terms of strategies to gain interest in their work, Cabello, as I mentioned in chapter six, was thought to have drawn on a local personality as the model for her story. Thus her novel had gossip appeal to 1880s *limeños*. In addition, she was thought to be one of the first novelists of Peru (a sure way to gain a readership in and of itself). It is possible that the resemblance of her plot to that of Flaubert's well-known and popular realist novel Madame Bovary aided in the circulation of her novel. It is also likely that the subplot, which incorporates the time-honored fairytale of Cinderella with some subversive twists, triggered familiar images and helped to make her work publishable and readable. Cabello de Carbonera had a particular knack for embedding her critique in stories and mental pictures that appealed to the popular imagination.

Roqué arguably had the most *ethos* of the three among the lettered elite, evidenced by the fact that she was the first woman admitted to the *Ateneo* and was granted an honorary degree in literature from the University of Puerto Rico. She, like Cabello, hosted literary gatherings in her home. We may hypothesize that, as her personal reputation possibly lent name recognition to her work among her peers, we find fewer strategies such as the ones listed in the paragraph above, to market her work to readers. Nonetheless, the theme of adultery (or, in this case,

the verge of adultery) was likely to spark readers' interest, just as readers of Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter (and of other stories of adultery) still enjoy today the piquant draw of sexual transgression. It is interesting to note that, in regard to character development, both Hija and Blanca Sol feature what one could call uppity female characters—they are prideful, they speak their minds, and have a forceful textual presence. Roqué's character, however (primarily after she marries), is less outspoken than the other two. By challenging sexual mores, Roqué must have known that she was treading sacred ground--and therefore had to step lightly--to justify the taboo *jouissance* of female sexuality.

While manipulation and critique of the Angel of the House and strategies for wide readership are a common factor among the narratives, the literary style and genre of each is unique. Barragán stands alone of the three in that her narrative is by far the most fantastic and imaginative of the group. Rather than lead her reader's mind into a realistic setting in which to visualize a feasible model, Barragán plays with fantasy to urge the reader to dream an outrageous and completely new model for a young woman, much like a nineteenth-century version of the woman warrior. María is beautiful, brave, intelligent, crafty, morally good, and seductive—thus she exhibits many of the characteristics of a warrior maiden.

Both Cabello and Roqué, drawing more heavily on popular literary models of the nineteenth century, employ a primarily realist/romantic style for the telling of their story, and the plots tend to be more realistic than that of Barragán in terms of what each author's society could expect women to do in fiction. For example, rather than present blatant feminist agency, the main vehicle to early consciousness raising in Cabello and Roqué is presenting a transgressive character who is defended and forgiven by several trustworthy characters in the novel. In this way, the authors work within readers' expectations to gently tweak these preconceived ideas about women's domesticity, education, agency, and attitudes toward sex.

To conclude, I have shown, like many of the critics I name in the introduction of this study, that we can hypothesize in an informed way about what drove these authors to risk ridicule, alienation, and censorship to publish alternative models for female identity. The authors here are on a continuum that can be traced back to the 1500s in the writing of the Spaniard Santa Teresa de Avila (Spain), the 1600s in the work of María de Zayas y Sotomayor (Spain) and Sor Juana (Colonial Mexico), among others, and whose work would set a literary base for later women poets Agustini, Alfonsina Storni (Argentina), and Gabriela Mistral (Chile).

Upon choosing identity and agency as central themes for early feminist writing, the authors of this study have much to teach current readers about the tradition of women's preoccupation with female subjectivity. As Grosz points out, one of Lacan's contributions to feminism is his critique of the idea that a person is born a "pre-given, indubitable, unified subject" and instead proposes a "theory of the socio-linguistic genesis of subjectivity which enables male and female subjects to be seen as social and historical effects, rather than pre-ordained biological givens" (148). If we look upon the history of feminism in the United States, France, and Britain, one thing that the women's movement in these countries share with the Spanish American authors I have presented is their concern with how patriarchally-produced feminine ideals aim to limit women's public voice, participation in democracy, and ability to gain domestic and civic rights. Historically, controlling how women see themselves and how they are seen by the rest of society has been a relatively effective tool to keep women from demanding or achieving higher education, the vote, equal property rights, and an equal sexual standard, just to name items on the wish lists of the nineteenth-century women I have mentioned in this study. By textually reclaiming the right to self definition, the three women novelists of this study are helping to loosen a very tight restraint that was preventing their contemporaries from demanding social and legal rights equal to those of men.

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