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**Affecting Violence: Narratives of Los Feminicidios and their Ethical
and Political Reception**

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**Affecting Violence: Narratives of Los Feminicidios and their Ethical
and Political Reception**

by

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Dedication

For Dolora and for all those who have suffered violence as a result of war, gender, race, or social class.

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Affecting Violence: Narratives of Los Feminicidios and their Ethical and Political Reception

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Abstract: In Mexico there is an increasing lack of engagement of the Mexican government and its citizens towards resolving violence. In the 20th century alone events such as the Revolution of 1910, La Guerra Cristera, La Guerra Sucia, and most recently Los Feminicidios and Calderón's War on Drugs are representative of an ethos of violence withstood and inflicted by Mexicans towards women, men, youth, and marginalized groups. This dissertation examines Los Feminicidios in Ciudad Juarez and the cultural production surrounding them: chronicles, novels, documentaries and films. In it I draw on Aristotle's influential *Nicomachean Ethics*, Victoria Camps' *El gobierno de las emociones* (2011), María Pía Lara's *Narrating Evil* (2007), Vittorio Gallese's and other scientists' research on neuroscience empathy and neurohumanism, and socio-political essays in order to theorize how a pathos-infused understanding of ethos might engage a reading and viewing public in what has become a discourse about violence determined by a sense of fatalism. Specifically, I argue that literary and film narratives and their interpretations play a significant role in people's emotional engagement and subsequent cognitive processes. I stress the importance of creating an approach that considers both

pathos and logos as a way of understanding the ethos of violence. By doing so, we can break through the theoretical impasse, which thus far has resulted in exceptionalisms and has been limited to categorizing as evil the social and political mechanisms that cause this violence.

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INTRODUCTION

On January 23, 1993, the body of Alma Chavira Farel was found on the outskirts of Ciudad Juárez.¹ She had been raped, and there was no evidence to suggest the characteristics or whereabouts of the culprit. The investigation that followed was contradictory and as a result, inconclusive. She was the first (or so it is assumed)² of what became an epidemic of women killings in Ciudad Juárez popularly known as Los Feminicidios,³ which by now, in 2012, has spread to other states in Mexico.

In the last 17 years Mexican writers, activists, artists, and filmmakers, have brought visibility to the increasing number of women who have been killed or have disappeared without a trace by fictionalizing their stories, writing fictional testimonies based on family accounts, organizing protests, and forever capturing their suffering on

¹ Most of this information is an interdisciplinary compilation of information provided in *El silencio, Huesos en el Desierto, Cosecha de mujeres; Safari en el desierto, Entre las duras aristas de las armas: Violencia y victimización en Ciudad Juárez, Trama de una injusticia: feminicidio sexual sistémico en Ciudad Juárez*, “Femicidio sexual serial en Ciudad Juárez: 1993-200”, “La cultura del feminicidio en Ciudad Juárez: 1993-1999” journalistic articles published between 1993-2010 in *El Diario, Frontera Norte, La Jornada, and CIMAC*, and information provided on <http://www.casa-amiga.org/feminicidio.html>, <http://mujeresdeJuárez.org/>, and <http://www.pgr.gob.mx/Temas%20Relevantes/Casos%20de%20Interes/Muertas%20de%20Juárez/Presentacion.asp>

² “El cadáver de otra joven mujer violada, y ya en estado de putrefacción fue hallado en un arroyo de aguas negras en la colonia Industrial. Aún no ha sido identificado... tenía las manos atadas a la espalda con alambre de paca, y por el avanzado estado de putrefacción se encontraba irreconocible... el subdirector de la Policía Judicial del Estado, Francisco Alcalá Pérez, indicó que... este homicidio es diferente a los anteriores puesto que no se tiene evidencia alguna” (*Con saña inaudita es ultrajada y muerta joven dama. No descartan que sea el mismo asesino de Nancy*, Norte de Ciudad Juárez, 3/07/91, Información Procesada, Base de Datos de la Prensa de Chihuahua, CD Base.)

³ The word *feminicidio* as opposed to *femicido* or *femicide* was coined by Marclea Lagarde to describe “que no se trata solo de la descripción de crímenes que comprometen homicidas contra niñas y mujeres, sino de la construcción social de estos crímenes de odio, culminación de la violencia de género contra las mujeres, así como de la impunidad que los configure” (Russell 12). Although there is a debate amongst scholars on the use of *feminicidio* vs *femicidio*, the term *feminicidio* began to be used in the media to signify the killings of women, and became popularly known in the cultural realm as Los Feminicidios.

pages, canvasses, blogs, and films. More specifically this visibility has focused on the northern border of Mexico and its infamous border city Ciudad Juárez.⁴

Perhaps attention has been concentrated on the northern city because, since 1993, the bodies of women continue to be found in Ciudad Juárez, and the Mexican government has yet to find a solution for this terrifying social phenomenon.⁵ In 1994 Ester Chávez Cano⁶ organized a group of women named Grupo 8 de Marzo, which questioned the lack of involvement of the authorities and also compiled news articles relating to crimes against women. They began to classify and categorize how and why these women had died. The Division of Gender Studies at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez and the Independent Committee of Human Rights of Chihuahua later joined Grupo 8 de Marzo. These groups began to analyze the deaths of these women through the lenses of gender, migration and the economic dynamics of the maquila industry. Their research pressured the authorities into appointing a special task force called La Fiscalía Especial de Investigación de Homicidios contra Mujeres.

The reports done by activists, NGOs, human rights officials, and eventually government-appointed investigators, together produced profiles of the murdered women.⁷

⁴ Has been deemed the most dangerous city in the world by various news sources (*Special report: 'Juárez deserves the title of most dangerous city in the world'*, El Paso Times, 6/7/2010) and governmental official including Texas Governor Rick Perry (*Governor Perry: Juárez Most Dangerous City*, 3/1/12: <http://www.ksm.com/news/governor-perry-juarez-most-dangerous-city-in-america>)

⁵ See Appendix Ref 1 “Chronology of Los Feminicidios”

⁶ Ester Chávez Cano was one of the pioneers in the questioning of the impunity of the authorities, taking to the streets and plastering the city with pink ribbons representing the dead women. In 1999 Chávez also established the first rape crisis center “Casa Amiga” which became known for its community outreach. However, as her popularity grew, other activist groups, state government officials, and media outlets accused her of embezzling funds, and raising awareness for herself rather than the slain. She dismissed these accusations by arguing that they detracted from the real issue. In 2008 she was awarded Mexico’s National Human Rights Award. Then she died of cancer in December of 2009.

⁷ See *Informe sobre los homicidios de mujeres en Ciudad Juárez* (1998) by la Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos de México; *Muertes Intolerables* (2003) by Amnesty International; *Informe sobre Ciudad Juárez* (2003) by la Comisión Interamericana para los Derechos Humanos, *Homicidios y*

Most of the victims have been young women between 17-28 years old from poor working class families; some have been identified as maquila workers, students, prostitutes and shoe store clerks. According to these reports, the murdered women were usually found in vacant lots within Ciudad Juarez or on ranches and other areas of the desert in the outskirts of the city. They were primarily found bound, raped and strangled. Although most recent findings reveal that, with the insurgence of drug cartels in the area, women's bodies have appeared with parts of their bodies mutilated, this phenomenon has been interpreted as "messages" between cartels.

Despite President Felipe Calderon's war on drug cartels, the killings continue to this day. In fact, the judicial lines of investigation and citizens' overall engagement seem to be more convoluted than ever. Drug-related violence has taken over the attention once accorded to the murders of women. The government's influence over the media has continuously diverted the attention from the woman killings of Ciudad Juarez to the drug war. In a single year, drug-related violence produced more global concern than the ongoing murders of women. This escalation has created problems on several levels. For one thing, it has become very hard to keep track of the homicides against women for being women—what some feminists like Marcela Lagarde have called Los Feminicidios. Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba states:

En 2003, cuando Amnistía Internacional emitió el informe Muertes Intolerables se desató algo que llamamos la guerra de cifras: las ONG manejaban un número (que era el que manejaba Amnistía), el gobierno otro. Luego empezaron especulaciones sobre que había muchas más asesinadas que las reportadas y que el número de desaparecidas era mucho mayor. Por esas razones nosotros no podemos asegurar ningún número. Muchas muertes recientes se asocian al narco,

Desapariciones de Mujeres en Ciudad Juarez (2004) by Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Penales, *Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005* by U.S. Department of State; *Feminicidio* (2009) by Oficina en México del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos.

lo cual es un problema de clasificación, pues mientras que el feminicidio se ve como causa de muerte por el hecho de ser mujer, en este caso puede considerarse una muerte más relacionada con el crimen organizado.

As a result, there are no accurate numbers. The NGOs, Amnesty International and the Mexican government all have different recorded figures, and in some cases their websites have not been updated since 2007. This lack of accurate bookkeeping is in part the result of authorities not keeping proper records, selling files, or making up numbers to make things seem better than they are. Thirteen years of inadequate information not only reveals that each group involved has a number that promotes its own interests, but, more importantly, it also stresses the impossibility of having a congruent number, especially in a city where migration is constant, where multiple interests are at play, and where the surrounding desert swallows the unfound bodies of those slain.

Additionally, there are a number of explanations for these killings, but no central line of inquiry. For example, in the article “La batalla de las cruces: los crímenes contra mujeres en la frontera y sus intérpretes,” Patricia Ravelo Blancas and Hector Domínguez Ruvalcaba compile a total of 32 different theories collected from their field work.⁸ Amongst the top theories are those related to the complicity of policemen, messages from drug-lords to the authorities, trafficking of organs, women and prepubescent girls, a serial killer, and the porn industry, especially the branch related to the elaboration and marketing of snuff films.

As the woman killings have become more visible in the narratives that circulate in the cultural sphere, the Mexican government has established stringent laws, enforced through special branches of the judiciary, to address gender crimes, which previously had either been ignored or disregarded as matters of public policy. Regrettably, despite its

⁸ See Appendix Ref. 2- “Collected Theories on Los Feminicidios”

efforts, Mexico continues to record an extraordinarily high incidence of such crimes, indicating that, although the topic of gender violence does circulate in the public realm, not enough is being done to shift the perception of it. The poor measurements in combination with the continuing violence suggest the ineffectiveness of the government, and to some degree Mexican citizens, to understand this ethos of violence that surrounds Los Feminicidios.

FEMICIDE/FEMINICIDOS: STANDARD THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The gendered killing of women is a phenomenon that has been around for centuries. It has, of course, undergone various transformations--from battle tactics, to witch-hunts, to racial cleansing, to female genocide. It is also something that is not particular to one place: there are various locales around the world which have records of crimes against women, including the Balkans, Algeria, India, Australia, Spain, Uganda, Kenya, Iran, Pakistan, China, Guatemala, Argentina, México and the United States, to name a few. Globally, there is a plethora of socio-political responses to *femicides*; in Mexico, these responses tend to follow the theoretical framework of worldly scholars addressing the issues of the government's inefficiency, patriarchal values, sex/gender systems, and identity politics. These lines of analysis primarily derive from two main axioms: one stemming from patriarchy and the other from the byproducts of economic dynamics.

Based on my extensive research, the most popular premise, and the one used by most scholars of femicides, is based on the system of power deriving from patriarchal values. For example, Diana Russell, Jill Radford, and Jane Caputi are seminal scholars of femicide studies, and their work has heavily influenced both Marcela Lagarde and Julia Monárrez (who are the most well-known Mexican scholars on the subject). These

scholars primarily focus on how society tends to represent, produce, and perpetuate the killings of women. In the book *Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing* (1992), for example, Jill Radford and Diana Russell use the term *femicide* to define “the misogynist killing of women by men” (xi). They claim that there are many different forms of *femicide*:

racist femicide (when black women are killed by white men), homophobic femicide, or, lesbicide (when lesbians are killed by heterosexual men), marital femicide (when women are killed by their husbands); femicide committed outside the home by a stranger; serial femicide; and mass femicide. [...] The concept of femicide also extends itself beyond legal definitions of murder to include situations in which women are permitted to die as a result of misogynous attitudes or social practices. (7)

Both authors think of *femicide* as part of a *continuum* of sexual violence, a term coined by Liz Kelly and defined as: “any physical, visual, verbal or sexual act experienced by a woman or girl at the time or later, as a threat, invasion or assault, that has the effect of hurting or degrading her and/or takes away her ability to control intimate contact” (Kelly 41). The origin of the term has been widely debated amongst feminist circles; however, Diana Russell claims she first heard the term 'femicide' when in 1974 Carol Orlock was preparing an anthology on the topic that was never published. Others, like Caputi, insist that the term is a derivation of the term 'gynocide,' which Mary Daly coined in 1973. Three years later Andrea Dworkin defined it as: “the systematic crippling, raping, and/or killing of women by men...the relentless violence perpetrated by the gender class men on the gender class women”(Dworkin 16).

As the term *femicide* has developed its various contemporary conceptualizations, the one thing that has remained constant is the continuous association between the term and the ideas of sexual violence, gender, and patriarchy. Rapes that end in death are also considered femicides. According to Jane Caputi, rape has its roots in a patriarchal, sexist, and misogynist society. Susan Griffin, Andrea Dworkin, Diana Russell, Jill Radford,

Joanna Bourke, and Susan Brownmiller have argued that rape is quite a paradigmatic expression of patriarchal force. Caputi adds to the argument by stating:
rape is not, as common mythology insists, a crime of desire, passion, frustrated attraction, victim provocation or uncontrollable biological urges. Nor is it one perpetuated only by an aberrant fringe. Rather rape is a social expression of sexual politics, and institutionalized and ritual enactment of male domination, a form of terror, which functions to maintain the same quo. (3)

These theorists agree then, that the result of patriarchal values, roles and needs enacted through rape directly result in sexual killings. Caputi states that “serial sexual murder is not some inexplicable explosion epidemic of an extrinsic evil or the domain only of the mysterious psychopath” but the “next step in the procession of patriarchal roles, values, needs, and rule of force” (Caputi 3).

Moreover, violence based on gender has different manifestations, but it is not classified in the judicial system as *femicide* unless it results in death. Note that it does not matter whether this death is the result of sexual pleasure. Even if, for example, a man chokes his wife (with her consent) to feel extreme pleasure when her vagina contracts, and he cannot let go until he feels sexual realization, and then his wife dies, this type of crime is still considered a *femicide*—implying that the death was the result of relentless systematic violence of a husband against his wife simply because she was a woman. The term *femicide*’s wide umbrella reveals the problem in using it for theoretical analysis and categorization. Needless to say, by using the term, it is very easy to detract from the analysis of the actual forces that are at work and fall back on what I call female exceptionalisms, which I define as the impasse between the absolute difference of male power and woman victimhood that results in the lack of association of the term “woman” with the idea of “human” and facilitates the way women are easily dehumanized and commoditized.

While it is important to acknowledge that there are cultures that promote rape, sexual killings and all violence towards women in general, it is equally essential to question why these attitudes are normative and how these attitudes come to be accepted and even to dare to point out that women are not the only ones being raped, maimed and killed—children, men and minority groups also experience these forms of violence. It is important to consider whether these actions happen to people only when they are feminized or dehumanized.

In the era of Los Feminicidios, scholars like Marcela Lagarde and Julia Monárrez Fragoso reinforce the ideas of Caputi, Russell, and Radford in their analyses of woman killings in the Mexican context, instead of deconstructing the intricacies of this problem from a perspective that does not fall into female exceptionalism. Marcela Lagarde is one of Mexico's leading feminists and is responsible for a plethora of legislative change that has occurred in the last two decades. She is also responsible for taking the term *femicide* and changing it to *feminicidio*. According to Lagarde, adding *ni* to the term implies crimes against females, and the social construction and impunity that is intrinsic in the way the government deals with them. The term has come to be associated with this historical period.⁹

In *Los cautiverios de las mujeres: madresposas, monjas, putas, presas y locas* (1993), Lagarde discusses five main social roles in México that oppress women from an anthropological perspective: mother-wives, nuns, whores, prisoners, and manic women. She defines patriarchy according to three aspects: 1) opposition between masculine and feminine genders in relation to male dominance in social relations, norms, language, institutions, ideologies and world views; 2) competition amongst women for men and

⁹ The New York Times has divided this historical period in two waves, the first in the 90s, and the second in the first decade of the 21st century (Cave A6). For the purpose of this dissertation I define the period starting in 1998 up until the present.

being socially accepted in spaces created by men; 3) machismo—a cultural 'phenomenon' based on masculine power and discrimination against women. She also explains that patriarchal power does not limit itself to the oppression only of women, but also to children and other people in minority groups defined by age, ethnicity, social class, religious principles, and worldviews that differ from those of the dominant group (Lagarde 87-91). According to her analysis, patriarchy in México is not only related to gender, but also a social infrastructure based on male power and domination that permeates the realms of the political and the economic. While Lagarde's argument is convincing, it is also problematic because it conflates patriarchy with men, and thus obviates the systemic construction of cognitive and affective processes. What is more, her discourse in practice eliminates classes of interlocutors from the debate and thereby limits the scope of visibility and discussion that can lead to a positive change in our understanding of patriarchy.

Julia Monárrez takes a sociological approach to *feminicidio* and U.S/Mexico border issues. She has argued that there are four topographies to the serial killings of women: *sexual feminicidios*, *sexist feminicidios*, *feminicidios related to the drug trade*, and *feminicidios related to addiction* (Monárrez Fragoso 102-104). She has also categorized the killings of Ciudad Juarez as *feminicidio sistémico sexual*, a term she coined specifically to be able to legislatively categorize the *feminicidios*. She defines a *feminicidio sistémico sexual* as:

El asesinato de una niña/mujer cometido por un hombre, donde se encuentran todos los elementos de la relación inequitativa entre los sexos: la superioridad genérica del hombre frente a la subordinación genérica de la mujer, la misoginia, el control y el sexismo. No solo se asesina el cuerpo biológico de la mujer, se asesina también lo que ha significado la construcción cultural de su cuerpo, con la pasividad y tolerancia de un estado masculinizado (Monárrez Fragoso, 2006).

Although I concur with Monárrez in creating further categories of *feminicidio* for legislative reasons, I believe reasserting difference by further fragmenting the *feminicidios* into topographies and categories only detracts from the main principles and limits our ability to gain further insight of the factors involved in these crimes. Producing further categorization for each type of death may prove productive in a legislative setting, but it is counter-productive when put into practice in scholarly work and public forums for two main reasons: bookkeeping and being able to name the phenomenon in a manner that enables people to immediately associate the term with a specific phenomenon. Currently, the *feminicidio* files are still unreliable and incomplete, so to further categorize the crimes is impractical and complicates bookkeeping, especially because, due to the current war on drugs, the deaths of women, men, and children have tripled, making the slayings of women hard to place into any objective category. Further categorization of *feminicidios* hides the perpetrators of these crimes, taking away their accountability, and allowing them to be lost behind a mound of jargon and paperwork.

Secondly, by being able to name the phenomenon in one single term that allows a frame of reference for scholars, lawyers, intellectuals, and the public as a whole, it becomes more visible. For example, the Holocaust is a term that immediately references the mass genocide of Jews in Germany; people don't associate it with the different types of crimes against Jewish people, and it does not make them think about the Holocaust in terms of women, men, or children, but rather as a mass extermination of humans who had a specific set of beliefs. According to the philosopher María Pía Lara, in *Narrating Evil* (2007), naming the Holocaust was a process, "that began by finding ways to name the catastrophe, and then to capture what was unique about it and so on" (5). Simply put, finding a term for the phenomenon categorizes the catastrophe by naming the event and referencing what was unfortunately unique about it. The popular name for this

phenomenon in Mexico in the public sphere is Los Feminicidios. Due to the nature of the visibility and frame of reference of the term, then, I will employ the term throughout this dissertation, despite my profound disagreement with the theoretical premise behind it.

The tendency of some second wave feminists to focus solely on patriarchy may also prove counter-productive to the degree that it identifies men as the problem and alienates them. By only talking about patriarchy they exclude from consideration other forms of dehumanization. For example, while accusing men and the government of being misogynist, we must realize that women are also enforcers of this misogyny, not only through words, but also through actions. It is they who often pass on the misogynist perspective to their children, by staying with a cheating abusive husband, teaching their sons that they are to be served and taken care of, accepting that their sons should be sexually initiated by prostitutes, etc. Another aspect is that some Mexican feminists have been able to gain power and respect by masculinizing certain aspects of their public personas, which ironically plays into the argument of patriarchy they criticize. Also, if Mexican feminists continue to rearticulate the idea that men are bad, that men are killers, that government is run by men and that is why it is 'Evil,' they might create a misandric movement, in which maybe some women will be justified in castrating men. I want to clarify that, although I strongly believe in the power of identity politics¹⁰ to produce awareness, social movements, and possibly change preconceived notions towards minority groups, in this particular case, I find that accusing one gender of hating the other or insisting on the eradication of patriarchal epistemic beliefs leaves us at an impasse, instead of providing insights and producing a change in perspectives.

¹⁰ See Anzaldúa 1999, Butler 1993, 1999, Cixous 1976, Domínguez-Ruvalcaba 2007, Fanon 1968, Foucault 1980, Friedan 1963, Irigaray 1985, Robbins 2011, Sedgwick 1990, Spivak 1990.

Let's briefly consider the other axiom, which, although different than the previous patriarchy influenced approaches, can arguably be associated with it—I am talking about the economic factors that have resulted in commoditizing women. This line of inquiry is reminiscent of the anthropologist Gayle Rubin's "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in which she builds on her idea of the sex/gender system¹¹ and Lévi-Strauss's idea of kinship¹² to claim that the exchange of women in order to establish kinship situates their oppression in society, not biology—and thus, the oppression of women is not the root of social organization, but rather, the product of it. Scholars from different disciplines have in varied forms developed research on gender violence that rescue Rubin's line of argument to address the problem of Los Feminicidios through the lenses of neoliberalism (Ileana Rodríguez), structures of violence (Patricia Ravelo, Rita Segato, and Hector Domínguez Ruvalcaba), human trafficking (Dennis Altman, Ronald Weitzer), and social justice (Martha Nussbaum, Jose Luis Monereo). While their approaches are important and do shed some light on what are mainly the result of economic dynamics, my research proves that the aforementioned scholars had skirted or barely tackled the issues of how narratives make us feel, how they help build identities, how they contribute to our understanding of the cruelty humans do unto other humans, specifically to women (who, as I mentioned before have a historical tendency to be dehumanized). Most importantly, they lacked practical solutions to the problem of violence towards women. This is not to diminish the important contributions of their work, but rather to identify a problem that I see within their arguments, often in spite of the intentions of their authors. The critical discourse on Los Feminicidios in Mexico must

¹¹ Rubin defines this system as a process in which a particular culture turns biological sex into "products of human activity" (88).

¹² Refer to Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structure of Kinship*, 1969.

expand its critical gaze beyond identity politics and Ciudad Juarez—as this type of gender violence in Mexico is not only a border issue or a socio-economic problem but also a symptom of a more global phenomenon. In the second decade of the 21st century, the point should not be that women are being killed in massive numbers, but rather, that humans are being killed on a daily basis throughout Mexico, and its society has come to accept that as part of a lifestyle—an ethos.

Neither axiom is sufficient to explore and reflect upon the intricate nature of Los Feminicidios because they both are heavily logo-centric and do not consider the role of pathos. In a way, by not considering affect, these approaches limit reflection only to that which scholars find to be centered on reason, logic, critique, and who is ‘most’ right; instead of allowing room to reflect, understand, incorporate all possible circumstances including the role played by emotions and ethics—debating in a manner that may produce a shift in understanding of femicides. Thus, I would like to propose an alternative framework: a pathos-infused approach.

A PATHOS INFUSED APPROACH TO LOS FEMINICIDIOS

Los Feminicidios are a case study of what appears to be a continual progression towards an increasing lack of engagement regarding violence against women, youth, men, and marginalized groups. This attitude is exemplified by such historical moments such as La Guerra Cristera (1926-1929), La Guerra Sucia (1958-1977), El movimiento Zapatista (1994-2005), and most recently Los Feminicidios (1995-present) and Calderon’s notorious War on Drugs (2010-present). Scholars like José Vasconcelos, Alfonso Reyes, Octavio Paz, Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowska, and Carlos Monsiváis, have all hinted through their work at an ethos of violence that plays a part in the Mexican cultural imaginary.

In this dissertation I analyze how Los Feminicidios that began in Ciudad Juarez and later expanded to the rest of the country are represented in literature and film. I focus on these specific woman-killings, because, unlike any of the other aforementioned events, Los Feminicidios are a phenomenon that have failed to engage the government and the vast majority of the Mexican population in critical discussions and actions to resolve them—despite their visibility in the media, films, and novels both at a local and global level within the past 20 years. It appears they are an occurrence that is not fully understood nor addressed in a manner that calls attention to and produces a shift in the Mexican citizens' engagement towards these crimes. Additionally, they are events that, while unique within the Mexican context, are exemplary of a growing global problem.

I suggest this is, in part, a problem that stems from the way we attempt to analyze, talk and reflect on Los Feminicidios. I argue that the way we can understand this violence is by learning how to reflect about it in a manner that recognizes the importance of pathos (emotions and imagination) in controlling people's ethos (character) of violence. Previous models adopt a more socio-political way of thinking and understanding this ethos, which to some degree are valid, but insufficient, as they often leave us at a theoretical impasse. Once we introduce pathos into the conversation, we have a better model of how to understand the emotions that produce these crimes and perhaps a way to learn to govern them in order to make better choices that do not harm humans.

As a preview, I intend to discuss what a pathos-infused understanding of violence entails by analyzing the role that narrative and subsequent interpretations of narrative play in peoples' emotional engagement and cognitive processes. I strongly believe that, in this case, reflecting on the cultural production about Los Feminicidios in Mexico can lead to a deeper understanding of this issue and in more general terms, about human nature.

The aforementioned lines of research try to apply logocentric analyses as a sufficient way to model and understand ethos. Socio-political approaches are still currently used in various literary and interdisciplinary critiques on the topic,¹³ and, although these scholars are arguably being ethical, I do not believe their research is sufficient to break with the academic ontology that has left us at an impasse. In part this standstill is due to the unintended creation of exceptionalisms, reducing understandings of social and power mechanisms to the doings of evil, and fatalistically displacing our moral and ethical responsibility for the world's atrocities to forces we cannot control such as governments, neoliberalism, systems of power, etc. This way of understanding violence can result in re-articulating the same attitudes of aggressors, making us accomplices in atrocity. A lack of pathos in these theoretical frameworks limits our own potentialities for harming others, resulting in a lack of engagement with the type of violence involved in occurrences such as Los Feminicidios. My alternative framework seeks to incorporate both logos and pathos in analyses in order to further our understanding of what we classify as evil. This approach stems from Aristotle's influential *Nicomachean Ethics*, Victoria Camps' *El gobierno de las emociones* (2011), María Pía Lara's *Narrating Evil* (2007), and research on neuroscience and empathy in order to explore what it means to have a pathos-infused understanding of ethos. Then, I will turn to studies about ways to interpret narratives¹⁴ in order to link how reading or witnessing a narrative can affect our biological processes. The emerging field of neuroscience is currently attempting to establish relevant links between these processes and a vast array of fields including, but not limited to, literary studies, psychology,

¹³ See Fuentes, Poniatowska, Báez, Biemann, Hoffman, García, Guerrero, Donoso Macaya, García Ramos, Florence, and López-Vázquez,

¹⁴ Refer to Tompkins *The Reader in History: The Challenging Shape of Literary Response*.

sociology, anthropology, and theoretical approaches to narrative. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will set the theoretical groundwork that will contribute to my argument that by incorporating pathos into the already existing studies of Los Feminicidios—we can add a layer that may lead us to understand how an appeal to emotions and the imagination may play a part in triggering ethical behavior and possibly produce a shift in the treatment and understanding of these crimes.

ETHICS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF NARRATIVES

Aristotle's idea of ethics in *Nicomachean Ethics* strongly suggests that ethics are part of a person's ethos (character). He believed that part of that ethos was defined by virtue, which was concerned with emotions and actions. He argued that practicing moral virtue gave humans the opportunity to be good—whereas those that did not would fail to make choices that would make them better. Aristotle emphasized that:

it is moral virtue that is concerned with emotions and actions, and it is in emotions and actions that excess, deficiency, and the median are found [...] thus we can experience fear, confidence, desire, anger, pity, and generally any kind of pleasure and pain either too much or too little, and in either case not properly. But to experience all this at the right time, toward the right objects, toward the right people, for the right reason, and in the right manner—that is the median and the best course, the course that is a mark of virtue. (43)

Much like Plato in *The Republic*, Aristotle believed these moral virtues would result in ethical virtues like prudence, justice, and patience—virtues that he believed were the product of knowing what emotion corresponded to a specific event or situation.

Unlike Plato's belief that these virtues come about through training in the sciences and metaphysics, Aristotle contended that they come from being able to understand the emotions that lead to virtue and incorporating them into our daily lives. For example, according to Aristotle:

A man becomes just by performing just acts and self-control by performing acts of self control [...] without performing them, nobody could even be on the way to becoming good. Yet most men do not perform such acts, but by taking refuge in argument they think that they are engaged in philosophy and that they will become good in this way. In so doing, they act like sick men who listen attentively to what the doctor says, but fail to do any of the things he prescribes. That kind of philosophical activity will not bring health to the soul any more than this sort of treatment will produce a healthy body. (40)

According to Aristotle's premise, we cannot fully develop and understand our character (ethos) by following a general set of rules or specific knowledge (logos), but rather through practicing what emotions to feel (pathos) and what actions to take (praxis) in specific social situations. This moral education—*paideia*—in turn puts all those values into practice as an extension of ourselves, enabling us make wiser choices by knowing how to react and test our ability to be just, prudent, courageous, generous, etc., and to discern between what is good and what is evil.

Camps rescues Aristotle's premise in *El gobierno de las emociones*, an eloquent study of how our emotions are not contrary to rationality, but rather complementary to it because it is only through our understanding of emotions that we are able to act rationally and make better moral choices. This process of knowing our emotions in turn makes us all better participants and members of humanity. In her analysis, Camps argues that emotions do have a role in ethics, contrary to the popular belief that ethics is "el dominio y la erradicación de las pasiones" (15). Through a thorough analysis of Aristotle, Hume and Spinoza, Camps asserts that: "La ética es una inteligencia emocional. Llevar una vida correcta, conducirse bien en la vida, saber discernir, significan no solo tener un intelecto bien amueblado, sino sentir las emociones adecuadas para cada caso" (16). For example, not only should we know when we should feel shame or fear, but we should also understand what role society plays in the engagement of our emotions, and what

their role should be in our respective society. In other words, all emotions are useful to humans and can in fact contribute to the general well being of a person that experiences them—but we first need to get to know them and learn how to govern them in order to make choices that improve humanity.

According to Camps, in order to develop a sense of ethos, there needs to be equal focus on both logos and pathos. We achieve pathos through what she calls:

empatía con los sentimiento ajenos [...] esa empatía nos conmueve, en tanto que la indiferencia ante el placer o el dolor ajeno nos subleva, sentimos que es inhumana. Teniendo en cuenta que la ética es una necesidad derivada de la realidad social del ser humano, el fin de la educación moral tendrá que ser una cierta comunidad de sentimientos que nos haga partícipes y miembros de una misma humanidad. Comunidad de sentimientos que nos vaya indicando qué es lo que debe concernirnos por encima de todo. (17)

This community of feelings is constructed on the difference of what is determined by nature and what depends on us. This is where morality plays a role: the moral, according to Camps, acts in the realm of the things that depend on us, what can be different—that which can change. It is morality or lack thereof that should produce feelings of rage, shamefulness, or the desire for justice in humans. A society plagued by the mass killings of women should be enraged because it is a phenomenon that goes against that which is natural, unless of course they lack ethos and moral dimension. People who have ethos have moral responsibility because they react affectively to immorality and injustices. It is this affective reaction that is necessary to guide our behavior. A person who fails to be moved by that which they supposedly believe in is apathetic—“vive en la indiferencia porque no ha hecho suya, no ha incorporado a su manera de ser, la diferencia que existe entre el bien y el mal” (17). Much in the line of Aristotle, Camps believes that we achieve this emotional intelligence through practice and warns that a solely patho-centric

approach would only result in substituting rational reductionism for emotional reductionism.

Camps notes that a way for us to practice and understand our emotions is through narratives. She believes that:

la creación artística es capaz de expresar con más rotundidad y eficacia, también con más belleza y a menudo con mayor precisión, ciertas intuiciones que subyacen en [los textos] filosóficos...Las ficciones emocionan: sentimos ternura por Sancho Panza, nos conmueve la soledad del moribundo en *La muerte de Ivan Ilich*, la lectura de *El proceso de Kafka* nos produce frustración y angustia, algunas películas de Kubrick provocan miedo y repulsión, pero al mismo tiempo atraen. (309)

Narratives provide the practice ground to develop ethics because they are capable of arousing our emotions and allowing us to assimilate the situation in which characters find themselves, thus allowing us to determine what emotion corresponds to a specific situation. In this manner we are able to start internalizing our ethical virtues and building our ethos. Plato believed that fiction was mimesis, manipulation, and lies. This mimetic practice, according to Plato, put humanity at risk because it did not incite good behavior since it is often easier to imitate bad and condemnable actions than good actions, in part because of our self-interests. In contrast, Aristotle believed that representing human actions, although mimetic, provided insight into human nature by focusing on the *how* and not the *what*. In other words, narratives provide examples of human interactions, allowing us to focus on how their stories unfold and how we react to them, not so much on what happens. If we were to only focus on what happens rather than how, then there would be no art to storytelling, newscasts would not worry about how to deliver the news, and there would be no need for rhetoric.

In part, Camps supports the idea that it is by practicing and understanding our reactions to narratives, especially those that are fiction, that we can develop an ethos that

enables us to be emotionally intelligent ethical beings. This in turn may have a plethora of ramifications, from taking accountability for our own emotions to understanding that “no solo la acción individual precisa el componente emocional que la motiva, también éste es imprescindible para la acción política” (20), and in the best case scenario producing a shift in collective sentiment that may lead to social change.

Lara has tackled the issue of how a group of stories can lead to social change. Throughout her work she has argued that if enough people tell new stories about a certain issue, narratives that produce empathy with their respective audiences, then an individual, a community, a state, a country or the world can shift its perceptions. Lara’s works have contributed three ideas that are foundational for my project. In *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere*, Lara develops the idea of narratology into an argument of how social movements tend to frame their ideas in narrative forms, becoming active subjects of their own stories. She analyzes a wide range of narratives written by women, from autobiographies, stories, novels and writings by women activists, and argues that these narratives have transformed individual identities, consequently affecting the public spheres in which they circulate.

In *Rethinking Evil: Contemporary Perspectives* (2001), Lara collects essays from contemporary scholars who explore the idea of evil by examining the cruelty inflicted in the 20th century not as a divine consequence of human behavior, but rather as a human consequence of our own behavior. The essays in this volume explore why humans would intentionally inflict cruelty onto other humans and enjoy it.

Lastly, in her most recent publication *Narrating Evil: A Postmetaphysical Theory of Reflective Judgment* (2007), Lara explores how our understanding of evil manifested through narratives affects our capacity for reflective judgment. Lara draws upon Immanuel Kant’s and Hannah Arendt’s ideas on reflective judgment to argue that

narratives help societies understand their past by promoting public debates that construct a more precise picture of historical truth and in certain circumstances lead to international justice. As an example, she uses the coining of the words 'genocide' and 'Holocaust.' She explains how in the beginning of trying to make sense of World War II, historians began to depict specific episodes and possible explanations for Hitler's policies. Then, during the 1950s, because of the stories that began to circulate from and about the survivors, people began to understand those episodes as genocide, but the catastrophe had yet to be named. *The New York Times* first used the term 'Holocaust' in 1959, and the survivors and witnesses continued to publicly disclose stories allowing for a shift in public consciousness and reflection. The process of making the mass murders of Jews a worldwide issue began by the way the stories about people who survived or witnessed the Nazi atrocities circulated in the public imagination through films, political events (such as the Eichmann trial), and scholarly debates. Twenty years later a mini-series by the name "Holocaust" about a fictional family and the Nazi atrocities drew a worldwide audience of 220 million viewers, allowing a global shift in understanding of the matter and forever linking the term Holocaust to the mass murder of Jews by the Nazis during World War II.

Lara also argues that these works effected a global change in awareness. After all, the idea of human rights stems from the atrocities committed during the Second World War. If the representations of the Holocaust—both fictional and non-fictional--created such an emblematic shift in public perception, then I cannot help but wonder whether narratives about diverse forms of cruelty towards women and their dehumanization could also create a worldwide shift in the treatment and awareness of rape, sex-trafficking, and woman killings. I like to think they could. The ideas that are developed by Lara in these three works contribute to the political impact of storytelling,

but also stress the importance of narratives for our assimilation with the victims of certain forms of violence, both on an emotive and moral level.

NEUROSCIENCE AND EMPATHY

Since Plato and Aristotle, thinkers, scholars and artists have shared the assumption that we are inherently capable of understanding others. Now, the fields of neuroscience and the emerging neurohumanism¹⁵ offer new data to reinforce the idea that empathic engagement has a primary role in how we understand and explain our worlds. The discovery of mirror neurons sheds new light into how we come to understand others through motor-actions. Mirror neurons are “neurons that discharge when an individual performs an action, as well as when he/she observes a similar action done by another individual” (Rizzolatti 2005), resulting in an embodied simulation, “an inherent biological mechanism by which our brain/body system models its interaction with the world” (Gallese 2010). This mechanism is measured by analyzing empirical data that is recorded as a result of the activation of the mirror neuron system shown in fMRI studies.

In the article “Being Like Me’: Self-Other Identity, Mirror Neurons and Empathy,” neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese provides an overview of the research that has cited the activation of spectators’ mirror neurons when they witness motor actions in film, visual art, television and even pornography. Other studies have shed light on how mirror neurons are not only triggered by visual stimulus, but also through audio and written stimuli. For example, Marco Tettamati’s research proves that simply listening to action-related sentences lights up mirror neuron areas in the brain; Lisa Aziz-Zadeh’s

¹⁵ In the article “How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology,” Hannah Chapelle Wojciehowski and Vittorio Gallese define *neurohumanism* as: the framing of scientific discoveries regarding mind in terms of what it means to be a human, as well as the complex dialogues and interchanges about the nature of the human between members of the global scientific community on the one hand and members of the humanities on the other, with social scientists often poised between the two groups.

research concludes that the re-enactment of sensory motor representations during conceptual processing of actions involved in reading linguistic stimuli triggers mirror neuron areas in the brain. Other studies have provided insight into our processing of language and meaning (Gallese and Lakoff 2005), demonstrating how “when we experience others expressing a given emotion such as disgust, the same brain areas are activated as when we subjectively experience the same emotion how we understand and perceive emotions” (Gallese 2009), and established that we affectively experience empathy for other’s pain, but not the sensory aspect of it (Singer 2004, Jackson 2006).

All these studies render the same basic idea: action-related stimuli regardless of their form (written, visual, auditory, emotional), trigger mirror neuron areas related to those actions “as if” the person reading, witnessing, or listening was actually affectively experiencing them. It is the triggering of mirror neuron systems that allow human beings to activate their embodied simulation mechanisms and ground their ability to experience empathy. Granted, much in line with Aristotelian thought, it is essential to note that the manner that each of us experiences empathy is based both on our biological and social contexts.

In 1909 E.B Titchener coined “empathy” as the translation from the German term *einfihlung*; however, prior to its use in English, its German usage was fairly recent. This term was initially used in the interdisciplinary work of Wilhem Wundt, one of the founding fathers of psychology and the German philosopher Rudolph Lotze to describe the mechanism by which humans are capable of understanding their world by feeling (into) it. In “Microcosmus: an essay concerning man and his relation to the world,” Lotze explains that humans are capable of understanding inanimate objects because we place ourselves into them.

Influenced by Lotze, Robert Vischer introduced the term into aesthetic theory in 1873, to explain how we symbolize inanimate objects of nature and art. In 1903, Theodore Lipps used the concept in the field of psychology to explain the inner imitation of other's movements. Then in the mid-twentieth century Husserl extended the concept of the term in Phenomenology. His reflections published in *Ideas* pertain to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy. Husserl argues that "to have objective existence, the condition of possibility of intersubjective givenness must be fulfilled. Such an intersubjective experience-ability, however, is thinkable only through 'empathy,' which for its part presupposes an intersubjectively experienceable Body that can be understood by the one who just enacted the empathy as the Body of the corresponding psychic being" (101). This seems to suggest that our understanding of the world does not rely on the exclusivity of cognitive processes due to visual stimuli, but rather by what Gallese defines as "intentional attunement" (a sense of connectedness that allows us to perceive the world through action-related sensory-motor processes which is part of our empathic response).

The ideas of perception as associated to action-related processes were also a concern for phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty; however, for him, comprehension of gestures was a result of seeing said movements in the conduct of other people. In his book *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty explains that the "sense of the gestures is not given, but understood, that is, recaptured by an act on the spectator's part. The whole difficulty is to conceive this act clearly, without confusing it with a cognitive operation" (185). Both, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty sensed that we came to know about other's experiences directly rather than by cognitive process; their theories are now grounded by the empirical evidence collected by the research on mirror-neurons.

Empathy occurs at the most basic molecular level because it is at the root of how we understand the presence and experiences of others directly. According to Vittorio Gallese this way of entering intersubjectivity “includes the domain of action, and spans and integrates the various modalities for sensing and communicating with others [...] mirror neurons fire no matter whether the action is executed or perceived¹⁶” (Gallese 84). Embodied simulation may lead us to know what an experience would be like for others by increasing our understanding of their gestures; this is empathy.

In a recent lecture titled “Body and Empathy in Aesthetic Experience: A Neuroscientific Perspective,” Gallese explained that the perfect sadist would be highly empathic but not sympathetic. Thus, someone who understands that experiencing pain is an excruciating experience and wants to inflict it, does so knowing what the feeling of that experience produces “in others and not to the self” (Gallese, 773, 2008). This is very different from someone who relates to what it would be like to be the person receiving pain; that would be sympathy. Lauren Wispe describes the difference this way: “To know what something would be like for the other person is empathy. To know what it would be like to be that person is sympathy. [...] In sum, empathy is a way of knowing; sympathy is a way of relating” (80). For example, a popularly cited figure, Hitler, was able to inflict pain and kill a great number of Jewish people because he empathized with them. Had he been sympathetic he would not have done so. Sympathy implies relating to the pain or misfortune of others and often leads to altruistic results, whereas empathy may or may not lead to altruistic results since it is not linked to specific good or bad intentions.

¹⁶ It is important to note that when the action is directly executed the mirror neuron response is significantly higher than in evoked by an observation of the same action

We experience empathy because of a form of mimicry that occurs neurologically in embodied simulation. The results of this experience can then lead to varied cognitive processes that allow an action based on moral paradigms. In the article “The Two Sides of Mimesis: Girard’s Mimetic Theory, Embodied Simulation and Social Identification,” Gallese discusses the neuroscientific implications for social cognition against Girard’s Mimetic Theory. He argues that empirical research in developmental psychology and neuroscience support Girard’s claim that “mimesis is neither good or bad, but has the potentials to lead not only to mimetic violence but also to the most creative aspects of human cognition” (1). Therefore, to say that reading or watching violent narratives produces a violent society is not necessarily true, since, according to our previous discussion of Aristotelian ideals, these narratives can provide insight into human nature. Granted, those who follow Plato’s thinking would likely assert that watching violence results in violence and puts humanity at risk by promoting the imitation of bad actions.

When we read or watch a violent scene, our mirror neuron systems activate, allowing us to affectively simulate this violence. Cognitively we are able to differentiate that the violence we are witnessing is a representation, not physically real. Through this simulation we are able to know what certain types of violence feel like for the people we read about or watch on film. After all, “when the action is observed or imagined, its actual execution is inhibited. The cortical motor network is activated (though, not in all of its components and, likely, not with the same intensity), but action is not produced, it is only simulated” (Gallese, 443, 2010). Therefore, the neurologically simulated violent action (in this case) may lead us to mimic it affectively knowing the experience we are seeking, or we are able to sympathize and perhaps decide to embark on an altruistic cause to find creative ways to fight violence. While these conclusions are rather speculative, as many neuroscientists are still developing this idea and testing it, I think it is valuable to

explore the possible ways in which we can gain awareness that our ability to empathize can lead to good or bad intentions. This idea is of particular importance to my discussion of literature and film that represent the killing of women because neuroscience and studies on empathy can play into how narratives affect our understanding and experience of these modes of expression and what moral and ethical effects this neurological process and affective experience can have on our real lives.

NARRATIVES, EMPATHY, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Narratives are stories told through a particular medium (language, images, sound, etc), and have blossomed into the public sphere as a way of cultural expression. By definition narratives tend to be heuristic tools because they don't provide objective certainty; they allow room for reflection and allow room for their interpretation to be a matter of discussion rather than a prescriptive dictum. As previously discussed, Aristotle, Camps, and Lara have all suggested that narratives, especially fiction, help us practice how to react to situations by assimilating them and subsequently develop moral virtues that may lead us to make better choices and produce a shift in our individual and collective ethos. Additionally, neuroscientists and neurohumanists have also hinted that the fictionality of literary and filmic narratives predisposes readers and spectators to empathize with characters because, neurologically, the shared manifold for intersubjectivity operates when subjects see videos, experience virtual reality through computer interfaces, and simply hear or read narration about others (Tettamanti 2005, Gallese 2006). Thus, it comes as no surprise that those fictional characters and fictional worlds often make us feel empathy with and sympathy for them.

EMPATHY IN LITERATURE

When considering how literature triggers our empathic response and how that plays into our moral affects, three theorists come to mind: psychologist Martin Hoffman and literary theorists Jèmeljan Hakemulder and Suzanne Keen. In his book *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (2000), Martin Hoffman develops the idea that novel reading can play a role in the socialization and moral internalization necessary for the change of empathic feelings into prosocial action. In other words, Hoffman speculates that our reading experiences indirectly lay the foundation for later altruistic action. While this may very well be the case, I think it is necessary to be mindful that if Hoffman is right, then we can also argue that our reading experiences may also lay the groundwork for spiteful, evil actions. Therefore, throughout my analysis I will constantly incorporate the idea that our response to and discussions of both literary and filmic narratives must always incorporate the two sides of the debate about literature, its influence and possible consequences.

In order to ground philosophical, psychological and social beliefs that reading has an effect in our lives, I invoke the research of Jèmeljan Hakemulder, whose scholarly work documented all the empirical studies available prior to the year 2000 on the issue. In *The Moral Laboratory: Experiments Examining the Effects of Reading Literature on Social Perception and Moral Self-Concept* (2000) he analyzes and surveys available empirical research on the effects of reading literary texts on norms and values, moral development, empathy, out-group attitudes, sex-role concepts, self-esteem, critical thinking and anxiety reduction.¹⁷ Hakemulder's analysis hinges on the idea of what he

¹⁷ Hakemulder surveyed fifty-seven studies, thirty-one were reliable, and of these twenty-six demonstrated narrative texts had effects in readers. For effects on norms and values see Berg-Cross & Berg-Cross 1978, and Burt 1972; moral development see Biskin & Hoskisson 1977, Johnson 1990, Justice 1989, Keefe 1975, Kinnard 1986; empathy see Bilsky 1989 and Milner 1982; outgroup see Brisbin 1971, Geiger 1975, Jackson 1944, Litcher & Johnson 1969, Tauran 1967, Zucaro 1972; sex-role see Ashby and Wittmaier

defines as pre-ethical effects—abilities that are neither moral nor ethical and that stem from the capacity of readers to understand “the conflicting demands, being able to determine our own norms and values, and predicting the consequences of either option of the dilemma” (4). He argues that narratives contribute to the development of this ability to make inferences in order to understand motivations and emotions of characters, and therefore should be used as the basis for moral development. He suggests that by increasing moral reasoning and changing the “way participants reflect on ethical decisions” (53) we can “stimulate(s) ethical reflection, which enhances the understanding of ethical discourse” (25). Hakemulder’s survey reveals that “subjects’ identification with the characters enhanced their ability to comprehend thoughts, attitudes and emotions of other persons”(57), establishing that empathy plays a role in increasing the knowledge of human psyche and affects moral development. He also notes that critical thinking may be enhanced because of a “subjects’ ability of interpretation” (57), but it does not necessarily result in altruistic actions. Hakemulder’s detailed scrutiny of the data available provided much insight towards my own beliefs about how narratives influence our abilities to make moral and ethical choices.

Suzanne Keen builds on Hoffman’s theory and Hakemulder’s research in her book *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), by researching empathy, novels and altruism. Keen posits that narrative empathy, the shared manifold that occurs while experiencing fictional narratives, does not necessarily transpose the feelings of fictions with real others, nor does it directly lead to real-world altruistic actions. She points out that her own research “suggests that readers’ perception of a text’s fictionality plays a role in subsequent empathic response, by releasing readers from the obligations of self-

1978, Barclay 1974, Flerx et al study 1 and 2 1976, McArthur and Eisen 1976; self esteem see Gross 1977 and Roach 1975; critical thinking Bird 1984; anxiety Cutforth 1980 and Scheff & Scheele 1980.

protection through skepticism and suspicion” (xiii). Keen explains that readers’ empathy (the effects of what is felt when we read) and authors’ empathy also play a part in how we emotionally resonate with fiction and its consequent success or failure in the marketplace. For Keen, character identification and narrative situation are techniques that help trigger readers’ ability to empathize with fictional worlds; however, she often questions how factors such as genre, setting and period may hinder or help an empathic response. Keen holds that “understanding the aesthetic effects of narrative empathy illuminates the responses of feeling brains to the world-wrought spaces and inhabitants of fictional worlds” (ix). Keen’s theory of narrative empathy opens up the possibilities of future research, especially because it can help explain why in literary criticism some texts have been favored over others, which have had best-selling success, why there is a tendency to prefer narratives that tell stories and unintentionally “arouse passions” over those that seek to intentionally produce an empathic response in readers, and how we can come to understand these preferences what they reveal about human nature.

EMPATHY IN FILM

Although the theories of Hoffman, Hakemulder, and Keen pertain to empathy and novel reading I hope to build on their research with contributions from scholars that work with empathy and film. The communication and social psychologist Dolf Zillmann, film theorist Noël Carroll, and media studies researcher Margrethe Bruun Vaage are three scholars whose work on film and empathy is of great relevance to my discussion of how film triggers our empathic response and moral affects. Dolf Zillmann is often cited in studies pertaining to communication and emotions because of his extensive research exploring how our engagement with film and television are dependent on our empathic experience. His preeminent research paved the way for many other theories that are used

today to understand and analyze the effects of media.¹⁸ For the purpose of my discussion I draw on Zillmann for his theory of empathy in relation to film and his subsequent ideas on what narrative techniques may trigger this response.¹⁹

In the coedited book *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes* (1991) Dolf Zillmann and Jennings Bryant collect an array of essays that discuss reception and reaction processes, as well as responses to program genres. Zillmann's chapter, "Empathy: Affect From Bearing Witness to the Emotions of Others" discusses the various approaches to empathy in terms of their limitations, weaknesses and strengths, in order to present a theoretical model of empathy which he coins as the "Three-Factor Theory of Empathy." The theory postulates that spectators' treatment of characters on a screen usually involves them emotionally reacting to witnessing others express emotional reactions. Zillman explains that this emotional reaction or empathic response is the result of reflexive, excitatory, and experiential biological components. Zillmann argues that the reflexive component is both an unconditioned and conditioned skeletal motor reaction that is "elicited by exposure to another person's manifest or impending emotional behavior" (148). This suggests the unconscious automatic firing of mirror neurons. The excitatory component consists of reactions independent of motor responses such as "heightened activity in the sympathetic nervous system"(147), but it does not necessarily involve complex cognitive meditation. Finally the experiential component is the conscious experience of the stimuli; Zillmann claims that "exteroceptive and/or interoceptive information about many facets of an immediate

¹⁸ Some of these theories include entertainment theory, mood management theory, selective exposure, excitation transfer theory, disposition theory, anatomy of suspense, misattribution theory of humor, massive exposure to media effects, coition as emotion, sportsfanship, rhetorical questions and persuasion, three-factor theory of emotion, empathy theory, and connections between sex and aggression. See Bryant et al.

¹⁹ I will provide an in depth explanation of these techniques later in this section.

emotional reaction reaches awareness, and that this awareness fosters an appraisal of the response-eliciting circumstances” (147). This is the formation of judgment that results in the spectators' choice to engage or disengage with the screen. Zillmann's theory of empathy is of particular interest to my discussion because it implies that in order for spectators to be engaged they must be made to care about characters, which speaks to how narrative construction of films (film genres) trigger empathic responses.

The film theorist Noël Carroll has also made a case for empathic response by arguing against film criticism based on psychoanalysis and subject-position theory; he claims that the audience responds empathically to cues provided by the circumstances in the narrative of the film. In his essay “The Philosophy of Horror: Paradoxes of the Heart,” Carroll states that in horror fictions the emotional responses to monsters are cues that trigger responses in audiences. Very much like Zillmann, Carroll believes that in narrative film fiction the audience's empathic response is the result of their reaction to the character's emotional state in a given circumstance. Throughout his essays, Carroll cites the necessity to offer alternative paradigms in order to create a debate that challenges the theory used in film studies for the last thirty years. In agreement with Carroll, I aim to offer an alternative paradigm related to film narrative and the role of empathic response of the spectator that, instead of adhering to theories of subjectivity, ideology or culture in general, attempts to focus on the particular phenomena of the woman killings of Ciudad Juarez as depicted on screen and in literature.

Margrethe Bruun Vaage builds on the research of Zillmann and Carroll by establishing that empathic response is not only our emotional reaction to characters, but also a way for spectators to engage with the film in order to understand and make sense of the characters. In her essay “Fiction Film and the Varieties of Empathic Engagement,” Bruun Vaage argues that “empathy is an important mechanism for pulling the spectator

into the narrative engagement, making the narrative outcome matter for us as spectators because we may feel the triumph in the hero's success, [...] the resignation of his defeat" (175)—or our own desires for particular outcomes in the relationships between these fictional characters. Her ideas contribute to my discussion the notion that spectator engagement is dependent on how much the film narrative succeeds in triggering an empathic response in order for us to care about the outcome of the characters, thus eliciting a reflective process about their particular circumstances.

Film theory has preoccupied itself with how cinema engages with spectators by attracting them to specific representations of social, psychic, and ideological paradigms. Theorization about the spectator's emotional reactions and engagement has historically followed two lines of inquiry: (1) analysis of specific film genres and the emotions they produce, and (2) identification with fictional characters facilitated by specific narrative structures. Theorists who focus their discussions on how film genres affect viewers have argued that different genres of film would not be considered as such if they were unsuccessful in engaging the spectators in a particular way. Horror films would not be horror films if they did not scare or invoke a feeling of fear in spectators. Melodramas would fail as such if they were unsuccessful in conjuring up feelings of sadness or melancholy. Thrillers would not be thrillers if they did not give the audience some sort of adrenaline rush. Even pornographic films would disappoint if they did not sexually arouse the spectator. The very reason these films are classified as such is because of their ability to induce involuntary mental affective and bodily reactions in spectators. These theorists claim film genres condition the responses of spectators by triggering specific reactions with narrative cues composed of lighting, music, sound and editing (Carroll 1990, Williams 1991, Bordwell 1997, Coplan 2004).

The best example of this type of argument is Linda Williams' notion of how horror, melodrama and pornography use women's bodies as cues to trigger specific and unique emotions in spectators. In the essay "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess" (1991), Williams posits that the success of horror, melodrama, and pornography "is often measured by the degree to which the audience sensation mimics what is seen on the screen"(4), meaning that the spectator reacts to the emotions being portrayed by the characters. Horror, melodrama, and pornography are often considered genres that generate empathic responses in their audiences specifically because of the way they portray violence, emotion and sex (usually utilizing women). Williams theorizes that, by thinking about the form, function and system of representing violence, emotion and sex in these three "gross genres," we can explore their effect on the bodies of spectators. She argues that the way spectators respond to these genres is the result of how spectators have been conditioned to see women as cues for feeling diverse emotions. Williams explains, "in each of these genres the bodies of women figured on the screen have functioned traditionally as the primary embodiments of pleasure, fear, and pain" (4). In other words, the spectator's empathy kicks in by unconsciously reacting to and engaging with the cue of a woman feeling pleasure, fear, and pain. Therefore, for Williams, the empathic response of spectators is the result of their bodies being "caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen along with the fact that the body displayed is female" (Williams 4). If we consider that emotional responses are a form of emotional learning, then we must take into consideration how the genres of horror, melodrama, and pornography have conditioned us to react to the feelings of female characters on the screen.

In the study "Sex and Violence in Slasher Films: Reexamining the Assumptions" (2003), Barry Sapolsky, Fred Molitor and Sarah Luque found that slasher films of the

1990s contained more violence than those of the 1980s, that they rarely mixed scenes of sex and violence, and that they showed males more often as victims of violence. However, their findings did indicate that the films showed females in fear for longer periods of time. These results can be further supported by Linda Williams's idea of how portraying women in distressful situations is a conditioned emotional cue for us as spectators to react to the feelings these women appear to feel. We must also consider that the form of mimicry that Williams alludes to is more complex than simply reproducing the sensations exhibited by bodies on the screen—it is part of the neurological processes that involve mirror neurons, a form of empathy. As previously discussed, mirror neurons do not necessarily reproduce the exact sensation, emotion, or movement, but they do trace those sensations in our neurological synapses at different intensities that depend on our pre-ethical abilities and previous life experiences.

The other line of argument that is popular in film theory addresses identification with characters. In the late seventies and eighties, theorists particularly drew from psychological theories to hypothesize how the functions of film viewing affected spectators. They posited that viewers identified with fictional characters both good (Rimmon-Kenan 1976, Skura 1981, Metz 1982 and Gabbard 1987, Friedberg 1990) and evil (King 1981) in order to experience the emotions of those characters for some sort of gratification. For example, Christian Metz argues in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (1982) that the camera forces a perspective on the viewer by simulating the vision of another person through its lens. When we see the far end of a sword moving away from us as it pierces a victim's body, Metz would claim, we as spectators identify with the perpetrator because the camera only shows that perspective. In technical words this is known as a point of view (POV) shot.

Metz's notion of identification through POV shots has been challenged, in part, because identification is not solely based on seeing someone's perspective, but in witnessing the person performing an action within a set of circumstances. Barry Sapolsky (1979), for example, tested Metz's assumption by creating erotic movies that alternated between POV shots and master shots (which are considered more objective), both inviting identification with one character at a time. In the POV shot, the camera simulated the visual perception of the male or female engaged in intercourse, while in the master shot the camera showed either male or female and their respective actions towards their partner. Then, Sapolsky measured the blood pressure and physiological reactions, including the heart beat of spectators, to gauge the emotional response to each camera shot. Based on Metz's notion regarding identification and camera shots, Sapolsky expected spectators to manifest greater emotional response to the POV shots; however, the results challenged Metz's concept of identification as the spectators showed no signs of excitatory response. The results suggested that master shots increased blood pressure when spectators were given a master shot in which the actor objectively engaged in the portrayal of sexual activity. If we briefly recall how neuroscience has established that in daily situations we find others' behavior meaningful because it allows a direct link to our own experience of those same behaviors by processing their actions, emotions and sensations onto the same neural systems that control our own mental representations of those same actions, emotions and sensations (Gallese 2010), then Sapolsky's results make sense because we, as spectators, are not only viewing characters on a screen, but also relating to their experiences.

With the discovery of mirror neurons, some scientist and film theorists have begun to explore how films affect our empathic response, specifically our own mimicry of visual and auditory input based on facial recognition and familiar sounds. Much of the

current research stems from psychologists Titchener and Lipps' assumption that facial expressions produce affective states. For example, some findings conclude that infants smile at smiling faces and smiling patterns on masks (Spitz and Wolf 1946); children mimic facial expressions (Hamilton 1972); adults show increased lip movement and eye blinking when observing someone stuttering or rapidly eye-blinking (Berger and Hadley 1975, Bernal and Berger 1976); adults will increase laughter or yawning upon observing and hearing others laugh and yawn respectively (Cialdini and McPeck 1974, Provine 1992); audiences will sway forward when observing an actor leaning forward desperately trying to reach something (Hull 1933, O'Toole and Dubin 1968); and, while witnessing pain in others, spectators will also affectively feel pain although they don't necessarily physically feel it (Humphrey 1922, Aronfreed 1970, Singer et al 2004). Accordingly, much of the theorizing about film and empathy has revolved around the discussion of reaction shots, such as close-ups, which manifest the emotional distress of the actors through facial expressions that serve as emotional cues²⁰ and editing techniques that alternate between master shots and POV shots.²¹

In the book *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (1995), Murray Smith argues that POV shots contribute to the alignment of the spectator with a character, allowing the spectator access to the character's subjective state. In his essay, "Imagining from the Inside" (1997), Smith adds that POV shots predispose spectators to empathic response by showing them what the character sees, feels and thinks. He clarifies that POV shots are not central in provoking empathic response, but, when edited into the

²⁰ See Berger 1962, Craig and Lowery 1969, Hygge 1976, Englis et al 1982, Frijda 1986, Carroll 1990, Hatfield et al 1994, Plantinga 1999, Coplan 2004, Iacoboni 2008.

²¹ I have discussed have been widely accepted in Film Theory to aid in character-spectator identification, for more information see Metz 1982, Branigan 1984, Rinck et al 1996, Gordal 1997, King 2000, Ickes 2003, Goldman 2006.

film narrative, they help the spectator piece together and understand what a character's experience is like. Similarly Carl Plantinga argues in "The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film" (1999) that reaction shots, which usually involve close-ups of emotional faces, elicit empathic responses from spectators because they provide direct information as to the emotional states of characters. Plantinga points out that in order for close-ups to work narrative development is important, as we must be made to care about the emotions of the face on the screen.

I do believe that filmic structures like POV shots and close-ups of emotional faces trigger empathic responses in spectators by manipulating not only what they see but also how they react to what a character may be feeling, but I don't think these structures alone elicit empathic response. I believe the empathic response to film is better explained by Dolf Zillman's three-factor theory of empathy which establishes that spectators' treatment of characters on a screen usually involves them emotionally reacting when witnessing actors' emotional states by integrating reflexive, acquired and deliberate empathic reactivity. In part, Zillmann argues that, when we see something that reminds us of a previous life experience, we enhance our empathic response. For example, in an experiment, Zillmann and Sapolsky (1978) asked both women who had never given birth and those who had to watch medical films of childbirth while recording their physiological responses. Their objective was to measure how the three-factor theory of empathy prolonged empathic sensitivity and how subjects revealed conscious awareness of empathic involvement. The women who had experienced giving birth registered significantly higher elevated blood pressure as well as acknowledgement of their empathic involvement than those who had not experienced childbirth. Based on these results Zillmann and Sapolsky concluded that observing similarly lived experiences does in fact trigger empathic response at a higher intensity. They posited that these results

cannot be explicitly replicated in the case of narrative film; however, they do suggest that recalling previously lived circumstances of experiences facilitates the development of empathic sensitivity that eventually leads us to care about the characters in a film.

Margrethe Bruun Vaage's recent research incorporates Zillmann's three factor theory of empathy with the work of Smith and Plantinga. In her essay "Fiction Film and the Varieties of Empathic Engagement" (2010), Bruun Vaage holds that camera shots mimic how we naturally perceive others' behavior; thus, editing a sequence of multiple shots in a particular order suggests how we gather information from people in real life. She explains, "if you and I talk together, for example, and you suddenly stop and look at something, the natural way for me to find out what you are thinking and feeling is to track your gaze to see what you are looking at and use your facial expression to understand what you are feeling about what you see" (161). In a film this would involve a master shot of two people talking, then a medium close-up shot, where one person gazes away, followed by a tracking shot or a POV shot in which the camera follows the line of view to culminate in a close-up of the object or person being looked at. Then there would be a reaction shot of the person who initially looked away. Finally the sequence would end when the camera zooms out of the reaction shot to a master shot showing both people talking about, or reacting to, whatever it was they gazed at. Bruun Vaage clearly establishes that because this sequence of shots mimic how we as spectators form empathic links to real people in real life, it incites spectators to respond empathically as if they were in a real life environment.

Some skeptics might argue that editing camera shots in a specific sequence does not make sense because, technically, film is narratively constructed by filmmakers who organize the sequence of events according to their own emotional paradigms of what the film should evoke in spectators. The film theorist Noël Carroll has thought about how

editing affects spectators. In his essay “Film, Emotion, and Genre” (1999), he acknowledges that filmmakers do the emotional task of organizing scenes and sequences for us, and it is this work that transfers into cues of how we normally perceive the emotions of others in order for us, as spectators, to empathize with the characters' emotional circumstances. In fact, in his book *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (2008), he emphasizes the importance of camera shots like POV shots, close-ups, and medium close-up shots in facilitating mirror reflexes which in and of themselves are an innate empathic response.

Based on the aforementioned research, it is valid to argue that, if shots are organized in specific sequences that mimic how we naturally perceive our world and emotional circumstances, then films that are successful in mimicking these relationships make us care about the characters and engage with them until the very end. This may then translate into the film's box-office economic success. It is also important to consider that our previous life experiences may be triggered by these sequences, which in turn, make us feel specific emotional and physiological responses when watching the emotions of characters on a screen. This may later result in gaining awareness of the intensity of emotions that particular sequences evoked in us and maybe even triggering a process of reflective judgment.

These aforementioned scholars in one way or another have insisted on the importance of empathic experience to help understand fictional and real world characters. Hoffman, Hakemulder, and Keen's research establishes that, in a way, fictional literary narratives are simulacrum that provide a safe place away from the consequence-driven real world. Zillmann, Carroll, and Vaage insist that the empathic experience in film is the result of spectators emotionally reacting to the emotions of a character in a particular situation—that spectator reactions not only play a role in the level of engagement with

the film narrative, but may also result in reflective process about the circumstances of a given character. Therefore I argue that it is in these fictional worlds that we are able to approximate ourselves to actions we would not normally experience in real life, and thus are able to learn about and understand certain issues, cultures, and others. Despite the fact that novel reading and film watching do not directly change our real world actions (but according to Hoffman they lay the groundwork for later change), we cannot underestimate and deny the possibility of how they allow us to reflect on others and their actions, and how this may lead to a change in perception that can be positive or negative.

A MAP TO A PATHOS-INFUSED APPROACH TO LOS FEMINICIDIOS

In the following chapters I will examine how narrative strategies trigger multiple audiences' 'empathic response mechanisms' in literary and cinematic narratives about Los Feminicidios, in the particular context of Mexico. These works include *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra* (1998) by Rohry Benitez, *Las muertas de Juarez* (1999) by Victor Ronquillo, Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (2004), the Mexican film *Backyard* (2008) directed by Carlos Carrera, and the documentaries Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (2001) and *La Batalla de las Cruces* (2006) directed by Patricia Ravelo and Rafael Bonilla. I chose these narratives because in the last two decades they have given visibility to the stories of violence against women in Mexico.

In the first chapter I analyze *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra* (1998) and *Las muertas de Juarez* (1999) to explore how non-fictional texts attempt to represent empathy as a representational goal. The authors of both texts depict the suffering of women through testimonies and snuff-like descriptions in order to incite their readers to see the women's humanity. I explore how demanding real-world action from readers, results in turning away the general audience, while engaging academic and journalistic

communities. Meanwhile, the success of a non-fiction work depicting explicit details of women's suffering helps lay the neurological groundwork that contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of violence, clouding our ability to reflect and understand evil.

In the second chapter I focus on how the hyper-real fictionality in Bolano's *2666* (2004) is an instrument—a moral laboratory that allows us to reflect on our understanding of evil. I explore how fictionality provides judgment-free "safe zones" and stimulates narrative empathy in readers, opening the channels to role-play and "try on" different moral/ethical perspectives. In a sense, our imaginative performativity of the virtually simulating varied situations may lead us to develop pre-ethical affects that may allow us to ethically reflect on violence against women. I explore how pre-ethical effects allow us to sense, experience, and visualize the judgment-free abyss that is *2666*. Furthermore, the emptiness of this void gazes back, compelling us, as readers, to both look away and ignore the matter, or to think about our own behavior towards and complicity in this violence, resulting in an ethical reflection that may lay the groundwork for shifting perceptions regarding moral complicity.

In the third chapter I analyze how *Backyard* (2010), a film that fictionalizes the *Feminicidios*, contributes to the perpetuation of this type of violence in order to mirror the social reality of Ciudad Juarez and call attention to Los *Feminicidios*. I establish that the film's scenes are edited in a manner that mimics the rather destitute reality by depicting the historical places where these crimes have taken place and also representing circumstances that elicit an emotional response from spectators towards the characters in the film. I argue that seeing and emotionally reacting to these events, spectators may also gain insight as to how they, as real people, factor as part of the problem. This insight may have influenced the formation of judgments about the film that have been shared in

public online forums related to the Feminicidios and can aid in understanding the ethos of violence that to a degree facilitates these crimes.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I analyze how one of the documentaries about Los Feminicidios, Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (2001), was effective in persuading audiences to take altruistic action in the form of generating forums for discussion, donations, and support groups. I also examine the ethical implications of moving viewers to altruistic action, questioning if these actions create opportunities for moral learning that further our understanding of Los Feminicidios. I focus on Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (2001) because it was the first to visualize Los Feminicidios. I chose to analyze it, because it had wide critical acclaim, and it is one of the most cited documentaries in studies about Los Feminicidios indicating academics found its arguments persuasive, valid and well documented. Perhaps, the most interesting facet about this documentary is that it was used to raise awareness of issues affecting the US/Mexico border which resulted in the creation of screening events, the formation of community coalitions and economic support for victims and their families

Chapter 1: Non-Fictional Literary Calls to Action

In this chapter I analyze *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra* (1998) and *Las muertas de Juarez* (1999) to explore how these non-fictional²² texts seek to emotionally engage readers to call attention to Los Feminicidios. The authors of both texts depict the suffering of these women in testimonies and snuff-like descriptions in order to visualize them with more multi-faceted human characteristics, rather than commoditized as products of the maquila-industry or gendered others. I explore how capitalizing on this emotional engagement to call for altruistic action from readers may result in turning away the general audience, while engaging academic and journalistic communities. On the other hand, the success of a sensationalist non-fiction work depicting explicit details of women's suffering may help lay the neurological groundwork that contributes to the a lack of engagement and perpetuation of a culture of violence, which in return clouds our ability to reflect and understand our own role and attitude towards Los Feminicidios.

ACTIVIST LITERATURE: A STIFLED CALL FOR ACTION

The alarming reality of Los Feminicidios in Ciudad Juarez provoked Rhory Benitez, Adriana Candia and the members of Taller S, a literature workshop at New Mexico State University, to question how they could save “la dignidad de esas muchachas, laceradas hasta después de su muerte” (Benítez 5). Their objective was to

²² The line separating fiction and non-fiction consists primarily in defining what is fact and what is fiction. In this chapter I chose to focus on the genre non-fiction, a form of narrative defined by its factual descriptions and assertions. This definition often tends to set the expectation in readers that what they are about to read is holds more truth, than if they read a work of fiction based on a true story. This does not mean that I am skeptical of non-fiction's abilities to create critical discussions, but rather, I want to focus on how these genre-specific expectations mold the way these types of narrative affect readers.

find “la imagen humana de la víctimas, el rostro, el alma” (Benítez 5) and to provide a collage of texts ranging from fictional recreated testimonies, investigations, and chronicles about their own experiences while attempting to investigate the matter. In their minds this work would allow “al lector acercarse tanto al drama humano de la mujeres asesinadas como a esa realidad de la que todos somos reponsables” (Benítez 5). In summary, these authors sought to change the general perception of some of these women from sexually commoditized and marginalized maquila workers to women—humans with dreams and hopes of their own—by personalizing their individual stories. The women of Taller S hoped that by visualizing some of the victims of Los Feminicidios, the general public would read their manuscript and make connections between the reality that was taking place and the lives of some of the murdered women. The authors created testimonies based on the interviews and diary entries of seven²³ out of the 137²⁴ murdered women between 1993 and 1998. They structured the book as a collage divided into an introductory essay and seven segments. Each of the sections contained a testimony, an essay, or a study that meditated on social problems and a chronicle of the authors’ own experiences—specifically with the impunity and complicity of the police, government and public—which they attributed to a consequence of the systemic patriarchal social structure. According to Diana Washington, a prominent journalist who covers border issues for the El Paso Times, this was “the first attempt, by Mexican or U.S. writers, to look beyond the police blotter or official line for answers to one of Mexico's crimes of the century” (2000).

²³ Silvia Elena Rivera Hernández, Elizabeth Castro García, Olga Alicia Carrillo Pérez, Sagrario González Flores, Argelia Irene Salazar Crispín, Adriana Torres Márquez, Eréndira Ivonne Ponce Hernández.

²⁴ This number was decided through a rigorous investigation by Rhory Benítez et al that took information from two sources which corroborate the number: *Homicidios en prejuicio de mujeres que han causado indignación en los diferentes niveles sociales de la comunidad 1993-1998*, published by la Subprocuraduría de Justicia del Estado and journalistic investigations researched by UACJ, el Comité Independiente de Chihuahua Pro-defensa de los Derechos Humanos and Grupo Feminista 8 de Marzo.

Naturally, as is the case in Mexico, they went to seek out publishers in the cultural mecca responsible for disseminating these expressions: Mexico City. After being turned away by several major publishing houses, including Editorial Planeta, whose editor, Mirta Ripol, saw greater commercial value in another manuscript about Los Feminicidios,²⁵ the collaborators of Taller S were eventually referred to one of Mexico's top public intellectuals, Elena Poniatowska. On March 29, 1999 the authors met with Poniatowska, but she refused to help them get the manuscript published. She later explained her reasoning in the second part of a three-part essay published as "Las ciudades fronterizas son hoteles de paso" in the popular newspaper *La Jornada*:

Cuando me visitaron en el DF, yo misma tenía tantísimo trabajo y el tema de las muchachas muertas me pareció tan feo que las relegué para más tarde, decepcionándolas. Hoy, les pido una disculpa. Estoy segura de que involuntariamente contribuí al clima de misoginia con el que se toparon en la ciudad de México al presentar su manuscrito. Los temas del aborto, del maltrato a la mujer, del asesinato son dolorosos, y casi todos preferimos darle vuelta a la hoja. (2002)

Elena Poniatowska's indifference was appalling, especially coming from one of Mexico's top public intellectuals. How could a woman—who not only wrote several novels that are considered feminist attempts at calling attention to the issue of male dominated values, but also collected important testimonies from one of Mexico's most traumatic events on the eve of October 2, 1968—act with such disregard and call the issue "algo tan feo"? If anyone could have helped Taller S bring their manuscript to fruition and join in

²⁵ Editorial Planeta is responsible for publishing *Las muertas de Juárez* by Victor Ronquillo. This book was released on a national level on September 9 1999, and internationally at the la Feria Internacional del Libro on October 16, 1999. In fact, shortly after its publication there were accusations in the prominent newsprint sources like *Universal*, *Proceso*, *Reforma*, *El Angel*, and *Al Margen* that Ronquillo and Editorial Planeta had co-opted material from *El silencio*. Ronquillo dismissed these accusations in the *Reforma* and *Proceso* issues of October 31, 1999.

the denunciation of the impunity surrounding these crimes, it would seem to be Elena Poniatowska, but she turned her back on them. One possible explanation for her actions is that these killings were happening far away from Mexico City, and as Gustavo de la Rosa, a representative of the Commission of Human Rights of Chihuahua, said at a conference regarding the violence in Juarez: “If something does not take place in Mexico City, it does not happen at all” (2010). De la Rosa’s observation pinpoints a centralist attitude that promotes the lack of engagement regarding violence against women, youth, men, and marginalized groups in Mexico, especially those who live outside of the confines of Mexico City.²⁶

Following the dismissal of their manuscript by the leading feminist novelist of Mexico, the women of Taller S might have fallen into despair, trapped by the indifference generated by the lack of engagement with violence that results in a culture of complicity. Instead, in November of 1999, they were able to publish the manuscript, now titled *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra: Mujeres y víctimas de Ciudad Juárez*, with the help of the rape crisis center Casa Amiga and Ediciones Azar A.C., a small publishing division of Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua. The publication had little immediate impact with the public at large after its release. In fact, most of the national attention it received was prior to its release, specifically in the 1190 and 1198 issues of *Proceso* (October 1999), and in the newspaper *Reforma* on 17 and 31 October, 1999. The articles did not mention the book itself, but spoke about how the manuscript had been plagiarized

²⁶ In Mexico events and cultural productions originating in the provinces find it hard to find notoriety in publishing houses, theatres, and scholarship. In Debra Castillo’s and Socorro Tabuenca’s *Border Women: Writing from la Frontera* (2002), the literary scholars offer an in-depth critique of border theory, including a discussion of these centralist beliefs, and their resulting gendered and marginalized politics (7). In the same text, the authors quote Rosario Sanmiguel, who says that “the day that a large press publishes my work and it is distributed like that of Campbell or Gadea is the day that I will stop being from the border and begin being from the center. The border and borderness means being outside the exercise of power” (20).

and published in Victor Ronquillo's book, *Las muertas de Juarez*. After its publication it received some attention in articles written in the *El Paso Times* and *The Washington Post* in May and June 2000. The authors appeared at several promotional book readings in the United States, specifically El Paso and San Antonio, where the audience "was visibly moved by details of the victims, including their dreams and hopes" (Washington 2000) and the authors made it "available at the Bridge Center for Contemporary Art at San Antonio and Stanton in Downtown El Paso, and in Ciudad Juarez at Sanborn's and at the Clips bookstore" (Washington 2000).

As more academics became involved in studies about the murders of women in Ciudad Juarez, *El silencio* became well known; very likely it had resonated with the activist nature of these academics. More than a decade later, it is cited and considered one of the most reliable "non-academic" sources, according to academics and journalists working on the issues pertaining to Ciudad Juarez. For example Susana Báez thinks that *El silencio*: "se nos muestra como un documento de gran valor social, pues denota el compromiso ético de las autoras y busca propiciar el mismo entre sus lectores; sus enunciatarios principales son la sociedad civil y las instituciones del Estado" (Báez 186).

A full PDF version of the text is now available on the Internet²⁷; however, it is difficult to find an actual hard copy of the manuscript in Mexican bookstores, including the book markets of Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey, Mexico's three largest cities. In part, obtaining a hard copy is rather difficult because it was out of print by 2001, and also because it was "distributed mainly through the authors' personal networks and by a few dedicated booksellers who provide materials from publishers outside Mexico City to academic libraries" (Molloy 2002), including 14 libraries in the United States.

²⁷http://www.mirajuarez.org/public/foto_news_principali/El%20silencio%20que%20la%20voz%20de%20todas%20quiebra.pdf

This is quite telling of the sphere of influence and reception *El silencio* had as a whole with the Mexican public; it was widely popular amongst academics, but it unfortunately did not enjoy the same reception amongst the non-academic public.

The difference in reception between the general public and a more highbrow audience reveals two important factors we need to consider when analyzing why *El silencio* engaged some readers and alienated others. The first consists of reminding ourselves that, although we all share a basic biological mechanism through which we experience an unconscious level of empathy, not all readers will have the same level of engagement towards a narrative. The empathic response produced when reading is dependent on our previous life experiences, which, according to Hakemulder's analysis in *Moral Laboratory*, shapes our ability to understand "conflicting demands" (4) and "causes stronger effects on our beliefs about the emotions and thoughts of others (social perception) that a non-narrative presentation with approximately the same contents [...] it seems to take a text with character personifying the issue to change subjects' beliefs" (107). In the particular case of *El silencio*, it is sensible to postulate that academics may possess a training throughout their schooling that allows them to be more susceptible and open to demanding research-driven narratives whose rhetorical persuasion is evident—whereas a lowbrow readership may find it unappealing. Again, we must be aware that, even within these specific audiences, the way a reader reflects on a text is dependent on their previous life experiences and the way these shape their pre-ethical effects.

The second factor considers the narrative structure of *El silencio*, and the expectations it sets on its readers. The authors of *El silencio* are very candid about their intention to influence readers' behaviors by not only stating so in the introduction, but

also by including a postcard²⁸ that petitions an action-driven response to Los Feminicidios by beckoning readers to send it to the Governor of Chihuahua. The authors take the idea of altruistic action from the theoretical and put it into practice by giving the reader a choice: mail the postcard and be part of a community seeking change or do absolutely nothing and become one of those people the text critiques. According to Keen, this accountability limits readers' narrative empathy because they "experience a resultant demand on real-world action" (4) and it also deprives them of a "safe-zone" where they can reflect about the possibility and the meaning of taking action.

My critique focuses on analyzing and questioning *El silencio*'s narrative structure and overt rhetorical appeal to readers' emotions as a way of possibly understanding readers' (this includes the editorial, public intellectual, and lowbrow readerships) lack of engagement with this visualization of Los Feminicidios. Before continuing, I want to re-emphasize that *El silencio* is an extremely important text. Despite its lack of distribution, it was the first visualization of these crimes in non-journalistic narrative form, and it resonated with an important, albeit small, segment of the population that was positioned to take action and distribute it within highbrow circles. This positive reception set the precedent for future academically produced/sponsored/influenced cultural manifestations of Los Feminicidios.²⁹

The seven segments of *El silencio* are composed of essays, testimonies, and chronicles that deal with the problems involved in investigations of Los Feminicidios.³⁰

²⁸ See Appendix Ref. 3- "Postcard included in *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra*"

²⁹ In the early 2000 these cultural productions consisted of photography, documentaries and performance art. Some of these include performances by Violeta Luna, Las Mujeres de Negro, Grupo Ni Una Más, Palabras de Arena, La Oveja Negra etc. The collected photographs in *Juárez: The Laboratory of the Future* (1998). The documentaries *Ni una más! V-Day in Juárez* (2004), *Doble Injusticia-Feminicidio y Tortura en Ciudad Juárez* (2005), *Bajo Juárez* (2006), *Juárez: crims sense resposta* (2006), *On the Edge: The Femicide in Ciudad Juárez* (2006), *La Batalla de las cruces* (2006).

³⁰ These include a lack of proper investigations, the role of the National Human Rights Commission in the elections of 1998, the claims made by the official discourse, the use of Los Feminicidios for political gain,

Jesús Anaya (Editing Director for Planeta), in an article titled “Las muertas de Juárez, el libro de la indignación,” classifies this structure as “más académico,” not a book with “un estilo que va directo al corazón,” but rather “un libro de laboratorio, donde se diseccionan las causas profundas de los males de la sociedad” (Ravelo, 1999). While Anaya’s observation explains the poor reception of *El silencio* in the general public, it does so without using forensic (legal) or epideictic (ceremonial) rhetoric. Additionally, if we consider the authors’ intentions to persuade their readership and influence their behavior, then we can establish the use of deliberative rhetoric in text.

In “The Empty Eloquence of Fools: Rhetoric in Classical Greece,” law professor Ruth Higgins explains that, in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, “deliberative rhetoric concerns contingencies within human control. The deliberative orator addresses topics such as war and peace, national defense, trade and legislation, in order to assess what is harmful and beneficial” (22). Furthermore, Huntington Brown, an English professor, describes in *Prose Styles: Five Primary Types*, that “a deliberative argument gives the illusion of a controlled, generally increasing momentum [...] [its] purpose is not so much to induce or enable us to remember the parts of [an] argument as to inspire us to cast a favorable vote when hands are to be counted: *movere* rather than *docere*” (21). Higgins’ and Brown’s explanations both suggest that the deliberative, not legal or ceremonial, rhetoric in *El silencio* is strategically used within each of the mixed-genre sections to arouse readers’ emotions, such as guilt, pity, anger, injustice, and frustration, so as to “*movere*” the audience to mail the postcard, or, at the very least, to make a connection between their reality and the presented narrative.

the promises made by politicians during their campaigns, reflections of misogyny, the role of serial killer experts, the role of the media in the reporting of the crimes as well as in the reinforcement of the stereotypes, and the issues with the lack of infrastructure that create empty desolate places to dump the bodies.

It is important to mention, that, although the authors of *El silencio* primarily use deliberative rhetoric, this does not mean it is a testimonial text, as it has been categorized by Susana Báez, a local academic at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez. In her essay “De la impotencia a la creación testimonio y la denuncia social: *El silencio que la voz de todas quiebra*,” Báez analyzes *El silencio* with a feminist approach to situate the text in the tradition of testimonial literature written by women such as Elena Poniatowska, Cristina Pacheco, Guadalupe Loaeza, Elizabeth Burgos and Rigoberta Menchu. She states that the mechanisms of production of the discourse found in *El silencio* do not come from an official institution, or from subjects who possessed knowledge and truth, but from a social commitment that these authors made when they met every Saturday in their Taller S writing workshop, which had no affiliation to any institution (Báez 187). She argues that the mothers of the dead women have the predominant voice in the testimonies, as revealed through discursive elements such as memory, diary, archival information, images, newspapers and interviews. She argues that, through discursive elements such as memory, diary, archival information, images, newspapers, and interviews, the predominant voice in the testimonies becomes that of the mothers of the seven women. This, according to Báez, allows the text to acquire “verisimilitude and sensibilization” (197).

While Báez’s argument is a valid observation, I argue that this verisimilitude is constructed to influence reader behavior. It is not evoked by the testimonies, but rather invoked by the intention to engage the readers’ emotions by complementing the melodrama in the testimonies with the evidence presented in the studies and chronicles. We must consider that testimonies have often been co-opted and fictionalized to create the *illusion* of credible testimony and verisimilitude, which, in and of itself, is very problematic; when promoted as non-fiction, it increases reader skepticism and suspicion,

and perhaps ultimately decreases reader engagement with violence (Stoll 1999, Rysiew 2000, Graham 2000, Arias 2001, 2008, Moran 2005).³¹

For example, in the essay “The Margin at the Center: On Testimonio” in *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (2004), John Beverly observes that there is “an interplay between real and imaginary” (40), and that “what is important about testimonio is that it produces, if not the real, then certainly a sensation of experiencing the real that has determinate effects on the reader that are different from those produced by even the most realist or ‘documentary’ fiction” (40). A testimony’s “truth effect” in a work of fiction such as an autobiography, according to Beverly, produces a “specular effect” (41) in readers that “confirm[s] and authorize[s] his or (less so) her situation” (41); in other words, readers experience empathy in the form of identification with the narrator by assimilating their circumstances. Victor Nell, in *Lost in a Book: The Psychology of Reading for Pleasure* (1988), observes that “we willingly enter the world of fiction because the skepticism to which our adult sophistication condemns us is wearying: we long for safe places—a love we can entirely trust, a truth we can entirely believe. Fiction fills that need because we know it to be false” (56). In contrast, non-fiction arouses readers’ suspicions because it purports to speak the truth. These suspicions, as Keen argues in *Empathy and the Novel*, diminish the reader’s engagement with the testimony and preclude any possible empathic responses because there is no safe zone, but there is, to some degree, a demand on real-world associative action.

³¹ For an extensive debate about testimony in general reference Adler 1994 and 1997, Alston 1993, Bach 1984, Christensen and Kornblith 1997, Coady 1992, Dummet 1981 and 1994, Ebbs 2002, Garver 2004, Goldberg 2001, Grovier 1993, Habermas 1996, Hume 1977, Lipton 1998, Moran 2005, Plato 1992, Rorty 1979, Weiner 2003, Wells 2003. For a debate in the context of Latin America see Zimmerman 1998, Pratt 2007, Arias 2001, 2008, Beverly 2004, Bartow 2004, Craft 1997, Dulfano 2004, Lindstrom 1994, 1998, Mallon 2001, Skłodowska 1992, 2004, Rodríguez Freire 2010, Rodríguez 1994, 2001, Ward 2004, Yudice 1991.

Báez also claims that the text of *El silencio* acquires a sensitizing character. However, recreating a woman's dreams and the treatment she received post mortem does not make the text sensitive; it gives the dead woman a human facet and de-commoditizes her. Also, we must take into account that sensitization is an emotion that happens to a reader, not in a text: appealing to the possibility of a reader's awareness may be achieved by the use of specific rhetorical devices and then may influence the reader, but it in no way produces an effect in the text itself. Furthermore, in order to actually prove if *El silencio* sensitized readers because of its supposed testimonial nature, we would need to analyze the reactions of a controlled focus group, much in the line of the experiments done by Daniel Baston and Jèmeljan Hakemulder that were mentioned in the introduction.

ESSAYS, TESTIMONIES, AND CHRONICLES

The first essay presented in *El silencio* is Patricia Cabrera's "La mejor frontera de México." Cabrera tries to establish intimacy with the readers through a second person narration that speaks directly to them. She tells her readers "that if they have never been in the desert they do not know what *nothing* is" (Benítez 9). Cabrera appeals to the readers' knowledge to rearticulate the idea of the desert in their minds; she equates the nothingness of the desert to Ciudad Juarez, an empty space surrounded by roads and sparse infrastructure that paradoxically bring both life and death to the city. She describes the juxtaposition of development and nothingness in the midst of the desert:

...las nuevas colonias se levantan como una esperanza; a lo lejos se ven las torres de electricidad apostadas entre las casas de cartón y tabla como el indicio de que la modernidad se apodera ya del sitio. Una modernidad a medias, con alambradas que debieran dividir pero que en realidad sirven de poco para quienes las cruzan para dejar basura, animales muertos...cadáveres. A pesar de todo, el desierto sigue siendo desierto. El polvo se pega en la piel, se mete en el alma. Los pies

reniegan en la arena, el sol pega más fuerte, el ambiente reseca la voz. El silencio abruma. (Benítez 10)

Cabrera places emphasis on the heaviness of the desert, on how—despite the efforts of modernity—everything is covered by sand and silenced by the environment (the desert) surrounding the city; she metaphorically establishes a parallel between the landscape and the State. Although this equivalence might be questionable, Cabrera uses the image of the desert to represent the State, which stifles the cries of the city. It is the State that is responsible for the half-developed modernity, the lack of infrastructure, the silence, and like the desert, it does not seem to serve a purpose – especially not that of enforcing the law. By establishing this parallel, Cabrera contextualizes the main premise of *El silencio*, appealing to readers’ negative emotions concerning the State in order to break the silence and denounce “the impunity with which these crimes occurred and continue to happen” (Benítez 11).

In the event that this appeal to empathize with the current situation of Ciudad Juárez did not succeed, the second chapter of the book, titled “Nuestra Estadística,” tells the story about the lack of official statistical information collected on the matter. According to the research done by the authors of *El silencio*, amongst the 137 murdered women reported between 1993-1998, only 62% were identified, while 38% were so mutilated it was impossible to identify them. Most of them were between 13-30 years old, and 35% died of strangulation. They were usually found in vacant lots, primarily in August, March, and December.³² This information paints a stark picture and summons the question: if there have been 137 reports of murdered women, then why the lack of action? The research succeeds in giving the readers a glimpse of the social reality of Ciudad Juárez by making visible in charts and graphs the statistical data about rapes,

³² See Appendix Ref. 4-“Crime Distribution”

identification percentages of victims, case status, victims by age and complexion, frequency and place of findings by month, and causes of death. The chapter constantly appeals to the moral affects of its readers, providing evidence of why they should empathize, however it does not approximate readers to the human drama of the assassinated women.

The human drama, or the goal of bringing readers closer to the human drama of Los Feminicidios, is employed in the remaining chapters of the book through testimonies centered on interviews with family members and the experiences of the seven authors of *El silencio*. These testimonies are based on what people who knew the girls thought of them and on their diary entries. They are not their own words, nor are they stories of their own experiences, and they are therefore more like third person witness accounts of experiences with the killed women. They also include facts about how the family members and the murdered women were treated in the press, by police, etc., making them real women whose stories are specific. However, their particularity gets lost in the authors' constant reminder that they are a few out of hundreds of murdered women. In the introduction of *El silencio*, the authors' state:

las historias de las victimas, que aparecen intercaladas en esa información [the studies] aunque todas son producto de entrevistas con la familia y amistades de las jóvenes, la mayoría de ellas fueron recreadas con el fin de presentar con mayor claridad y profundidad la vida de estas mujeres que no merecían ni morir asesinadas, ni quedar en memoria colectiva como una fotografía de la nota roja. (Benítez 6)

While the authors might have originally intended for these testimonies to bring forth the particularity of the women's deaths, in the end, they are but a statistic, which ironically is often brought forth to the reader by the authors themselves.³³

I also find that the narrative constructions of these testimonies do not allow readers to identify with the women's stories. They do not appeal to the readers to feel with the women and "open up the channels for both empathy and related moral affects such as sympathy, outrage, pity, righteous indignation, and (not to be underestimated) shared joy and satisfaction" (Keen 4), which in theory would allow for reflection and perhaps even a change in perception about Los Feminicidios of Juarez. Rather, the recreated testimonies encase the victims, putting the reader at a distance. Yes, they are portrayed as humans and women, but they remain victims nevertheless.

For example, the first segment of mixed-narrative sections begins with the recreated testimony of Silvia Elena, which recounts what she was like and how the authorities tarnished her image. The testimony is called "Una vida. Silvia Elena Rivera Hernández. Septiembre de 1995. Dios te guarde." It begins in first person narration, her alleged words,³⁴ but after the first paragraph it switches to her mother's voice, employing a first person narrative that talks about the girl. This switch in point of view provides an almost heuristic way of evoking empathy in readers by helping them associate the emotional connection between mother and daughter. Therefore the testimony is not Silvia's: it may be based on interviews with her mother, but more likely the authors

³³ Robert P. Abelson, Kurt P. Frey and Aiden P. Gregg cite in their book *Experiments with People: Revelations from Social Psychology* that "the dictator Stalin once commented, with ironic insight into the nature of empathy: 'The death of one man is a tragedy, the death of a million a statistic'" (243).

³⁴ These are not her words, but a construction of what she would have or could have said based on the author's research and their interviews with her family members as they mention in the introduction that "la mayoría de ellas (the testimonies) fueron recreadas con el fin de presentar con mayor claridad y profundidad la vida de estas mujeres".

constructed it so as to attempt to incite empathy in their readers. Silvia's mother narrates how she perceived her daughter, what she thought her daughter liked, why her daughter did things, and how she knew something would happen to her daughter. This narrative frame distances the ability to identify with the girl, as it is her mother who informs the reader about Silvia, how she disappeared, how her family looked for her, how the police treated them, and the fear the mother felt when the police found her dead body. The mother's testimony reminds the reader that her daughter is a victim, regardless of the fact that her testimony portrays Silvia as a girl with dreams and ambitions. Although the story is emotive, the testimony may keep readers guarded, skeptical, and perhaps even suspicious because the mother's testimony idealizes her daughter by emphasizing her daughter's ideal image, dreams and hopes. This image and these wishes may have been what the mother wanted for her daughter, not what was at one point expressed or desired by the daughter. In addition, rather than evoking an unconscious emotional response in readers by allowing them to identify with a first-person narrator who was herself a victim, the testimony issues call to action in response to the mother's distress and the daughter's lost dreams, even while it communicates structurally a sense of futility, given that the young woman is already dead.

The authors of *El silencio*, so as to reinforce this injustice and remind the reader of the necessity of action, include a chronicle to accompany this testimony in the next chapter. The chronicle by Adriana Candia, "La hora más larga: crónica de una visita a la PJE," asserts that "el orden en México se establece no como las leyes dicen, sino como los que las aplican quieren" (Benítez et al 33).³⁵ Candia describes how she was shocked to find that the extensive crime scene analysis shown in Hollywood films and programs,

³⁵ PJE stands for Policía Judicial del Estado

the infrastructure needed to cross-reference data, and the historical, psychological and literary investigative processes were nonexistent at the PJE, even though “an ex FBI agent hired by the federal government had said that the investigators of the PJE work with a methodology equivalent to the one used in the United States” (Benítez 33). The poor treatment of Silvia’s case as described in the testimony, in addition to the description of Candia’s appalling experience visiting the PJE, reinforces the plea for a call to action to denounce the lack of proper investigative methodologies and infrastructure.

In the third segment, another testimony, study and chronicle combination beckons the reader to action with the overly emotional story of Olga Alicia and the following chronicle, “Son muy pocas, es lo normal, los asesinatos y delitos sexuales contra mujeres en Ciudad Juárez comparados con otros centros urbanos” (Benítez et al 77). The testimony of Olga, like Silvia’s, is told through the intuitive perspective of her mother Irma, who describes how she identified the clothes on top of a pile of bones as her daughter’s. The police never answered any of her questions, lost the file with the supposed information about her daughter, including alleged DNA samples, and left her in the dark. Again the examples utilized discursively plead to readers for action, seeking to capitalize on their possible emotional responses to the injustice. The ensuing study and chronicle reinforce the testimony by contrasting with the “facts” of the “official discourse” as depicted in the media.

In the study portion of the third segment, “Causas y valores en juego. El discurso oficial,” the authors analyze the way politicians and authorities have dealt with the murders. They question why, after 137 women were murdered from January of 1993 to October of 1999, the authorities in charge of preventing these crimes “declararon en la prensa que el número de muertas es normal para una ciudad del tamaño de Juárez”

(Benítez et al 77). The authors reflect on how many dead constitute “a lot,” especially in relation to the phenomenon of serial killings. They provide other scholars’ research³⁶ on the matter, including Callahan’s and Armstrong’s case study, titled *El Depredadors: Murder in México*, which states that, although they have yet to examine all the evidence, they believe that the principal form of death is by strangulation, and that the victims had been sexually abused, tortured, and mutilated, leads them to conclude that these deaths could be related to a serial killer or sado-masochistic crimes (Armstrong 2010).³⁷ By including this type of research, which, at the time of *El silencio*’s publication (1999), was current, the authors challenged the official discourse provided by authorities in Ciudad Juarez and made the connections for the reader, as opposed to providing more open-ended analysis that would, in theory, provide the possibility for readers to draw their own critical reflections.

Finally, this segment closes with a very personal chronicle, by Isabel Velázquez, who questions why women were treated the way they were by the authorities, especially when they were Mexican citizens, who as such had every right to live, work in whatever profession they chose, and go about freely without putting their lives in danger. She even goes as far as to add the skewed perspective of Jorge López Molinar (Attorney General under the administration of Francisco Barrio) to show readers the degree of denial about the problem: Porque lo de las mujeres, con todo y que son más de cien las violadas y asesinadas en los últimos cinco años, no forma parte de la violencia como en un todo. Es una excepción, un capítulo distinto (Benítez et al 84). The inclusion of this quote confirms that the authorities do not seem to care what is happening and unfortunately

³⁶ They quote the work of Stephen Giannangelo *Psychopathology of a serial murder. A Theory of Violence*, a conversation with Hernán Cavazos Hermosillo, and Rafael’s Ruiz Harrell’s *Criminalidad y mal gobierno*.

³⁷ Dr. Julie Armstrong conveyed this information in a power point presentation of her paper. It was sent by email on 4/25/2010.

have quite an obtuse perspective on the matter, playing on the reader's sense of justice for them to take action. Granted, this quote is from 1998 and the reaction to this chronicle may or may not have changed over time as people became more aware of Los Feminicidios, although Domínguez Ruvalcaba sharply observes that "la reacción de la gente a las declaraciones de los políticos no parece cambiar con los años y por lo tanto la crónica sigue vigente" (email July 14, 2011). In November of 2009, the Attorney General of the State of Morelos, Pedro Luis Benítez Vélez, recommended to women that they "learn to prevent and not to provoke" and stated: "Es mejor que las mujeres se vayan a sus casas, o de sus familiares, y no que estén expuestas a ser violentadas" (Vélez 2009). In her essay, *De la ideología a la argumentación en notas periodísticas sobre violencia de género y trabajo femenino*, Patricia Córdova Abundis, through a Foucauldian perspective, analyzes how the formation of discursive ideology manifests itself in diverse dimensions through the actual content of sentences, discussion, and conversational structure. Thus, the "official discourse" in relation to Los Feminicidios, according to Córdova Abundis' linguistic research, promotes the following argument: "una mujer es culpable de cuanto le sucede incluso un abuso sexual, si ésta acude al lugar de los hechos voluntariamente" (Cordova 29). Therefore, Velázquez' chronicle about the general attitude represented by the authorities pinpoints the faulty logic behind the discourse of those in power, suggesting that democracy in Mexico violates its own ideals; in fact, she goes on to cite articles 1, 5, 9, and 11 of the Mexican Constitution, which she believes need to be refreshed in the minds of those who enforce the law.³⁸

Velázquez is also very clear in stating that "en una democracia verdadera cada parte vale tanto como el todo y la agresión a una obrera recién llegada es una afrenta tan

³⁸ See Appendix Ref. 5-"Articles 1, 5, 9 11 of the Mexican Constitution"

grande para la sociedad y las autoridades como la que pudiera hacérsele a la hija de un empresario notable. En Chihuahua, esa democracia no ha llegado todavía” (Benítez et al 85). The obvious implications of social class and privilege in her statement reveal part of the issue: if the women that were being killed in Ciudad Juárez were born to privilege, the violence would not have gone unaccounted for after six years at the time of the *El silencio*’s publication, and almost two decades after the 1993 murders.³⁹ Again, readers are beckoned to real world action, and asked to denounce the impunity and the injustice. The first and third segments I have already discussed are clear examples of how the authors of *El silencio* employ the rhetorical mode—pathos—in the construction of their narrative in order to influence their readers’ behavior.

SNUFF NARRATIVES AND NON-FICTION

In this section I analyze Victor Ronquillo’s *Las muertas De Juárez*, which, although critically dismissed and academically despised, continues to have international best-selling success, indicating an obvious preference on behalf of the general public. *Las muertas de Juárez* was released in September of 1999 amidst scandalous accusations of plagiarism and manipulation of the work presented in *El silencio*, producing what journalists called a “sensationalistic true-crime saga” (Molloy 2002), “un buen ejemplo del periodismo snuff o la porno violencia descriptiva” (García 2005). The journalistic and academic community dismissed it. A search on MLA International Bibliography yields no results arguing against it, for it, or even analyzing the style of its contents. I want to clarify that I do not see a critical value in Ronquillo’s narrative, but rather a manifestation of the stylistic preferences that dominate the book market, which influenced the decision

³⁹ This chapter was written in 2011, and although much attention has been brought to the issue of Los Feminicidios it has been sidelined by the genocide produced by the current war on drugs.

to publish a work such as Ronquillo's rather than the manuscript written by the members of Taller S.

El silencio and *Las muertas de Juárez* are both structured as collages of testimonies, interviews, essays and chronicles. Their biggest difference, besides the authors' popularity or lack thereof, is how the respective authors use the rhetorical mode of pathos to visualize and call attention to Los Feminicidios of Ciudad Juárez.⁴⁰ *El silencio* attempts to give the victims of Los Feminicidios a more humane treatment and pleads for real world action from readers through testimonies that are narratively constructed to play to the readers' emotions by personalizing the victims and giving a voice to their stifled dreams and aspirations. *Las muertas de Juárez* does the opposite—Ronquillo documents these deaths in what he claims is “un libro testimonial, un reportaje, para su elaboración fue imprescindible realizar una detallada investigación documental y amplia investigación de campo” (Ronquillo, 1999)—giving voice to some of the accused perpetrators⁴¹ of these crimes in five chapters. Another important point of contrast is that the authors of *El silencio* focus on the feminine perspective of Los Feminicidios by depicting the mothers, daughters, and their own experiences; in contrast, Ronquillo focuses on the male perspective of the perpetrators, the police, and their actions. He only

⁴⁰ Ronquillo is a famous journalist from Mexico City who had the support of Editorial Planeta. The publisher saw more return on investment in Ronquillo because he was already part of the central corpus of writers, unlike the authors of *El silencio*.

⁴¹ *El Egipcio Sharif*—accused of being the mastermind behind Los Feminicidios, he has been under arrest in Mexico's high security prison El Cerezo since October 3rd 1995.

Alejandro Máñez—Journalists speculate his real name is Armando Martinez, he is a powerful entrepreneur whose family owns many nightclubs in Ciudad Juárez. His elusive nature and powerful connections have kept him out of official records, despite the fact that arrest warrants have been issued for him in connection to Los Feminicidios.

El Diablo y Los Rebeldes—Gang arrested in 1996 and accused of killing women, they claimed they were tortured to confess that Sharif used to pay them \$2000 for each woman they killed.

El Tolteca y Los Ruterros—Gang of bus route drivers arrested in 1999 and accused of killing women at the end of their shifts. They claimed they were tortured until they confessed to the crimes, and that they worked under orders of Sharif.

focuses on the women in relation to the men, as their victims. Additionally, Ronquillo stylistically and playfully imagines how these girls might have experienced their death by adding short explicit vignettes, which I classify as snuff-like descriptions due to their placement in a work of non-fiction, that serve as asides to the main story. Just as in snuff film, in which viewers witness a factual death of a woman that serves as the source of pleasure in the genre, the descriptions of Ronquillo have a similar effect. This critique of *Las Muertas* focuses on how Ronquillo appeals to readers' emotions through a form of narrative snuff that may engage readers in pleasure, terror, etc, and the consequent ethical implications of this type of narrative placed within a text classified as non-fiction, which I will develop further below.

Camps, Keen, Baston and his group, and Hakemulder, have all argued that fictionality provides the distance from reality that readers require to safely simulate experiences. In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989), the philosopher Richard Rorty explains:

Fiction like that of Choderlos de Laclos, Henry James, or Nabokov gives us the details about what sorts of cruelty we ourselves are capable of, and thereby lets us redescribe ourselves. That is why the novel, the movie, and the TV program have, gradually but steadily, replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principle vehicles of change and progress. (xvi)

A text categorized and marketed as nonfiction that nonetheless includes fictional passages may limit the process of re-describing oneself if the reader is unable to discern between the imagined and the real.

Muddling the line between nonfiction and fiction could have negative real-life consequences. If we consider how studies on empathy have shown that we are mimetic in nature (Gallese 2009), then we need to be aware of how overtly violent snuff-like descriptions may lay the groundwork to perpetuate the ethos of violence that has

increasingly plagued Mexico and to cultivate the violent effects of particularly pathological individuals. Dr. Gallese and his team, as well as Suzanne Keen, Marjorie Taylor and other scholars have argued that individuals with pathological characteristics pertaining to dissociative disorders cannot tell the difference between a simulated action and real-action.⁴² This includes those individuals who have an abnormal separation of mental processes from conscious awareness, which manifests during intense daydreaming (especially the kind where people lose track of time and bodily awareness). Keen argues:

Fantasies and daydreams, delightful though they may be, however, do not inevitably contribute to the social good, and they may sometimes allow a person to indulge in imagined actions that would be judged criminal, immoral, or dangerous if carried out. This is part of the attraction of fiction for many readers, even sophisticated ones, and should not be dismissed from a broader consideration of narrative ethics. (128)

The fact that fiction does have an allure because it allows us to fantasize and daydream about things that would not necessarily be acceptable as real-world actions brings greater importance to gaining awareness of how snuff-like descriptions have an effect on readers. Additionally, when we read about an act, a world, an experience, we are biologically and neurologically experiencing a kind of virtual reality; we imagine it, “we have the experience of being there, of taking place in the action, of performing what takes place” (Mancini 133). Camps observes that “lo que emociona no es la referencia, sino el sentido, no el acontecimiento, sino el marco teórico en el que se inscribe. No es el monstruo lo que produce placer y lo que convierte al terror en irresistible, sino la narración en la que acontece” (Camps 314). Ronquillo’s snuff-like narrative dangerously oscillates between the borders of imaginative actions and real-world actions, which may unintentionally not only emotionally engage readers pleasurably, but also represent

⁴² I am not suggesting violent actions are solely pathological—if that were the case—we could all plead insanity and not be held accountable for our actions.

women as fetish objects, consequently feeding an audience that empathizes with the real pleasure of causing their torture rather than the pain of their suffering.

Las muertas de Juárez opens with an admonition to its readers. Ronquillo shares that, throughout the elaboration of the text, he suffered for the victims, “su dolor ensombreció sueños y vigiliass [...] de esa muerte vivida tantas veces sólo me salvó la risa de mis hijas...”(9). This warning attempts to establish that the readers should feel empathy with and sympathy for the suffering of the victims. The ensuing twelve chapters Ronquillo calls “una suerte de rompecabezas formado por reportajes, entrevistas, crónicas, y textos que se enlazan en un negro tramado” (9). In chapters four, five, six, ten, and eleven there are prominent snuff-like descriptions; not surprisingly, they are also the chapters where Ronquillo mythologizes the perpetrators of these crimes. At one point in Ronquillo’s journalistic investigation he admits that there is “una complicidad” (213) that is implicit between himself and Sharif, one of the men who is presumably responsible for some of killings. The other chapters are related to Ronquillo’s research regarding police investigations, drug-cartel related violence, and his meditations regarding these crimes.

In chapter eleven, Ronquillo defines snuff as: “cuerpos torturados, violados, cercenados, sesiones grabadas de sexo y dolor que culminan con la muerte” (250), evidently making reference to the nature of video snuff by employing the verb “grabar.” If, however, we consider that writing is another form of recording, then we can establish that this definition can be applied to narrative descriptions that document actions of sex, pain and torture that culminate in death. It is these descriptions of the women’s pain, which, quite unfortunately, Ronquillo admittedly intended as asides to move his readers and trigger their empathic responses. In an article published by *Reforma* on September 8, 1999, Antonio Bertrán explains that Ronquillo’s work was written “con los recursos de la literatura” in order to “da[r] voz a las víctimas.” He then quotes Ronquillo to clarify that

“era necesario ir sumando los datos de la investigación y narrarlos con las técnicas de la literatura porque la eficacia de un libro como éste tiene que ver con la emoción que despierta en el lector.”⁴³ This article shows that Ronquillo truly was convinced that representing the women’s suffering through snuff-like descriptions was the best way to appeal to readers’ emotions—to incite them to feel empathy with and sympathy for these victims. Note, however, that he only wanted to raise awareness and did not seek to influence reader behavior, as there is no call to action such as a postcard.

The manner in which Ronquillo begins to engage in his snuff-like descriptions is reminiscent of Platonic mimetic debates that claim that watching violent movies, playing violent video games, etc. make people more violent. As the “journalistic investigation” evolves, Ronquillo narrates the violence against women with increasing detail. He describes some of the actions experienced by these women through his imaginative musings, from the perspectives of the perpetrators, victims, and himself/the readers as voyeurs.

In chapter four, Ronquillo recalls the violent history of Abdel Latif Sharif. He provides explicit yet minimal details in the accounts of how Sharif attacked some of the victims. Ronquillo imagines:

Sharif la lleva a la recámara y con violencia la arroja al piso. La golpea en la cara con los puños cerrados, le exige que se quite la ropa. Amenaza con matarla [...] La amenazó con una pistola, la llamó perra, y trató de estrangularla mientras la violaba. (91-92)

⁴³ Ronquillo’s literary techniques are similar to those used in Sade, in that they construct very explicit and graphic violent sexual content; however, unlike Ronquillo, Sade’s descriptions are placed within the genre of fiction. In fact, even with Sade’s work there is a wide debate on the moral problematic. See Klossowski 1991, Hénaff 1999, Horkheimer 1979, Allison, Roberts, and Weis 1995, Barthes 1976, Bataille 1973, Carpenter 1996, Chatelete 1972.

Ronquillo creates distance from the acts themselves by using third person narration. The implied suffering of the victims at the hands of Sharif is generic. The details in the description do not portray Sharif as a monster, but they are enough to portray him as a ruthless man, while at the same time diverting readers' attention from the women. This narrative distance from Sharif and his actions is the result of Ronquillo's fascination with Sharif, as well as his belief that Sharif was falsely incriminated for the crimes.

In chapters five and eleven, Ronquillo narrates the historical events that lead to the capture of other aggressors like El Diablo, Los Rebeldes, El Tolteca and Los Ruterros. First, through third person narration he describes his own imagined explanation for the events that led Rosario García Leal to her death:

Jalaron a la muchacha al asiento y la acostaron boca arriba. José Luis fue el primero en violarla. Al terminar con ayuda de El Diablo, la cargaron y la tiraron al suelo. José Luis cacheteó a la muchacha, le dio puñetazos y la apretó del cuello hasta que dejó de moverse. (110)

Then, in chapter eleven, he offers the testimonial perspective of El Gaspy, one of the chauffeurs of buses that circulated along Ruta 7:

El Tolteca empezó a manosear a la muchacha y como vio que no se dejaba, empezó a golpearla en la cara con el puño cerrado le dijo: estate quieta cabrona, espérate. Entonces la empezó a encuerar [...] se desabrochó el pantalón y se lo bajó junto con el calzón para luego violarla. La muchacha empezó a gritar: 'auxilio, ya déjenme'. Cuando acabó El Tolteca gritó: 'el que sigue cabrones' [...] El Samber terminó de violarla y gritó: 'el que sigue' así que se arrimo El Kianim él también se bajó el pantalón y el calzón para violarla y cuando terminó me gritó: 'ora sólo faltas tú' [...] al llegar con ella estaba casi desmayada por la golpiza que le había puesto El Tolteca y ya casi no se movía. Yo me bajé el pantalón y el calzón y la violé, pero cuando terminé, El Tolteca la empezó a jalar de las greñas y de las manos para bajarla del carro. Le gritó: 'bajate cabrona' y le empezó a poner otros golpes en la cara con el puño cerrado. (239)

The details involved in describing the gang-rape of these two groups are not only more explicit than the details provided in Sharif's actions, but the violence is also amplified and multiplied when focusing on a group of men who enjoyed raping, torturing and killing a girl rather than an individual perpetrator. It is important to note that Ronquillo's way of engaging his readers' emotions relies precisely in the overabundance of explicit details. Evidently, this is his way of triggering an empathic response—the degree of suffering experienced by the victim “should” certainly make readers empathize with her and develop sympathy for her. We do not see her suffering from her perspective because Ronquillo focuses on the perspective of the attacker, thus suggesting they do not seem to care about her suffering and take pleasure in it. We, the readers, may react to this by “reading into” her attackers' pain-derived pleasure and supplying the moral empathy lacking in her attackers. I question if these passages could also resonate positively with readers who believe women should be punished, those who enjoy these kinds of descriptions, or those who derive almost orgasmic pleasure from them. Can they empathize more with the perpetrators' desire to obtain pleasure by force than with the suffering women?

Let us briefly recall Barthes' idea of *jouissance*, wherein readers experience a type of orgasmic pleasure when a text helps them break out of their roles in order to consider the author's stated intent—feeling pain rather than pleasure. Either way, we must still think about the possibility that the text may lead to a pleasurable empathic reaction instead, which, as described at the beginning of the chapter, heavily depends on how the readers' previous life experiences and pre-ethical judgments affect their engagement with the text. What if, by disclosing the victims' degree of agonizing pain from the perspectives of both the perpetrators and the victims, this snuff narrative produced pleasure in readers? As far-fetched as it may sound, what if some readers think

of these descriptions as an instruction manual as to how best inflict pain in another person? The fact that all the passages described above are fictitious, but occur within the context of non-fiction, hinders the process of allowing us to form pre-ethical judgments and reflect on these crimes.

The ethical problem with Ronquillo's text lies in the way he inserts fictional explicit vignettes depicting torture and death into a narration that he deems objective. If the purpose of employing snuff narrations was to impress the degree of the victims' suffering upon readers by emphasizing and enhancing the aggressors' actions, it appears that it was not enough to "wake up" readers. In chapter six Ronquillo provides an account of suffering through the perspective of a woman. Through second person narration, Ronquillo invites the reader to imaginatively become the victim, instead of a woman fighting for her right to live, within a text that is supposed to be objective:

Te suben a un carro blanco, muy grande, en la parte de atrás uno de sus amigos te manosea. Quieres gritar, decir algo, pero tu lengua es un trapo viejo que se enreda en la garganta y te sofoca. Estás mareada, cierras los ojos y lo dejas hacer. Te pierdes en un sueño pesado del que no recuerdas nada más que el miedo, el miedo de que te hace sudar, el del vacío en el estómago, el del temblor que no puedes controlar, el de tu grito en un cuarto oscuro donde no hay más que la colchoneta donde estás acostada. Gritas y gritas, te cansas de gritar [...] Quién sabe de dónde sacas fuerzas y gritas. No es tu voz, es un animal herido. Él te dice que te calles, se acerca y te desnuda, te abandonas. Mejor la muerte. (142-143)

By describing the actions that lead to death from what technically is the perspective of the reader as the woman, Ronquillo fails to provide that narrative distance needed to imagine "what it would be like" to be a victim of these crimes. Granted second person perspectives would theoretically make the reader feel more like the victim, however in this case there Ronquillo nulls this effect by suggesting that we are not only victims, but

“un animal herido”; we are negated the possibility of associating ourselves with a human. Ronquillo reinforces the idea that these women, or in this specific passage, we the readers, are some “other.” This point of view does not expand on what this violence does to a woman within the context of human experience; it does not allow the fictional distance needed to empathize, nor does it allow a space for reflection. It only serves the purpose of limiting our understanding of these crimes, as if they were something natural, that a woman is something that can be dominated to the point of death because she is not human but animal, something other than human.

The culmination of these increasingly violent descriptions occurs towards the end of chapter eleven when Ronquillo removes the blame for the crimes from specific perpetrators and instead ascribes them to the abstract notion of evil. The final description objectifies both perpetrators and victims; it reduces the infliction and suffering of pain to motor-response actions, as if to show that “Evil” whispers these acts to anyone who is willing to listen:

“El Mal”: ella no es nadie. Piel morena, senos, nalgas, el sexo en el centro. [...] La amarran sobre una cama [...] Vuelven a golpearla. Amordazada y cegada, está lista. Un hombre se acerca y la manosea[...] Los otros se ríen. [...] el hombre está encima de ella y muerde con fuerza el seno que antes chupaba. Sangra. Vuelve a morder. El tipo le levanta las piernas, la penetra con algo. [...] La penetración es ahora por la vagina[...] las enormes manos sobre el cuello[...] lo último que escucha es el bramido de la bestia. (255)

Ronquillo’s vilification of evil portrays a monster that must be eradicated, not a human crime that must be understood and discussed before it can be eliminated.⁴⁴ It is evident

⁴⁴ In *On Evil*, Terry Eagleton observes that the conception of “the word “evil” is generally a way of bringing arguments to an end, like a fist in the solar plexus. Like the idea of taste, over which there is

that for Ronquillo, Los Feminicidios are the result of “la reencarnación del mal [...] una pesadilla de la que ya no podrán despertar [...] otra vez el desierto, una estación del infierno” (259). By blaming “Evil,” Ronquillo absolves the actual perpetrators he described in earlier chapters and “solves” the mystery behind the crimes with the maddening and pointless conclusion that “Evil” told them to do it. Perhaps this is how Editorial Planeta, responsible for disseminating this work of non-fiction, justifies Ronquillo’s use of snuff narration; after all, if we were to accept Ronquillo’s conclusions, his narrations are the product of his objective journalistic take on evil. Why should we worry about understanding the suffering of women and our own engagement with this type of violence if these actions are incited by evil rather than by us and our fellow humans?

SHAPING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF EVIL

In 1999 *El silencio* and *Las muertas de Juárez* were the first works to visualize Los Feminicidios of Juárez. They set a precedent for subsequent non-fiction works published on the killings. Some worth mentioning due to their relative presence in the Mexican and international book market include *Huesos en el Desierto* (2002) by journalist Sergio González Rodríguez and *Cosecha de Mujeres: Safari en el desierto mexicano* (2005) by journalist Diana Washington Valdez. González Rodríguez is currently considered “the most authorized voice in the matter” (Rodríguez 162). Like *El*

supposedly no arguing, it is an end stopping kind of term, one which forbids the raising of further questions. Either human actions are explicable, in which case they cannot be evil; or they are evil, in which case there is nothing more to be said about them” (8).

silencio and *Las muertas de Juarez*, *Huesos en el Desierto* questions the incongruence and impunity involved in the investigations of these murders, but adds a new dimension to the debate on misogynistic and complicit culture. The text brings forth the idea of women as commodities and the suggestion that “the whole system is implicated in the matter and that the responsibility reaches even the high levels of the presidency” (Rodríguez 162). González Rodríguez later became immortalized in Roberto Bolaño’s fictional novel 2666 pertaining to Los Feminicidios. Diana Washington Valdez introduced the issue of Los Feminicidios to American audiences through her extensive coverage of the murders in the *El Paso Times* and the subsequent translation of her book into English as *The Killing Field Harvest of Women: The Truth About Mexico’s Bloody Border Legacy* (2006), which allowed for wider readership and visibility for Los Feminicidios.

El silencio’s desire to influence readers’ behavior and the alluring snuff-narratives of *Las muertas de Juarez* suggest a lack of critical engagement by readers because the texts were too demanding in the first case, and too explicit in the second. This may have limited our ability to publicly discuss and debate the subject, and, as an unintended consequence, may have promoted an ethos of violence. Throughout my analysis of *El silencio* and *Las muertas de Juarez* I have insisted that the authors of each text structured their non-fiction narratives in order to overtly appeal to readers’ emotions. In *El silencio* the combined effect of recreated testimonies, essays, and chronicles seeks to engage readers’ emotions in order to influence their behavior. Meanwhile, the snuff-like descriptions conjectured in *Las muertas de Juarez* blur the border between fiction and

non-fiction, which problematically may cause readers' emotional engagement to dwindle or may cause readers to find pleasure in descriptions of harm to humans, instead of finding them insufferable. The best-selling success of Ronquillo confirms that, as far as the book market is concerned, nonfiction authors writing about real-life injustices must meet the growing preference for sensationalist violent descriptions by revealing explicit details and not demanding any altruistic real-world action from readers. Publishing success unfortunately means disregarding the ethical consequences of "making certain schemata more available than others" (Hakemulder 64) and laying the groundwork for certain aspects of readers' real world actions and experiences.

Newspapers and newscasts—the main technologies that “inform” people—rarely ask anything from their readers/spectators, and often narrate violent events in the same investigative manner as Ronquillo. They also tend to try to appeal to their audiences' emotions by sensationalizing testimonies of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders that happily provide a plethora of explicit, but not necessarily accurate, information. By witnessing, accepting, and delving into these kinds of representations of violence we have become complicit in its perpetuation. In the essay “Major Offenders, Minor Offenders,” published as a perspective in the collection *Rethinking Evil*, Sergio Pérez argues that we get “immersed in evil progressively, as with a lifelong task, step-by-step, through a gradual absorption that separates the individual from his fellow men [...] from Sade to Genet seems to make it clear that, in a human being's journey evil perfects itself” (190). Therefore, it is essential that we gain awareness as to how our exposures to violent narrations in non-fiction cultural expressions influence our actions and shape our

understanding of evil not as a nightmarish monster that we can blame for our actions, but rather as a concept that needs to be critiqued, discussed, and perhaps even re-conceptualized.

Chapter 2: *2666* a Moral Laboratory for Reflective Judgment

In this chapter I will further our discussion on the role narrative and its subsequent interpretations play in people's emotional engagement and subsequent cognitive processes. In contrast to the previous chapter, where I discuss two texts classified as non-fiction that brought visibility to Los Feminicidios, in this chapter I focus on how the distance from reality provided by fiction may allow us to further our understanding of Los Feminicidios. As an example of how we can create debates that may allow us to critically discuss this violence, I propose a new methodology to teach novels about the woman-killings that not only incorporates the logo-centric academic debates on the subject, but also a pathos-infused approach involving role-taking experiences. In order to elaborate this new approach I use the novel *2666* both because I consider it as part of the foundational canon⁴⁵ produced to call attention to the issue of woman killings in Ciudad Juarez; and, because of its global best-selling success, which suggests a strong empathic response on behalf of readers. I argue that the overabundance of storylines of morally ambiguous characters who are neither explicitly good nor bad provide role taking opportunities produced by narrative empathy. I explore how we can conceive *2666* as an instrument that allows us as readers to role-take and "try on" varied moral/ethical perspectives.

As I have previously cited in the introduction and the previous chapter, Camps, Rorty, Hakelmulder, and Keen have argued that fictionality provides safe zones for us to

⁴⁵ *Desert Blood* (2005) by Alicia Gaspar de Alba also deals with the phenomenon of the woman killings, but its success was limited to the United States.

imaginatively simulate diverse perspectives in a clearly stated fictional context. In this new pathos-infused methodology, meant for an academic environment, I propose that we, as readers, can deepen our understanding of Los Feminicidios, expand our critical gaze beyond the doings of “Evil”, and become more morally invested by assimilating and empathizing with the emotions and situations of fictional characters. This approach would, in theory, allow readers the opportunity to be morally and ethically engaged with Los Feminicidios at various degrees of involvement within a context that they know is fiction, unlike Ronquillo’s fictional vignettes in a text marketed as non-fiction. If we consider the possibility of how the process of empathizing activates our memory structures, hones our pre-ethical abilities by training our minds to imagine our reactions to diverse situations in which we may be able to learn how to govern our emotions, and consequently leads us to reflect about the significances of certain conducts indicative of what moral decisions we would make in a given hypothetical situation. Then, it may also be possible that we can transmute our feelings for fictional situations to similar real world situations. I conclude that part of creating critical discussions that can shift public perceptions can begin in small-class like settings, book clubs, etc., and 2666 is a great example of a novel that may be used as a teaching tool that, with guidance, may create a discussion about our ethical, moral, and general engagement towards Los Feminicidios, that, in turn, may allow us to continue rearticulating with our students our understanding of evil and our own role regarding violence against women in general. Perhaps by teaching students ways in which they can use fiction to learn to govern their emotions, we

as academics may start shaping more moral ethical individuals who care not only about themselves, but also about other humans.

INCEPTION AND RECEPTION

Roberto Bolaño wrote *2666* in the last five years of his life as he was awaiting a liver transplant in Spain. During his last years Bolaño corresponded with the journalist and author of *Huesos en el desierto*, Sergio González Rodríguez, enlisting his help with the specific details surrounding the woman killings, in order to get to know “the language of forensic investigation” (Valdes 30). Bolaño also compared notes and used everything González Rodríguez may have taught him in his novelization of *Los Feminicidios*.

Bolaño, “read the manuscript for *Huesos en el desierto* months before it was published—but he refashioned it all to suit his own ends” (Valdes 33). He met González Rodríguez in 2002, when he was in Spain for the official launch of *Huesos en el desierto*. In their meeting González Rodríguez recalls that Bolaño jokingly told him he would make him a character in his novel (Valdes 35). Seven months later, Bolaño died on July 14, 2003. After his funeral, Ignacio Echevarría, Bolaño’s friend and renowned book critic for the widely circulated newspapers *Reforma* (México) and *El País* (Spain), delivered the manuscript of *2666* to Anagrama, which published it in 2004.

Bolaño’s family and Anagrama decided to publish the original version of *2666* as a five-part, 1125-page opus, instead of publishing each part separately, as Bolaño had instructed before his death. According to Ignacio Echevarría in the note to the first edition of *2666*, “las cinco partes que integran *2666*, aparte de los muchos elementos que comparten (un tejido sutil de motivos recurrentes), participan inequívocamente de un

designio común” (1122). The story line follows four romantically-involved critics — Piero Morini, Jean-Claude Pelletier, and Manuel Espinoza — who are unequivocally obsessed with finding an elusive German author, Benno von Archimboldi. Their search takes them to Santa Teresa, where they meet a crazy professor of philosophy. The professor, Amalfitano, fears for the life of his daughter because of the woman-killings that are happening in Santa Teresa. Then Fate, a North American journalist, sent to Santa Teresa to cover a fight, discovers the ongoing streak of woman-killings. When he tries to investigate some of the crimes, he has to flee the city for fear that the police will prosecute him. After the section about Fate, there is a fourth section with 110 detailed descriptions of dead women, how and when they were found, and how these deaths affected locals, doctors, police, and journalists. Almost all of the investigations are soon forgotten for lack of evidence. Finally, in the last part of the novel, Archimboldi travels to Mexico in search of his nephew, who is accused of being the chief suspect of these murders.

After 2666’s success in the Spanish book market, Natasha Wimmer translated the five parts into English, and in 2008, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux published it both as a 900-page hardcover and as a three-volume slipcase paperback. In part, 2666 has had great international success because of its availability in Spanish and English; it has also received tremendous global public, critical, and academic acclaim. In México, *Reforma* praised the novel as “el acontecimiento narrativo más importante de las letras iberoamericanas de los últimos años: una novela compleja, torrencial, prodigiosa, que marca el inicio de la nueva literatura continental” (2005). *Palabra*, another widely

circulated newspaper, boasted that, “se considera como una máxima novedad editorial del 2004 en habla hispana” (2004). In the English-speaking world, The *New York Times* book critic Jonathan Lethem observed that “2666 is as consummate a performance as any 900-page novel dare hope to be [...] Indeed, he produced not only a supreme capstone to his own vaulting ambition, but a landmark in what’s possible for the novel as a form in our increasingly, and terrifying, post-national world” (2008). Janet Maslin, in the article “The Novelist in His Literary Labyrinth,” pointed to how “Bolaño’s references were sufficiently global to encompass [...] and to interweave both stuffy academia and tawdry gumshoe fiction into this book’s monumentally inclusive mix” (2008), and Christopher Goodwin, a journalist for the *Sunday Times*, observed that “what’s so remarkable and unusual about Bolaño is that he appeals to highbrow literary aesthetes and general readers looking to be entertained and engaged” (2008). To this day, the novel continues to have widespread success as it becomes available in other languages, visualizing and introducing the haunting story of the Los Feminicidios to other cultures and new generations of readers.

Needless to say, *2666* also prompted the publication of a number of scholarly articles that interpreted the violence depicted in the novel in terms of aesthetics (Donoso 2009), neoliberalism and post-colonialism (Oliver 2007, Farred 2010, Balkan 2010), colonialism (Farred 2010, Balkan 2010), pharmacology (Herlinghaus 2011), the city as a performative space (Balkan 2010, Olivier 2007), hermeneutic codes (Solotorevsky 2007), narrative structure and meta-fiction (García 2008, González 2008, Cuevas 2006, and Candia 2005), visual representations, literature of exile (Medina 2009) and horror

(Espinosa 2006, Galdo 2005, González 2008, Rordíguez de Arce 2006, Villoro 2006).⁴⁶

In a sense, these literary critical approaches to Bolaño's 2666 were contextualized by reproducing and reinterpreting the pre-established notions set forth by the vast material produced by Bolaño's critics⁴⁷ about his previous work, and in some cases, incorporating the available scholarship on Los Feminicidios.

In summary, although not all of these studies deal head on with the issue of Los Feminicidios, much in the same manner as the novel, where they are peripheral, yet essential to the plot. Most critics hint at a genealogy of Evil that is made visible through the use of repetition, serialization, character development, and by identifying "los circuitos en los que se mueve el horror" (Villoro 13), represented in the diversity of theoretical perspectives. For example, for the literary critic Ángeles Donoso Macaya the ethical component of 2666 "se hace manifiesta en la escritura de 2666 mediante la elaboración y la exhibición de una metodología del mal, metodología que vuelve visible y describe la forma y el sentido de la violencia" (128). Donoso's genealogy of Evil in Bolaño is an aesthetic project interested in *how* violence is visualized—a methodology of Evil—that gives violence a particular meaning. For other critics such as Grant Farred, Florence Oliver and Stacey Balkan and to some degree Patricia Espinosa, Juan Carlos Galdo, Daniuska González, Ignacio Rodríguez de Arce, and Juan Villoro the genealogy

⁴⁶ See Donoso 2009, Farred 2010, Medina 2009, Balkan 2010, Oliver 2007, Solotorevsky 2007, García 2008, González 2008, Cuevas 2006, Candia 2005, Rodríguez de Arce 2006, Galdo 2005, Pemjean 2005, Espinosa 2006.

⁴⁷ See Burgos (2010), Ferrer (2010), Sauri (2010), Arriarán (2010), López-Vicuña (2009), Medina (2009), Goldman (2009), Valenzuela (2008), Paz Soldán and Faverón Patriau (2008), Conant (2008), Bel (2007), Ríos (2007), Zavala (2006), Braithwaite (2006), Trelles (2005), Herralde (2005), Manzoni (2005 and 2002), Moreno (2005), González (2003), and Jennerjahn (2002).

of evil in 2666 is rooted in the power dynamics produced by colonialism and neoliberalism, defining evil as economic and political.

I admire the way in which these critics have strived to understand Bolaño's fictionalization of Los Feminicidios by trying to contextualize them within a genealogy or a methodology of evil. These interpretations are valid within a critical literary tradition; however, they do not create the necessary critical debate that expounds or tries to provide an understanding of evil that considers our own role in the violence. Instead, they reinforce the idea in readers that the violence depicted by Bolaño's fictionalized version of Los Feminicidios is produced by something outside ourselves: the economy, our colonial history, aesthetics, etc. By displacing the origin of the violence, locating it in evil as enacted by the aforementioned social, political and economic factors, these critics suggest we are powerless to influence anything, not even our own actions—'Evil' is inevitable—and as such we must resign ourselves to it. This is a rather fatalistic understanding of evil. It is this attitude that could be interpreted as the social problem of evil, especially when we consider that it perpetuates the idea that nothing can be changed, which arguably is one of the basic principles of right-winged conservatives. In his book, *La increíble hazaña de ser mexicano*, Heriberto Yépez eloquently observes

El mexicano actual está formado por una serie de costumbres. Repite lo que se ha hecho en el pasado y si alguien intenta no hacerlo, el mexicano (el viejo mexicano) se siente ofendido. Siente que algo no está bien. 'Así no son las cosas.' Lo que distingue al mexicano, para ser exactos, es que se acostumbra a todo. 'Así han sido siempre las cosas, ¿de qué te extrañas?', es una pregunta típica del viejo mexicano cuando alguien reclama o exige, por ejemplo, que algo no se haga a la usanza de la corrupción nacional. (38)

Hence, the political implications of thinking in this manner, if we are not careful, make us accomplices in accepting the atrocities that result from following traditions that prevent social, economic and political change.

A discussion of empathy, neuroscientific or cognitive reading processes in combination with some of these scholarly interpretations can enrich our understanding of *2666*. To some degree this approach may also offer insight into our own human nature, which does not result in a fatalistic perspective, but rather, in a more introspective approach that allows us to reflect on our attitudes towards Los Feminicidios. In turn, we may lead ourselves to proactive action that in the long term may help shift social paradigms on violence against women. Therefore, instead of offering a traditional literary interpretation of the novel *2666* in which I think of the text was an object and analyze it according to its relation to a set of variables and theoretical perspectives in order to offer an intricate multi-faceted interpretation of *2666*, like those of my aforementioned colleagues, I would like to propose we think about *2666* as an instrument, a moral laboratory of sorts.

In the next sections I establish what this new approach would look like in theory and in practice. First, I discuss some of the research that explores how empathic responses to reading play a part in role taking and the development of pre-ethical effects. Secondly, I provide some examples of how *2666* allows us to role-take diverse moral perspectives through characters who find themselves exposed to varied degrees of involvement in relation to the hypothetical woman killings of Santa Teresa. As a third step, I relate the previous role-taking observations based on *2666* to Los Feminicidios in

Ciudad Juarez, illustrating how role-taking not only exercises our schemata (memory structures) and develops our pre-ethical abilities, but also may incite us to reflect on the consequences of certain conducts and moral decisions we would make in a given hypothetical situation involving violence towards women. Finally, I conclude that the process of role-taking and its subsequent cognitive results can be used as an instrument to allow us to ethically reflect on our views on violence against women, which in turn, may provide a deeper understanding of our role in the perpetuation of these attitudes. Perhaps only then, will we be able to create less fatalistic and more inclusive public debate on Los Feminicidios and violence towards women in general.

ROLE-TAKING: AN EMPATHIC RESPONSE TO NARRATIVES

In 1978 Gordon Bower, a psychologist at Stanford University preformed various experiments on how readers understood and recalled stories. His findings were published in the article, “Experiments on Story Comprehension and Recall,” and revealed that an empathic response gets triggered when reading short stories. His various experiments demonstrated that readers were able to infer attitudes and actions that were not explicitly mentioned in the story. They were able to recall thoughts and actions of specific characters and even give a sympathetic interpretation to their actions. Bower’s experiments were some of the first to explore how readers understood stories. Since 1978, there have been others that have shed light on how readers construct, understand and recall stories. Most of these studies conclude that there is a process in which role-

taking⁴⁸ occurs as a result of readers' emotional response to characters, resulting in better understanding and recalling of stories (Bower 1979, Trabasso and Van den Broek 1985, Weiner 1985). These experiments sustain that reading fictional stories activates schemata, making them more readily accessible and thus influence reader's perception of events and people outside a text.

Other experiments that tested empathy specific variables suggest that readers do form explicit, lifelike representations of characters and emotions (Andringa 1986, Gernsbacher et al. 1992, De Vega et al. 2000). They show that the intensity of empathic response varies according to the relevancy of personal experiences in relation to a story. The more relevant an experience, the stronger the response, suggesting that empathy reflects processes within the reader, and thus, some people are inclined to empathize more than others (Stotland 1969, Mathews and Stotland 1973, Higgins and Bargh 1987, Higgins and King 1981, Hoffman 1977, Smith and Snell 1996). One particular scholar who has related empathy with role taking is the psychologist Dolf Zillmann. In his essay, "Mechanisms of emotional involvement with drama," Zillmann clearly distances himself from the normative definition of identification derived from Freudian psychoanalytic theory⁴⁹ by arguing that when it comes to film response, identification can be thought of as an empathic response in which a spectator reacts to the emotional circumstances of the

⁴⁸ Note that role taking is not the same as role-playing. Role-playing involves the real life action of changing one's own behavior to fulfill social roles. It is widely used in theater, improvisational games, occupational training, and psycho-therapy. Role taking is a mental process that occurs as an emotional response when reading the emotions of a character.

⁴⁹ For Freud identification was linked to the Oedipus complex, and consisted of the earliest emotional bond between a child and another person. He hypothesized that through identification the child attained traits and behavioral patterns. Freud insisted that the desire to be like another person resulted in the assimilation of that other, hence, making identification more obvious than imitation.

character on the screen. By becoming emotionally involved, reacting to and thinking about the consequences of being in the position of the character, readers are inadvertently role taking; they become actors in the story rather than mere observers.

In *The Moral Laboratory*, Hakemulder argues that texts should be used as moral laboratories. In his discussion of the studies on empathy and cognitive processes as related to the readers, he argues that there are three processes that trigger empathy. The first one “causes short and immediate reactions to the text, which do not involve cognitive processing” (69). The second response “prepares for actions of appreciable duration such as fight or flight” and “does not involve cognitive mediation either” (69). The third process is “a conscious experience of empathic reaction to a story” (69), he argues that it consists of three components: 1) “readers are cognizant of their reaction and appraise it as ‘feeling with’ or ‘feeling for’ the character” (69); 2) readers assess the reaction according to their moral and social judgments, allowing their “reaction to unfold when deemed appropriate, or inhibit or redirect their emotional response when considered inappropriate” (69); 3) “readers respond emotionally to revived experiences that are related to those confronting the character; further called role taking [...] this process may occur both deliberately or involuntary” (69). Therefore, Hakemulder claims that emotional identification⁵⁰ with characters, the “readers’ emotional or imaginary involvement in the ‘roles’ of characters” (60), plays a part in how readers’ experience fictional worlds. He believes that “reading narratives may produce a new understanding

⁵⁰ I must clarify that Hakemulder is not talking about identification in the Freudian sense—readers displacing their own consciousness with that of a particular character. He is specifically talking about identification as involved with empathic responses, imagery and emotional response—feeling with the characters.

of oneself, a genuinely new conception of one's values and prejudices" (86). Hakemulder insists that "rather than merely reliving old emotions from the past, readers bring them [the new conception of one's values and prejudices] forward in the present and apply them to new contexts" (86) which, in turn, creates new refined schemata that possibly mold our beliefs about which actions have implications that can be either desirable or undesirable.

Hakemulder's conclusions are important because they imply that fictional narratives provide the opportunity to role take, to "try on" different roles and moral perspectives. The fact that we are all different and our life experiences are unique suggests that our experiences in role taking may result in an intense internal reflective judgment of our own self-concepts,⁵¹ moral, values, and attitudes towards given fictional situations that we may then transmogrify to recall and understand real life situations. In order to elucidate this idea further, let us look at an example provided by the philosopher María Pía Lara in her book *Narrating Evil: A Postmetaphysical Theory of Reflective Judgment*. Lara contrasts Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* with Giorgio Agamben *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* to illustrate how reflective judgment, as opposed to determinant judgment, helps our attempts at "understanding the complexities of our evil actions" (Lara 180).

Lara observes that, "Agamben first develops his own judgment by using two most important and striking categories from Levi's narratives [...] and then he transforms them

⁵¹ According to Hakemulder, self-concepts are not static, but "dynamic conglomerates of selves undergoing temporal and situational changes" (86).

into new schema to understand modern politics” (117-118). Lara reasons that this kind of judgment is deterministic because, by using it as “general theory of the political, its moral scope is obscured” (118): in other words, we are being told what to think. In comparison, she argues that Levi’s stories “exemplify his own experience as a field of reflection” (121) and thus “avoid the simplistic strategy of forming judgmental views about the moral collapse he witnessed” (120). By not defining the “good against the bad” (121), Levi allows us to draw moral lessons from the stories, creating “the possibility of self-reflection, of understanding, of seeing the example as a way of mirroring ourselves into our own corrupted shape” (123). This type of judgment is what Lara defines as reflective judgment—we are not being told what to think, but rather constructing our own judgment based on self-reflection. Reflective judgments are the result of seeing stories as examples to mirror our complex human nature. It is this mirroring effect that I associate with the empathic process of role taking.

In the next section I lay down steps through which 2666 can be thought of as an instrument that allows us as readers to role-take by imaginatively representing the emotions we infer from fictional characters that are depicted as being exposed to the woman killings at various degrees of involvement. Much in line with Hakemulder and Lara, I argue that role-taking may incite us to reflect on the consequences of certain behaviors and moral decisions we would make in given hypothetical situations, opening the possibility to form reflective judgments. It is essential to note that, because each readers’ past experiences are different, the way in which they react to role-taking will be unpredictable, but, once that reaction is stated, it can be incorporated into a larger

discussion about how our unique role-taking may lead us to associate the fictional woman killings of Santa Teresa with Los Feminicidios of Ciudad Juarez, and may allow us to reflect ethically on the violence.

AN INSTRUMENT FOR ETHICAL REFLECTION

Drawing from Hakemulder's idea of texts as moral laboratories and Lara's discussion on Primo Levi, I argue that we as readers have the opportunity to role-take with as many characters as we emotionally react to in the five seemingly unrelated parts of 2666. The overabundance of storylines and characters Bolaño depicts as being neither bad nor evil (like those described in Primo Levi's stories), act accordingly to specific circumstances, interests and events that surround them, providing varied opportunities for readers to role take. Remember, however, that not all readers/students will react to the same characters nor have identical empathic responses because we all vary in age and gender and have different real-life knowledge and experience (Earthman 1992, Miall and Kuiken 1995). I will provide examples of my own role taking experience to explore how role taking might lead us to associate our emotional responses to the fictional circumstances regarding the woman killings with the real world woman killings of Ciudad Juarez. Please keep in mind that your own role taking experience and those of other readers will be different. The diversity of perspectives would in theory provide great starting points to create critical discussions.

In order to illustrate my point clearly, and to contextualize my role taking experiences, I will first provide a brief causal plot summary of each of the parts that make up 2666 as a whole. Secondly, I will select a passage from each of the five parts that

produced a reaction while I was reading and use it as an example of role-taking possibilities. For each example I will, 1) provide the causal antecedents pertaining to each excerpt; 2) explain how readers might be able to role take if they emotionally react to the emotions of the characters in the circumstances described in each fragment; 3) describe my own role-taking experience and how it affects my self-concept; 4) explore how through this process of mirroring I was able to reflect on my own reactions and form judgments and relate them to the real world situation of Ciudad Juarez. Finally, I will discuss how by role taking, we form reflective judgments that can then be shared in public forums and useful in stimulating public debates about our own views regarding the violence.

A Summary of Parts

The first part of 2666, “The Part About the Critics,” situates readers in the convoluted love life of four European academics: Liz Norton, Piero Morini, Jean-Claude Pelletier, and Manuel Espinoza. They have all slept with/and are in love with Liz Norton, but she seems to be undecided as to whom she loves. The four academics are also all passionate about the literature of a reclusive German author named Benno von Archimboldi. As the narrative develops, they become increasingly obsessed with finding him. In their search for this author, three of the four professors take a trip to Santa Teresa, where they meet Amalfitano, an exiled Chilean professor who seems to be losing his mind. Morini’s, Norton’s, Espinoza’s, and Pelletier’s preoccupation with finding Benno von Archimboldi inhibits them from paying attention to the woman-killings.

In the second part, “The Part About Amalfitano,” Bolaño narratively plunges readers into the existential crisis of Amalfitano, the Chilean philosophy professor we had previously met when Pelletier, Norton, and Espinoza arrived in Santa Teresa. We learn that his wife Lola abandoned him and their daughter Rosa, and that he has lived in Santa Teresa for a long time, working in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Santa Teresa. He came to Santa Teresa because his colleague Professor Silvia Pérez had invited him to teach. Amalfitano is concerned because the proximity of the woman-killings remind him that his daughter might be in harm’s way, and he believes he might be going crazy because he is having hallucinatory conversations. Silvia Pérez, a colleague who is “indignada por la forma en la que la policía del estado de Sonora y la policía local de Santa Teresa están llevando la investigación de los crímenes” (248), constantly dismisses his concern about his daughter, telling him that he lives in an upper middle class neighborhood and that those things do not happen there. He also finds himself stalked by the Chair’s son, Marco Antonio Guerra, who seems to believe Amalfitano and he understand each other.

In the third part, “The Part about Fate,” the woman killings take the forefront, as a North American journalist, Oscar Fate arrives in Santa Teresa to cover a fight between Count Pickett and Merolino Fernández. He befriends some men: Chucho Flores, who seems to be involved with Rosa Amalfitano, Charly Cruz, and Corona, who shares the affects of Rosa Méndez. After the fight, his newfound friends take him bar hopping. In one of these bars, Fate witnesses a man punching a woman, and no one at the bar going to her rescue. Then, later he sees a woman being raped and killed in a video disclosed to

him by Charly Cruz. These events lead him to meet with Guadalupe Roncal, a journalist from Mexico City, who is afraid of taking part in the investigations, because she had just taken over the assignment from her colleague who had been murdered. Together they begin to collaborate in piecing together the puzzles of the woman killings. They meet the chief suspect in the investigations, “un tipo enorme y muy rubio” (440), but later decide to flee Santa Teresa, afraid of the police.

The fourth part, “The Part About the Crimes,” is the most extensive. In it Bolaño narrates the circumstances of 110 cases of woman killings in forensic detail. At the same time, he provides individual story lines for those who were directly involved or affected by the woman killings—policemen, doctors, vendors, mothers, church desecrators and members, and journalists, particularly the story of the reporter Sergio Gonzalez. Bolaño does not provide moral judgment in any of their depictions; rather he simply represents their actions.

The last part of 2666, “The Part About Archimboldi,” is a biographical account of Hans Reiter, a German World War II veteran who finds himself writing novels in Germany post-World-War II. He decides to change his name to Benno von Archimboldi because he is afraid his real name might be associated with the Nazi war crimes of the 20th century, and he may be prosecuted. As a novelist, Archimboldi led a rather elusive lifestyle, never staying in one place long, and publishing a vast amount of works. The popularity of his novels results in the critics’ obsession with him, as described by Bolaño in “The Part About the Critics.” Then, one day, his sister Lotte recognizes parts of her childhood in one of his books as she is traveling to Santa Teresa to visit her imprisoned

son, Klaus, accused of being the chief suspect of the woman killings. Surprised by what she reads, she reaches out to him and enlists his help in freeing her son. The book inconclusively ends with Archimboldi's departure for Santa Teresa.

Role-taking in Practice

In order to provide an exercise that is both general enough to create debate and personal enough to provide insight, I will provide an account of my own role taking practice in *2666*. Additionally, as I previously mentioned, as a trained reader, I have an innate tendency to mark passages that call my attention, thus putting this conscientious way of reading into practice, might productive to instruct other readers/students to mark passages that made them feel something, and briefly describe what they felt and why they think they felt it. I am aware that not all readers approach texts this way, and, although in the next sections I constantly use the ubiquitous "we," I only do so for inclusive purposes. I want to make it very clear that each reader will have a particular and unique experience. If *2666* were to be taught in a seminar or discussed in a book club, perhaps teachers, professors and book circle leaders could utilize the questionnaire developed by researchers Miall and Kuiken to get people thinking and discussing about how they interact with literature.⁵² Below are but examples of my own experiences in role-taking and the possible ensuing lines of discussion that could result if shared in a group setting.

⁵² An interactive version of their Literary Response Questionnaire can be found at www.cod.edu/people/faculty/fitchf/readlit/LRQ.htm

Example 1: Excerpt from “The Part About the Critics”

De los cuatro Morini fue el primero en leer, por aquellas mismas fechas, una noticia sobre los asesinatos de Sonora, aparecida en *Il Manifesto* y firmada por una periodista italiana que había ido a México a escribir artículos sobre la guerrilla zapatista. La noticia le pareció horrible. [...] Después pensó en la periodista de *Il Manifesto* y le pareció curioso que hubiera ido a Chiapas [...] Durante un instante Morini sintió el deseo irrefrenable de compartir el viaje con la periodista. Me enamoraría de ella hasta la muerte, pensó. Una hora después ya había olvidado por completo el asunto. (64)

The preceding passage is from the first mention of the woman killings in 2666. At this point of the story Morini has just learned that Liz Norton is romantically and sexually involved with both Pelletier and Espinoza, and does not return his feelings. Readers may infer that Morini feels melancholic, evasive, needs to be loved and love someone, perhaps desires to escape his reality and travel. Readers, who have previously experienced romantic heartbreak or the need to evade their feelings, will likely empathize with Morini, on top of understanding him. Readers may feel remnants of experiences of long lost love, and hope for new love. Their response to these relived emotions is an emotional reaction to the implicit emotions of Morini, a form of role taking.

When we read this passage, we may react to Morini’s evasion of his own feelings, saying to ourselves “I have done that”—read something that takes distracts us from what we are feeling, only to realize that the content presented is an awful situation, and then we forget about it by thinking about circumstances that would make us feel better. In Morini’s case, he reads the newspaper so as to distract himself, only to be faced with the news of the woman-killings. This leads him to fantasize about falling love with the reporter who wrote the piece. Note how we recalled a previous experience (activation

of schemata) that enables us to assimilate Morini's fictional circumstance. Then we reacted (role taking) to what we possibly inferred as Morini's emotional response to evade his feelings in order to justify him (moral judgment).

Justifying Morini's emotions may lead us to question our own self-concepts about indifference, love, escapism etc. We may conscientiously ask ourselves why we justified his emotions, especially after he completely disregards the woman killings of Santa Teresa. What does that say about us as a people if we reacted to Morini's emotions and justified them in that hypothetical situation? Does responding to Morini's attitude in that manner, mean that we are like him? Does that mean that we would ignore news of other people suffering far away because of our own need to find solace for our own feelings? What if we were faced with a similar situation in real life? Would we react the same now as we have done in the past, especially because we have become more aware of others' suffering? If a piece of news had a relevance to our own lives, would we pay attention and take action? Perhaps. Some would probably read the news, maybe feel bad for a little, but then forget it, after all we so preoccupied with our own lives that the remote involvement of some tragic event may be totally irrelevant to us.

At this point we know that the event that Morini forgets and ignores is none other than the woman killings of Santa Teresa. Since the back cover of 2666 specifies that Santa Teresa is the fictional representation of Ciudad Juarez, we can then relate these questions to the specific case of Ciudad Juarez. Coincidentally this experience may have presented itself in the course of our lifetime. Los Feminicidios in Ciudad Juarez are thought to have begun around 1993, but continue to this day. For most of us, these

woman killings were happening elsewhere not anywhere near us, they were not an immediate threat to anyone we loved or ourselves, and while some of us may remember hearing about them we were probably all too preoccupied with our own lives. We could argue that this makes us bad people. That carrying on with our own lives makes us evil, but this would be all too simplistic, or as Eagleton observes, it is “a way of bringing arguments to an end” (8). Instead, let us consider what would happen if we were to ask a group of fellow readers if we should be held accountable for placing higher value on our immediate emotional interest, rather than caring about the “horrible” news of Los Feminicidios.

Perhaps this group discussion could provide better insight into how our own actions contribute to a more general attitude of indifference that in a sense plays a part in perpetuating a culture of violence. We could incorporate some of the scholarly perspectives that situate evil in factors outside of ourselves in order to help us gain further insight into why we tend to displace responsibility to agents other than ourselves, especially in the case of Los Feminicidios. Then we could shift the focus from ourselves to our own societies by questioning what happens when a community, society, or country shares this lack of engagement towards violence against women? Can we hold individuals and an entire society accountable for their lack of interest in stopping these crimes? These kinds of questions may not only produce fruitful debates, but also increase the possibilities of further understanding our attitudes of indifference, consequently giving us insight into our own human nature. We may even become more consciously

committed to changing our own behavior of indifference, especially if our discussion group emphasizes the need to change our own attitude in order to start influencing others.

Example 2: Excerpt from “The Part of Amalfitano”

Yo a usted lo comprendo, le dijo Marco Antonio Guerra. Digo, si no me equivoco, yo creo que lo comprendo. Usted es como yo y yo soy como usted. No estamos a gusto. Vivimos en un ambiente que nos asfixia. Hacemos como que no pasa nada, pero sí pasa. ¿Qué pasó? Nos asfixiamos, carajo. Usted se desfoga como puede. Yo doy o me dejo dar madrizas. Pero no madrizas cualquiera, putizas apocalípticas. Le voy a contar secreto. A veces salgo por la noche y voy a bares que usted ni se imagina. Allí me hago el joto. Pero no un joto cualquiera: uno fino, despreciativo, irónico, una margarita en el establo de los cerdos más cerdos de Sonora [...] Entonces sucede lo que tiene que suceder. Dos o tres zopilotes me invitan a salir afuera. Y comienza la madriza. Yo lo sé y no me importa. A veces son ellos los que salen malparados, sobre todo cuando voy con mi pistola. Otras veces soy yo. No me importa. Necesito estas pinches salidas[...]los chavos de mi edad que ya son licenciados, me dicen que debo cuidarme, que soy una bomba de tiempo, que soy masoquista. (287-288)

The passage occurs toward the end of the ‘part,’ Amalfitano and Marco had a few awkward encounters where Marco has confided in him. In this particular encounter Marco Antonio Guerra is explaining to Amalfitano why he identifies with him. His revelation may reveal that Marco Antonio Guerra’s angst and anger overwhelm him (perhaps, maybe even other emotions). Readers may likely role take with Marco Antonio Guerra’s need to reveal a secret: they may emotionally react to his need to induce self-harm in order to feel something other than his miserable existence.

We may react to our inference of Marco Antonio’s anxiety, his use of self-harm as a form of catharsis. We may even feel with him and completely understand his necessity to release his pent up frustrations, and the feelings of asphyxiation. Again, like

in Example 1, the recollection of past experiences will affect each reader's reactions. For some of us, the experiences of coping with pent up frustrations towards diverse situations may enable our role taking.

Once we consider how putting ourselves in danger or inducing self-harm for cathartic release or as a coping mechanism, we might be very surprised to find out what type of insight about ourselves we may achieve. Some readers may empathize with Marco Antonio's masochistic tendencies, leading us to either accept or question them. If we were in a situation where we felt asphyxiated and in order to cope felt we needed to self-harm, would we do it? Or, would we abstain and evaluate the consequences of our actions because they would be long lasting—they would be real, haunting, and may even land us in jail—and thus learn how to govern our frustrations.

If we assimilated these observations from this specific passage of 2666, we could situate them in the real world. In turn, we could entertain the idea that Los Feminicidios may be manifestations of releasing angst, anger, frustration, and/or other emotions. Although Marco Antonio's emotions are fictional, we can assume that it is common for many people to feel frustrated with their current situations and/or lives, and that they deal with their angst, asphyxiation, frustration and need for release in worse ways than simply self-harming. People could for example take their anger out on someone else in order to feel a release from their lives.

Bolaño's use of fatalistic verbs and adjectives such as "apocalíptica," "asfixiamos," "desfoga," "zopilotes," "bomba de tiempo," to describe Marco Antonio's frustration and need to self-harm as a way of feeling something other than his

environment's asphyxiation, may lead us, as readers, to question how, we, ourselves, would react if our life circumstances made us feel utterly helpless, as if faced by apocalyptic doom? Would we turn our pain inwardly or would we harm those around us as a cathartic release?

If we were to discuss the possibility of Los Feminicidios as a result of peoples' need for cathartic release, or dealing with their frustrations, we could gain further understanding of why women are often targeted and expand our perspective beyond that of gender difference? This type of discussion could result a rather in-depth evaluation of human nature. Ideally maybe this would create a dialog amongst public intellectuals, students, academics, NGOs and law-enforcement, that results in solutions for people to learn how govern their emotions.

Example 3: Excerpt from "The Part about Fate"

—No lo sé—dijo Rosa—, yo no soy mexicana, soy española.
Fate pensó en España. Iba a preguntarle de qué parte de España era cuando vio que en una esquina de la sala un hombre abofeteaba a una mujer. La primera bofetada hizo que la cabeza de la mujer girara violentamente y la segunda bofetada la lanzó al suelo. Fate, sin pensar en nada, intentó moverse en esa dirección, pero alguien lo sujetó del brazo. Cuando se volvió para ver quién lo retenía no había nadie. En la otra esquina de la discoteca el hombre que había abofeteado a la mujer se acercó al bulto caído y la pateó el estomago. A pocos metros de él vio a Roda Méndez que sonreía feliz. Junto a ella estaba Corona, que miraba hacia otra parte, con el semblante serio de siempre. El brazo de Corona rodeaba los hombros de la mujer. (401)

This fragment is part of a series of events and attitudes that Fate witnesses while drinking with Rosa Amalfitano, Rosa Méndez, Chucho Flores, Charly Curz, and Corona after a boxing match. Readers may role take with Fate's surprise at the narrated action. Fate's

surprise may either trigger a similar memory or allow us to imagine a hypothetical one. If our musings result in the latter we are forced to examine the moral choice of either action against or standing by witnessing abuse. If we recall a past experience then we can examine how that particular situation was different than this fictional situation, and how we acted.

Let us presuppose that we are rather altruistic readers, in which case if we had imagined a hypothetical situation similar to Fate's, we would find ourselves helping the woman, or even stopping the man from beating her, in which case, because of our altruistic nature, we could easily judge Fate's lack of action as cowardly. However, if we are not altruistic readers, if we are neither inclined to do good nor bad, then, we could empathize with Fate's urge to help, but much in the same manner as Fate, stop ourselves.

Depending on the type of readers we are, Fate's emotions may lead us to consider the consequences of meddling in a situation where a woman is being beaten up, or in more general terms, a situation in which another human being was being harmed. For example, sometimes in situations where other people are in danger and strangers attempt to help them, they find themselves in a catch 22. On the one hand they are interfering/meddling in someone else's life, but on the other their intentions may be misunderstood even if they were good, and might put them in harm's way. Could this be the reason why many people stop themselves from helping, or standing up for those who are harmed? This line of thought might produce a debate in which we are forced to think about how many people have been murdered as a consequence of not speaking up against the crimes, and how many others continue to say they did not see a thing. In turn, we

might be able to gain some insight as to how we are partially complicit in the perpetuation of this type of violence.

Example 4: Excerpt from “The Part about the Crimes”

Cuando cruzó la calle de tierra se volvió hacia atrás, para cerciorarse de que el paletero le obedecía, y vio a todas las moscas que antes rodeaban a éste alrededor de la cabeza herida de la mujer. En las ventanas de la acera de enfrente unas mujeres los observaban desde las ventanas. Hay que llamar a una ambulancia, dijo el afilador. Esta mujer se está muriendo. Al cabo de un rato llegó una ambulancia del hospital y los enfermeros quisieron saber quién se hacía responsable del traslado. El afilador explicó que él y el paletero le habían encontrado tirada en el suelo. Ya lo sé, dijo el enfermero, pero lo que interesa saber ahora es quién se responsabiliza de ella. ¿Cómo me voy a responsabilizar de esta mujer si ni siquiera sé cómo se llama?, dijo el afilador. Pues alguien tiene que responsabilizarse, dijo el enfermero. ¿Es que te has vuelto sordo, buey?, dijo el afilador [...] El otro enfermero se había agachado a examinar a la mujer caída espantando a las moscas a manotazos, dijo que era inútil que se madrearan, que la mujer ya estaba muerta. Los ojos del afilador se achicaron hasta parecer dos rayas dibujadas de carbón. Pinche cabrón ojete, es por tu culpa, dijo, y se lanzó a perseguir al enfermero. (448)

This is one of the 110 descriptions of the woman-killings in Santa Teresa. In this depiction, a knife-sharpener and an ice cream vendor come across a woman barely holding on to a light post. As they get closer they both realize she was badly beaten. The knife sharpener decides to take action and call an ambulance, only to realize that taking action comes at the price of taking responsibility for the injured woman. Perhaps readers will role take with the knife sharpener and identify with his feelings of astonishment, anger, or even rage.

If readers take on the knife sharpeners’ astonishment, and subsequent rage as emotions they can empathize with, their schemata may have activated their altruistic nature. This may allow readers to experience the moral obligation towards violence against women from a non-partaking witness standpoint. We may be able to see the lack

of moral engagement in the imaginary case of this woman's death, where everyone except for the knife sharpener seemed unwilling to take accountability for this woman. All the bystanders witnessed her death, she became a spectacle of death, and they watched as she died instead of helping her survive, therefore they were all accomplices in her death.

Bolaño makes his characters complicit in the woman's death by narrating this her death as a spectacle that they watch. This narrative construction parallels our own complicity with violence towards women; after all we also tend to make a spectacle out of death. Sufficient to say let us consider how many of us are drawn to newscasts' images of death, tragedy, and natural disasters. We can also recall the times we have driven by an accident, or a crime scene, only to try to get a glimpse of the disaster. There is something that speaks to our curiosity, but how do we go from curiosity of death to being complicit with crime? How do hundreds of murders of women go unaccounted for in a span of almost fifteen years? Why is it that no one knows anything for certain, and all they do know is speculative, or the result of scholars and NGOs raising awareness? Do people not realize that by not saying anything, they are partaking in a culture of complicity?

It is possible that many people may be fearful of the authorities and the subsequent endangerment for their wellbeing, but Mexico is not a totalitarian state, or at the very least it is not considered one, which in and of itself warrants a discussion. This raises important questions about our attitudes pertaining to Los Feminicidios of Ciudad Juarez and if they were indicative of how a lack of engagement with death threatening violence would become a major player in the current state of Mexico's war on drugs? Can our reflective moral judgments about historical attitudes allow us realize how one historical phenomenon facilitated another?

Example 5: Excerpt from “The Part about Archimboldi”

–En ocasiones—dijo Ingeborg—, cuando estamos haciendo el amor y tú me coges del cuello, he llegado a pensar que eras un asesino de mujeres.
–Nunca he matado a una mujer—dijo Reiter—. Ni se me ha pasado por la cabeza.
(970)

The casual antecedents consist of a previous conversation in which Ingeborg (Reiter/Archimboldi’s partner) had asked Reiter if he had ever killed someone. Reiter confirmed that he had, that he had killed a German he used to know. Ingeborg asked if it had been a woman, Reiter responded it had been a man. Then Ingeborg began to talk about how she thought some women are attracted to assassins because they were like gamblers who were willing to “amar hasta los límites” (970) only to end up killing themselves once they realized they had fallen into the abyss. Readers might be able to infer the innocent fear disguised behind the curiosity and sincerity of Ingeborg’s statement or, for that matter, the arousal created by the thought that her partner might be a woman killer.

Readers might associate how a simple gesture such as grabbing someone by the neck in a sexual situation could easily lend itself to death. They can perhaps consider how having someone else control one’s biological processes, such as breathing, is involved in creating control-arousal mechanism that could very easily get out of hand. Readers’ self-concept may be profoundly disturbed by the remote possibility of experiencing a similar situation. Note that this reaction may stem from a moral effect rooted in survival, rather than socially constructed paradigms.

Perhaps such observations can provide a line of discussion about how much we are willing to pay to experience a little pleasure, not just monetarily. If we consider how some of the women in Ciudad Juarez had been found with strangulation marks on their necks, then we must be willing to openly talk about our sexual preferences. Is possible that these deaths by strangulation are indicative of a sadomasochistic trend that accidentally ended in death? Could it be that this risky way to achieve pleasure is the result of being over stimulated by sexual images or perhaps our own boredom?

REFLECTIVE JUDGMENTS

The questions at the end of each of the examples provided are obviously rather open-ended questions. They are particular to my role taking experiences, which I consciously materialized into ethical reflections. If I were to share these reflections with a group, maybe a classroom, a book club, a blog, a TV show and invite other people to each share their respective reflections derived from role taking in 2666, then I believe that at the very least we could enrich our discussions of violence against women in the public sphere. We could focus on many issues. For example, based on my experiences of role taking we could discuss the problems of individual and collective accountability, on ways to cope with asphyxiation and frustration, on ways we can become aware of complicit attitudes that may perpetuate violence in our immediate surroundings or shape our history, and on ways that some sexual gestures speak volumes about our increasing need for violence in order to arouse ourselves.

If our ability to role-take and experience narrative empathy is unique to our own life experiences, then why can't we see a fictional narrative as an instrument that allows us to simulate experiences and attitudes, to confront fears, and even maybe ethically reflect on our real-life moral choices? I believe that using Bolaño's *2666* to reflect about the woman killings of Ciudad Juarez is indicative of what needs to be considered the imminent prerogative in classrooms teaching issues related to forms of violence.

Chapter 3: Visualizing Woman Killings on the Big Screen

The increasing popularity of Mexican produced films both in the global and national public domain merits a discussion about how film narratives have played a role in calling attention to the escalating violence involved in Los Feminicidios of Ciudad Juarez. In this chapter I will discuss the Mexican produced film *Backyard* (2008), directed by Carlos Carrera, because its international success and critical acclaim suggest a degree of engagement from viewers. In order to guide my discussion I draw from the research of film theorists, neuroscientific experiments, and communication psychologists. I analyze how *Backyard* prompts empathy from its spectators by editing diverse camera shots into sequences that mimic our natural way of establishing links between people, objects, and circumstances. I argue that this technique triggers an empathic response that invites us as spectators to take on the perspective of a bystander to the events that unfold, as well as to react to the emotions of the characters on the screen. I hold that *Backyard* replicates the factors⁵³ that contribute to the perpetuation of this type of violence in order to mirror the social reality of Ciudad Juarez, and call attention to Los Feminicidios. I establish that the film's scenes are edited in a manner that mimics the rather destitute

⁵³ The theories in the film are both those believed by researchers and locals. The best example of these theories is the article “La batalla de las cruces: los crímenes contra mujeres en la frontera y sus intérpretes”, where Patricial Ravelo Blancas and Hector Domínguez Ruvalcaba compile a total of 32 different theories collected from their field work amongst Juarenses. See Appendix Ref. 2- “Collected Theories on Los Feminicidios” for a chart of their findings. Amongst those theories, the ones that are depicted in the film are: complicity of policemen, trafficking of organs, women and prepubescent girls, a serial killer, the porn industry—especially the branch related to the elaboration and marketing of *snuff* films, male crisis because women have become the leading workforce of Ciudad Juarez, patriarchal cultural values, misogyny, racism, impunity from the government, female dress and loss of moral and family values, and the lack of appropriate infrastructure in the city such as paved and lighted roads.

reality by depicting the historical places where these crimes have taken place and also representing circumstances that elicit an emotional response from spectators towards the characters in the film. I argue that by seeing and emotionally reacting to these events, spectators may also gain insight as to how they, as real people, factor as part of the problem. This insight may have influenced the formation of judgments about the film that have been shared in public online forums related to Los Feminicidios.

CREATING BACKYARD

Sabina Berman, one of Mexico's most acclaimed feminist playwrights, wrote the screenplay for *Backyard*, and published it in 2004 in the pages of *Gestos*, an academic journal focused on the study of theatre. Then with the help of her production collaborator, Isabelle Tardan, and the director of Argos Comunicación, Epigmenio Ibarra, Berman approached director Carlos Carrera,⁵⁴ to invite him to participate in the project. In an interview with Columba Vértiz de la Fuente, published as an article in the popular weekly magazine *Proceso* as "Traspatio, filme incómodo," Carrera explains he was attracted to the screenplay because "más que realizar una película sobre las muertas de Juárez, me interesaba ver qué sucede en el país para que se pueda dar un fenómeno de esta naturaleza, y en el guión de Sabina encontré la explicación" (2009). Berman and Carrera revised the screenplay and began making the film with the financing of Epigmenio Ibarra, Grupo Financiero Inbursa, Coppel, and el Fondo para la Producción Cinematográfica de Calidad.

⁵⁴ His previous film *The Crime of Father Amaro* (2002) was blockbuster success. It took on the hypocrisy of the church.

Carrera chose to film the narrative in the places where historical events had taken place in order to realistically fictionalize the varied theories about the widespread killing and torturing of women in Cd. Juarez. He also fictionalized three important historical figures involved in the narrative of Los Feminicidios. The first one, Francisco Javier Barrio Terrazas, was the governor of Chihuahua from 1992-1998 who claimed the women were being killed because they wore provocative clothing and walked in the dark. The second, Abdel El Sharif, El Egipcio, was the chief suspect⁵⁵ of Los Feminicidios who died in 2006 after being sentenced to 30 years in jail for crimes against women and for allegedly paying the gang Los Rebeldes to kill women while he was imprisoned.⁵⁶ The third, Ester Chávez Cano,⁵⁷ was one of the pioneers in activism related to the murders. She opened the area's first rape crisis center, Casa Amiga, and was also credited with organizing campaigns challenging the authorities' impunity, taking to the streets and plastering the city with pink ribbons representing the dead women. The fact that the film fictionalizes these three key historical figures, in combination with being filmed in the places where the events happened, contributes to its hyper-realistic aesthetic.

⁵⁵ Conspiracy theorists may also claim that he was the government's scapegoat. Many of the investigations and trials regarding his involvement in Los Feminicidios contained gaps of information that directly tied him to the crimes. Not to mention, women continued being killed after he was imprisoned.

⁵⁶ In the film Los Rebeldes are depicted as Los Cheros.

⁵⁷ In the film, although Carrera opts to alter Cano's name to Sara, those with knowledge of the history of Los Feminicidios are easily able to identify her character as a representation of Ester Chávez Cano. It is possible her name was altered because, as her popularity grew, other activist groups, state government officials, and media outlets accused her of embezzling funds and raising awareness for herself rather than the slain. She dismissed these accusations by arguing that they detracted from the real issue. In 2008 she was awarded Mexico's National Human Rights Award. She died of cancer in December of 2009.

Carrera also visualizes some of the theories⁵⁸ regarding Los Feminicidios through the perspectives of two characters whose lives intersect in the film: Blanca (Ana de la Reguera) and Juana (Asur Zagada). Blanca is a newly appointed police officer sent to Ciudad Juarez to address the continuous murders of women. There, Blanca finds herself in an entanglement of impediments to her investigation ranging from police and state corruption, transnational corporative politics, to a lack of documentation, technological infrastructure, and human resources. Juana is a seventeen-year-old woman newly migrated to Ciudad Juarez. She arrives from Cintalapa, Tabasco, leaving behind a life that revolved around serving her father—in other words the epitome of patriarchy. Once in Ciudad Juarez she embraces the possibilities a life as a maquila girl has to offer, as well as its consequences. Juana becomes a victim of her circumstances, when her ex-boyfriend, Culberto, forced by other Juarenses men, asphyxiates her with a plastic bag. The lives of these two women intersect when Blanca finds Juana's mostly naked body in an abandoned desert road.

In an interview with Jorge Caballero, a reporter from *La Jornada*, Berman justified *Backyard's* narrative by explaining that initially she wanted to tell the stories of the events related to Los Feminicidios in a way that books and documentaries had not done already.⁵⁹ She decided that the best way to do it was to tell the story of the

⁵⁸ These include the police corruption, organ trafficking, machismo, domestic violence, a serial killer, the woman's conditions in the maquiladoras, the failure of the State to develop infrastructure in this border city, an indifferent society, and violence related to drug dealers.

⁵⁹ Berman's success in telling the story in a way that had not been done before consisted in her personalizing the story. She manifested the theories described in books and documentaries through the relationships of the characters. However, much in the manner of books and documentaries, the film maintains the collage style used in the books and documentaries about Los Feminicidios.

surrounding factors that contributed to Los Feminicidios: “una sociedad multicultural, que deriva su fatalismo hacia la indiferencia [...] un Estado que falla en sus más elementales deberes [...] una economía neoliberal y globalizada [...] y la vecindad con el país más rico del planeta, Estados Unidos” (Caballero 8). In the aforementioned interview she also tells Caballero: “quiero volver emocionante lo real, que el espectador sienta, sienta y sienta, y no por eso dejé de pensar y conocer” (8). It is obvious that her objective from the inception of the play and subsequent film was for the story to engage the spectators affectively; for them to react and feel strongly about the social culprits that contributed to the reality of the northern border city of México, and perhaps even abstract that reality in order to invite them to think about how the Juarenses reality relates to them.

Backyard was categorized as a suspense thriller. It hints at the possibility of simulating our real-world fears, as advertised in the movie poster: “un lugar donde tus miedos se hacen realidad.” It is important to note that the film is not a horror film, as the movie poster would suggest; rather it incorporates diverse elements of the suspense, thriller, horror, and melodrama genres without strictly following paradigms of specific film genres.

Paramount Pictures bought the feature (making it the first Mexican film bought by the studio) and released it nationwide in 350 movie theatres on February 19, 2009, which in Mexico is a rather large number for the release of a film. However, despite a heavy marketing campaign⁶⁰ before its release, the film did not last a month in the box office.⁶¹

⁶⁰ For example the magazine *Fernanda, ¿una mujer como tú!* and Cinemark México were holding an essay contest in which a person would win an all expense paid trip to Cancún. In order to win people had to “ver

The press critiqued the film for its plethora of characters, lack of argument, and false intentionality to represent something other than what it was: fiction. However, it is this hyper-reality and fresh approach to showing Mexico's social problems that seems to be the main reason people recommend the film in Mexican movie theaters' (such as Cinépolis's)⁶² online commentary threads. The film was well received, with great critical acclaim by critics and scholars of the Academia Mexicana de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas. It was nominated for eight Ariel⁶³ prizes, and won five. It was even submitted as Mexico's entry for best foreign film to the 2010 Academy Awards.

The apparent disconnect between the critical acclaim of the film and its limited commercial run seems to suggest that its presence in a very public forum would certainly cause an uncomfortable discussion for many. It also would perhaps allow Mexican citizens to form reflective judgments and create an open and national debate about the treatment of women, a discussion that perhaps both the authorities and a large faction of the population feared.

BACKYARD EMPATHIZING

In this section I discuss how *Backyard* calls attention to Los Feminicidios in Ciudad Juarez by analyzing two key sequences that mimic the rather destitute reality, not

la película *Backyard: el traspaso* y escribir un ensayo con extensión máxima de 1000 (mil) palabras con el tema 'Prevención y soluciones contra la violencia hacia las mujeres', inspirándote en la película."

⁶¹ The online magazine "El Mañana" published an article on March 15, 2009 protesting the film's disappearance from the box office, claiming that the film "salió por cuerdas a las primeras de cambio."

⁶² For example in the Cinépolis website (<http://www.cinepolis.com/Cartelera.aspx/Pelicula.aspx?ip=5586>), a commentary by user "Edagar David" reads: "En verdad vale la pena ver esta película ya que nos da una idea de lo que está pasando en nuestro país, y que lamentablemente algunos ni tomamos importancia". Another by user "Luis" highlights the film's precise documentation: "MUY BUENA LA PELÍCULA, BIEN DOCUMENTADA Y ACTUAL".

⁶³ The Mexican equivalent of the Academy Awards

only by representing the visual place where these killings have taken place, but also, by reproducing some emotional circumstances that make us care about the characters in the film. I will first analyze the opening, where we are introduced to a variety of factors involved in Los Feminicidios. Then I discuss the sequence that culminates in Juana's murder. I argue that these two scenes replicate how we could normally experience these circumstances and thus produce varied effects in spectators, which results in contradicting moral affects.

In order to illustrate my point clearly, I will first provide a detailed analysis of the opening sequence of the film; so as to establish how certain editing techniques mimic the visual and possible emotional reality of Ciudad Juarez. Secondly, I will analyze the sequence that pertains to Juana. In my analysis of this subsequent sequence I will 1) provide the causal antecedents that lead up to this scene, and 2) explain how spectators might be able to empathize with the emotions of the characters as depicted in these particular specific circumstances. Finally, I conclude that spectators' emotional response to the characters' outcomes may lead them to reflect on their reactions. Consequently this reflection may lead them to form judgments and associate them to situation of Ciudad Juarez, or violence against women in México as whole.

Opening Sequence: The fence and the factors

The film's opening sequence mimics the rather impoverished physical reality of Ciudad Juarez, as a border city that doubles as the United States dumping yard, and as a Mexican City on the periphery reflected by the lack of infrastructure that would normally be expected of a thriving border city. It also establishes the relationship of Blanca, a policewoman and one of the female leads, with her coworkers. The sequence begins as most of the Juarez narratives do: a fact—"una historia basada en hechos reales"—against

a backdrop of emptiness, in this case it is the blackness of the screen as opposed to the whiteness of a page. This statement evokes memories of other narratives of genocide such as *Schindler's List* and *Hotel Rwanda*, reminding us as spectators that what we are about to see is a representation of something that was real, not a recreation like those depicted in police shows, but rather a simulation, a place where we can make our fears feel real.⁶⁴ It is the possibility of what these fears of real life may be for each individual spectator that may trigger empathic engagement with the film from the very first frame. The statement against the black backdrop is also a way to connect with the spectators, by indicating that what they are about to experience is not a work of art that someone made up in a moment of creative genius, but rather, a story that is grounded in events that happened in real life and created because of the something that happened to someone⁶⁵ at a specific moment in historical time.

The next frame is spliced to the existing black screen by a fading effect, where the black screen with the white subtitle fades away to reveal a strand of barbed wire with a knot of what appears to be woman's hair lingering against a mixture of brush and blue-sky backdrop, while there are blue tones of unfocused movement in the background. The composition of this frame may trigger memory synapses of pain, the holocaust, or entrapment, depending on each individual's real-life experiences, which allows spectators

⁶⁴ Let us recall how the movie poster sells the film to spectators with the subtitle: "un lugar donde tus miedos se hacen realidad".

⁶⁵ I say "something" and "someone" because at this point in the film general spectators may not know that the film is based on Los Feminicidios of Ciudad Juarez, and although some spectator may have sought out the film because of the topic, comments of blogs suggest that people went to see the film because they thought it was a thriller.

to infer that they may be witnessing the aftermath of a violent event.⁶⁶ Then, the film abruptly presents another frame: a make-shift fence made out of different metal components and a stop sign. Then it zooms out to reveal a wide shot of the fence that is also made up of old tires, plastic, and a cross, inviting us to relate the frame of the barbed wire with this image, and infer that whatever we are about to see happened at what seems to be the entrance of a junkyard or a cemetery. What is explicit is that it is a place that appears to be the landfill of civilization.⁶⁷ The cross may speak to two very different spectators. Those who are unfamiliar with Los Feminicidios may think of death, indicating that they are going to be introduced to a dead character or to a relationship of someone living to someone who has died. However, for those who are familiar with the deaths of hundreds of women, it may prompt a very different memory—that of pink crosses used as symbols for the slain, and therefore indicate that they are about to see a dead woman’s corpse. The “STOP” sign amidst the fence may serve as a warning to stay out of this fenced location. This frame reveals that the filming did not involve very elaborate equipment; it uses natural lighting to set the scene, and it seems to play down the technical production to emphasize the reality of the screen world. This cinema verité style follows Carrera’s intention to make spectators feel as if what they are seeing is real.

⁶⁶ I am talking about both, personal memories and cinematographic memories. Jesús Martín Barbero argues in the essay “The City: Between Fear and The Media”, that “the images of the city offered to us by the media, and television in particular [...] have been incapable of going beyond the sensationalism and gruesomeness of accidents and murders, of assaults and armed robberies [...] they are incapable of going beyond the chaos in which the camera—which cannot communicate even the most obvious criticism of the lack of consideration for citizens’ responsibilities—frequently delights”(27). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that most of us carry a plethora of filmic images that we can quickly associate to another given image—it is as if our reality also consists of filmic intertextualities, of realities experimented in the world of representations, rather than in the real world.

⁶⁷ In fact the frames, of this opening sequence parallel those photographs compiled in Charles Bowden’s book *Juárez the Laboratory of Our Future*, suggesting an iconographic paragon.

From the wide-shot, the camera zooms in to the top part of the fence showing nail heads, and then it jumps back and forth between the images of three police on horseback, a torn single white tennis shoe, and a tracking shot, where the camera moves parallel to a woman dressed in jeans and a leather brown jacket (in the next sequence we learn her name is Blanca), followed by policemen as she walks towards something, takes out a handkerchief to cover her nose, and finally kneels down at the feet of a mummified body who lies against the backdrop of sand, mouth agape, as if in ecstasy. This cross-cutting technique in combination with the panning shot invites spectators to find a relationship between these six images. The process of relating these images—the barbed wire with hair, the makeshift fence, policemen, the shoe, the woman in jeans, and the mummified body—is facilitated by the fact that the editing mimics how a bystander in this particular circumstance would gather information about the visual reality of a scene.

The sequence continues when the camera zooms in to the upper right side of the mummified body as a female voice says “femenino,” then from a low angle the camera looks up at Blanca, moving vertically in a tilt shot in order to reframe her in the foreground, with a few men standing and taking pictures in the background. The camera again cross-cuts between shots of Blanca, the face of the mummified woman⁶⁸, a photographer, a robe covered in sand, and a man in a black leather jacket and cop-style glasses with a mustache (later in the film we find out his name is Fierro), writing in a notebook. Spectators hear a voice-over of the Blanca’s voice telegraphically dictating

⁶⁸ Again this image is very similar to a photograph published in Bowden’s book. See Appendix Ref.6 “Death in the Desert -- Murder victim on the city’s outskirts.”

facts pertaining to the finding: “Entre 16 y 26 años. Tiene el fémur fracturado. Las uñas pintadas de rojo. Y una bata a un lado de la maquiladora Kikay. El pezón izquierdo arrancado.” Her dictation is then interrupted by a question asked by a male voice. Spectators see a low angle two-shot showing two men standing side by side from the lower position of Blanca, but without taking her subjective perspective. One is Fierro, while the other is dressed in a kaki jacket and jeans, and also holds a notebook in his hand. He asks, “¿Qué numero de muerta es?” Fierro responds tritely “la veintinueve en lo que va del año.” The shot abruptly changes; the camera zooms in on the man in khaki while keeping Fierro in soft peripheral focus, as the man in khaki ironically asks “¿y de los ultimos diez años?” Again, the frame rapidly changes as if the camera were mimicking a bystander paying attention to a conversation, and the camera zooms in on Fierro as he aggressively fires back: “no seas mamón, Hernández.” An abrupt switch of frame captures the reaction shot of the man in khaki, Hernández, to the tone and manner of Fierro’s comment. The shot focuses on Hernández skeptically looking at Fierro, who is in soft focus. Hernández’s facial expression shows a smirk, one eyebrow higher than the other, as if indicating that this is the precise attitude he expected. Then we hear Blanca’s voice, which seems less telegraphic and warmer, as if it was disillusioned, while the camera still shows Hernandez’ reaction, “un diente de oro con una K grabada.”

The cross-cutting editing of the fictional interactions mimic how these would occur between groups of people who find themselves at a crime scene in a real-world situation, and thus allow spectators to gather information as if they were part of the conversation. In this case the exchange between the three actors may suggest animosity in

their relationships. First, it is clearly established that the woman is in charge, and that both Fierro and herself are part of the police force. While Hernández belongs to another group, his inquisitive and skeptical nature as evidenced in his exchange with Fierro may suggest he is part of the media, and that there is tension between the police and the media. It is also interesting to note how Blanca is not filmed alongside the men in this specific sequence; she is always alone, or, on an inferior plane. In fact, the shots mimic the gaze of someone who would be at eye-level with both men, or alongside Blanca. This might lead spectators to infer that Blanca is not the same as her colleague, that she does share the same attitude that her colleague has for the media. In a sense the relational mimicking of the camera forces spectators to be at eye-level with both men, or with Blanca, but never with the three at the same time. This relational positioning elicits an empathic response from spectators because they are in a sense invited to respond as bystanders to side with the cold, aggressive emotions of Fierro, the skeptical and inquisitive Hernández, or the seemingly objective emotions of Blanca.

Finally the sequence comes to an end by zooming in on Blanca's face. She looks tired, disgusted, but at the same time preoccupied. The camera moves vertically upward in a tilt shot that reframes the woman against a desert landscape, and police on horseback, as she mumbles in defeat, "muestra señales de estrangulamiento." The camera then begins to move away from the woman from a high angle. It zooms out, away from Blanca by means of a dolly shot taken while the camera continues to be in motion, revealing a panoramic view of the desolate desert like location, police cars parked on a sand road that disappears into the mountainous background, and a white subtitle in the

lower left corner informs spectators that this location is Lomas de Poleo, Ciudad Juarez, in 1996.

Maintaining a continuous and uninterrupted flow of action, the camera shows the police cars driving away while a man's voice explains that the first victim appeared three years ago, then we hear a woman's voice interjecting. There is an abrupt cut showing a frame of the desert and some rather impoverished settlements, and immediately after, there is another frame showing both Blanca and Fierro. He provides details of the murders, he reveals the contradictory count of dead and disappeared women, comparing their numbers to those reported in the media. While they are discussing and driving, the camera slowly begins to focus on the background until it reveals a panoramic view of some high rise buildings, including a Wells Fargo bank, the words El Paso, Tx appear on the upper left side of the screen, then slowly the camera moves revealing a panoramic view of low buildings as the words Ciudad Juarez appear on the lower right of the screen. The word 'Backyard' appears in the middle of the screen over this underdeveloped panoramic view, while the song "Poitik Kills" by internationally renowned star Manu Chao is heard in the background. This entire opening sequence is a mere five minutes long, enough time to possibly empathically engage spectators by mimicking how a bystander would both visually gather information in a crime scene, and emotionally infer possible relational tension between those present.

If we consider Zillmann's three-factor theory of empathy, then we can argue that the moral affects that could result from this process of empathic engagement in the first five minutes of the film is dependent on spectators' knowledge of Los Feminicidios of

Ciudad Juarez. It is this knowledge or lack thereof, that plays into how we react to the characters' emotions, judge their circumstances, and abstract these judgments to our real-world experiences. For those spectators with no real-world knowledge of Los Feminicidios, the sequence may remind them of other films that show a murder at the beginning of the film, and how this murder is resolved at the very end. In *Backyard* Carrera manages to build up suspense by introducing a dead body, cops, and visually contrasting both sides of the border producing a state expectation in which the audience anticipates that whoever committed this crime will be brought to justice. The famous suspense director, Alfred Hitchcock, said in an interview in 1963: "the showing of a violent murder at the beginning was intended purely to instill into the minds of the audience a certain degree of fear of what is to come" (Samuels 480). Although Carrera does not show the violent murder itself at the beginning, he does provide a corpse that most notably underwent a violent crime and was left to rot in a landfill belonging to a semi-urbanized part of Ciudad Juarez. By not representing the murder itself, Carrera is able to simultaneously build suspense by arousing fear of someone or something that provoked the death of this deformed feminine body, and the expectation that justice will be served. With this expectation in mind, spectators may begin to think the menace and responsible party for this murder is not a man-monster (especially if they consider that the film is based on real life), but a person who is depicted neither as obviously good nor as evil, but rather someone whose motives are more abstract and vague, someone who under a particular set of circumstances was capable of killing.

If, however, spectators did have in-depth knowledge about Los Feminicidios, then they may respond critically to the film. They would skeptically observe how Carrera replicates the relationships between involved parties. Perhaps they would even be able to detect the subtle paradoxes presented in the film and appreciate how far Carrera went to mimic the reality. In this initial sequence, the paradox lies in that the elements responsible for the lawful safety of citizens are introduced to the audience in their inability to fulfill this very responsibility. First, Hernández's and Fierro's brief exchange may allow knowing spectators to confirm the judicial system's inability to keep the cases of murdered women objectively filed by failing to answer a simple question of how many have died in the last ten years. Instead the aggressive and insulting response is a way of detracting and silencing further discussion.

Secondly, it is important to note briefly that the only apparent responsible part of the judicial crew doing something at the scene is Blanca. She is the one working, touching the body, and stating facts while the men stand in the background, or sit on their horses. Symbolically, this reflects the social demographic of how in Juárez the women have become the major labor force. The concept is then reinforced verbally by the policewoman's factual assertion that this body worked for the Kikai maquiladora, introducing a rather important element involved in the death of this body: the Kikai maquiladora, which is the transnational company that employs this young woman. Although the spectator does not know at this point the level of involvement of this transnational, knowing that most of the victims were maquila workers from the poorer sectors of society might lead knowing spectators to conjecture the possibility that this

maquila may have been involved in the murder of the girl. This is also another effort on Carrera's behalf to mimic the social dynamics of Ciudad Juárez: the commoditization of women who are treated as merchandise whose price is regulated by transnational corporations looking for cheap labor.⁶⁹

The following shots of the border, El Paso, contrasted with Ciudad Juárez, amplify the difference in economies in each side of the border. While El Paso is represented as a city of rapid development, Ciudad Juárez is represented as underdeveloped and lacking basic infrastructure such as pavement roads. The civilized and uncivilized come through the screen: El Paso, a city of law and prosperity; Ciudad Juárez, a city resembling the lawless towns of western genre films. The names for each space are located strategically on the screen as well. El Paso on the top left, Ciudad Juárez on the bottom right—conceptually El Paso is depicted in a visual metaphor as superior to Ciudad Juárez; Ciudad Juárez's inferiority is highlighted by the title "Backyard" that appears super imposed on Ciudad Juárez, establishing the city's condition as the backyard/junkyard/play yard of the United States.

⁶⁹ In another scene of the film Carrera's clearly establishes his intention to associate Los Feminicidios to their commodification by transnational corporations. The scene is edited in cross-cut manner between a business meeting with the governor of Chihuahua discussing the prices of women laborer around the globe and the interrogation of the serial killer, so as to invite spectators to associate the criminality to these neoliberal corporate men. In the scene the governor is in a meeting with representatives of the United States and Japan. He makes an attempt to convince these business men to help him develop Ciudad Juárez, however rather than using the capitalistic ideologies of the transnational companies, he appeal to them by using ethically stating, "certain things should be done because they are right". His investors snicker, and put things into perspective. First, the American representative states that the American public would not want to see their taxes being spent in México. Then the Japanese representative tells him maquilas want low production costs, "a Mexican woman is \$1.05 per hr, a Chinese woman is 90 cents per hour, [...] so she is 20 cents cheaper than a Mexican, in Bangladesh its 87 cents, in Thailand 83 cents of a dollar". Then the American tells him "por eso las marcas van a irse a maquilar a la China a la India [...] a menos que cueste menos no más". Meanwhile this debate is happening in the governor's office, the shots are crosscut with shots of the Egyptian and Los Cheros. The gang members claim their innocence by alleging that the Egyptian paid them \$1200, per woman they killed. In both locations, women are commoditized.

For the informed spectator, Carrera's intention to mimic the cultural reality may evoke stronger reactions and emotions towards the characters, and their judgments might be more critical. By associating all the elements of this initial sequence, it may be evident to these types of spectators that Carrera considers the police, the media, the transnational companies, the socioeconomic underdevelopment, the commodification of women, the spatial location of Ciudad Juarez, and the tension in the relationships between men and women as factors that contribute to Los Feminicidios. This associative knowledge may lead them to not experience the rest of the film in suspense, but rather with humor if they find Carrera's film parodic, with praise and satisfaction if they find the film accurately informs others of the historical factors that have resulted in Los Feminicidios, or, maybe these spectators might even react with indifference if they find that the film does not contribute anything new to the existent corpus of materials on the matter, failing to consider other factors that could be responsible for this normativized phenomenon.

Murder Sequence: From Juana's Rape to Death

Before describing in detail the sequence when Juana gets raped and murdered, it is important to provide some background on the narrative (causal antecedents) that culminates in her death. When we are introduced to Juana, she is portrayed as just arriving to the city from the small town of Cintalapa, Tabasco to live with her cousin Magda and work at a maquila. The night she arrives Magda modernizes her cousin's look after an image of Selena, a viewer familiar with Selena's life story would be able to know that this parallel between Selena and Juana, narratively foreshadows Juana's death. The next day Juana begins working at the maquila, but not before visiting the maquila's

doctor who warns her about the importance of using birth control in order not to get pregnant and lose the job. The sequence implies that Juana's new life gives her the opportunity to experience the freedom of making her own choices and safely exploring her sexuality.

Juana becomes aware of the difference between her life at home and her life as a maquila girl. In her town she would wake up at the crack of dawn every morning to go collect wood, cook and care for her father; whereas in Ciudad Juarez, she only wakes up early Monday through Friday and she gets paid for her work, which she considers less of a toll than taking care of her father. With her newly acquired sense of autonomy Juana goes dancing with several partners, and meets a man named Culberto, with whom she chooses to have sex. Despite the fact that she has sex with him, Culberto (an indigenous man from a town in Oaxaca) finds himself confused. He believes they should talk to her father, and even tells her: "Quiero que sepas que no importa que tú y yo estamos solos sin papás, para mí esto es muy serio Juana." Culberto wants Juana, but because of his previously instilled principles he conceives of sex as something very serious, which contrasts with her lighthearted take on it. Their intimate sexual engagement provides the rising action that leads to the climatic rejection of Culberto by Juana. In the scene in which Culberto is rejected, both of them are captured as part of the people arrested during a police raid, whose purpose was to capture the gang of Los Cheros. When they are released from prison Culberto forcefully grabs Juana; she tells him to stay away and walks away in the arm of another man, leaving Culberto broken-hearted and utterly confused. This rejection puts in motion a series of moral choices made by Culberto, that

result in the rape and murder of Juana, the climax, that provides the storyline its tragic narrative denouement.

When Juana leaves Culberto alone and miserable, he takes up company with some local Juarenses men. They party for several days, fueling Culberto's anger. One of the men in the group tells Culberto that Juana disgraced him and that he is a victim of Juana's sexual freedom, and must therefore tame her. Culberto becomes convinced that taming Juana is the only way to get her back. He invites her to a club with the pretext of making amends, and then Culberto drugs her. He and his friends, take Juana to a house that seems to have served as a place for drinking, gambling and to have sex. The camera focuses on the fully clothed bodies of both Juana and Culberto, her back is towards him, and she faces us. This is an objective panoramic shot, of the events that are about to unfold. We see Culberto caress Juana, and hear him tell her "solo quiero hacerte el amor." As Culberto begins to undress Juana, the camera zooms in on Juana's face capturing her grimace, and obscuring Culberto's caresses, implying that Culberto rapes Juana. At this point in the film spectators might feel scared with Juana for the events that are happening to her, or they might feel happy since they empathize with Culberto's feelings. It is highly likely that spectators may react either to the emotions of Juana or Culberto, as if they were their friends, siding with one or the other depending on their own life experiences.

The sequence of Juana's death begins with a beat up old van driving fast in a sand road. Juana's screams drown the sound of the motor; throughout this sequence her cries and men's laughter provide the background noise. The camera enters the vehicle by

zooming in on the passenger window to finally focus on the face of the driver. He is smiling and takes a drink out of a can, he looks at the rearview mirror, the camera follows his gaze and transitions into a rear angle shot that shows Culberto struggling with another man in a gray sleeveless t-shirt. In their struggle the man looks behind him, the camera follows his gaze to reveal a third man on top of Juana.

From this point on the camera will only show two positions, edited in a cross-cut manner. One position shows the perspective from the back of the van looking towards the front—this is a master shot that objectively portrays the actions before it, it creates distance between the spectator and the spectacle by not providing any specific perspective. This camera only moves vertically to reframe different parts of the characters. The other position emulates POV shots from the perspective of a fifth person sitting on the right side of the van. This camera moves with the movement of the van and it even mimics the obstructed view of what is happening in the van as the characters reposition themselves blocking this perspective. This position fails to establish any distance between spectators and the events on the screen; it is as if this position belonged to the spectator. The cross-cutting, jumping back and forth between these two positions, invites spectators to empathize, to find a relationship between what seems to be the position that shows the point of view of a fifth entity (the spectator), and the position that shows an objective representation of the actions that occur inside the van.

After the driver looks through his rear mirror, there is a cut and we see a master tunnel shot of the van, with a man on top of Juana, Culberto and the man in the gray wife-beater shirt, and the head of the driver. All three planes are shown in deep focus.

There is an abrupt change in the frame; the film cuts to the spectator's POV shot staring at Culberto's face. The frame shows his face in deep focus as his eyes indicate that he does not want to see the spectacle of Juana and the man before him. The POV shot shows how he tries to grab Juana's hand, but fails. The man in gray holding him changes places with the man raping Juana. As their positions change the camera remains eye level, and thus the body of the man that was raping Juana obstructs our view of both Juana and Culberto. In this moment of obstructed sight, the film might arouse our emotional response because we are forced to infer what is happening and what will be the outcome for Juana and Culberto, whom we have come to love or hate at this point in the film.

Once the man has grabbed Culberto in order to control him, we are shown a master shot from the back of the van, the eye-level frame shows Juana's struggling legs in soft focus, while the man in gray tries to take off what remains of her jeans. The film cuts to the POV shot of the emulated fifth person, showing the perspective from the middle of the van of Juana's left side, we see her screaming, drenched in sweat, uncombed, beaten, the man in gray holding her legs. It is clear that her panties are halfway down her thighs. Then the image defocuses, following the motion of the vehicle, so as to mimic the gaze of a fifth person in the van. There is a cut to the master shot taken from the back of the van. Now we can see Juana right side, her legs are bare, the man in grey's hands are between them, then he grabs his crotch as he positions his entire body between her legs. We can only see the sun illuminating Juana's bare legs, and his unbuckled belt, the rest of Juana's body is in dark light and in soft focus. Again there is a cut, and we are shown, through a POV shot, the image of Culberto against a window

while he tries to liberate himself from the other man's grip. The camera zooms in on his face. He is crying, his forehead is wrinkled, his mouth forms a clear downward frown. There is another cut. We see a master shot that depicts how the man in gray aggressively holds Juana, his arms suffocatingly cradle her upper body while he thrusts against her. The frame abruptly changes to a POV shot as we see the other man holding Culberto. He gives Culberto a plastic bag and tells him it is his job to kill Juana. The camera closes in on Culberto's head. He slowly shakes it, he is still crying, he looks distressed. Another cut, and we see a master shot of a side close up of the man in gray's face, he is struggling to keep Juana down, he turns to the other man, signaling him to bring Culberto closer. The man lifts Culberto, and drags him towards the thrusting body of the man in gray, the two-shot of Culberto and the man, becomes a two-shot of Culberto and the man in gray. The master shot shows the man in gray pointing a small gun at the nape of Culberto's head. Culberto looks scared. His eyes are bloodshot; he closes them as the camera moves vertically downward to show a plastic bag over Juana's face and the upper half of her body. Then there is a reaction shot of Culberto's face, his eyes are now open and intently focus downward so as to indicate he is staring at Juana. The camera alternates between his expression and Juana's face pressed against the plastic. Then it follows Juana's hand as she lifts it one last time, accidentally hitting Culberto's face and follows it downward to reveal her lifeless body. The film cuts to the POV shot that shows a close-up of Culberto's face, and the hands of the men holding him. His eyes are bloodshot, he is drenched in sweat, and he looks traumatized. The next frame is a wide-shot showing the front of the van in the middle of the desert, the van stops, and throws Juana's body out

of van as if it were trash. The van continues driving forward. As it passes the position of the camera, we see a shot of Culberto being thrown out as well, as the van drives away.

Though this whole sequence is a mere two minutes long, and it is edited to give the impression of a seemingly uninterrupted flow of action as well as to invite spectators to associate the two positions of the camera by cross-cutting between shots. This style of editing mimics the physical movements of a bystander to a struggle, as well as the emotional impotence of not being able to interfere. It is important to note that this response is unique in each spectator as it is dependent on their knowledge about Los Feminicidios, and previous life experiences. Perhaps some spectators might find themselves in emotional distress, they might cry, scream, or sit in utter disbelief, especially when for a moment, they are unable to see what is happening to Juana or Culberto, and thus cannot gauge the severity of their circumstance; or because they are overwhelmed by the characters' emotions. Some spectators might be alarmed, shocked, and disgusted, and they might ask themselves if what they just experienced is considered snuff. After all the sequence is candid about showing the rape and murder of a woman on the screen.

However, we must also consider the possibility of a different type of spectator, one who might be pleasurably aroused, who might enjoy listening to Juana's screams, catching brief glimpses of her legs, and seeing how she is about to be raped by yet another man, a sadist spectator. While this possibility might alarm some, we know this type of spectator exists because just as there are altruistic spectators, there are sadist spectators. In *Ethics, Evil and Fiction* (2003), philosopher Colin McGinn argues that,

“the sadist is able to relish his own attachment to life with added piquancy while he causes another to relinquish that attachment. He can compare his own life to that of the victim and be joyful at the disparity in well-being.” (80) This spectator might rejoice in witnessing this gang rape by empathizing with Culberto’s or the other men’s pain, by comparison they might find rape a righteous and deserving way of making a woman relinquish her embrace for sexuality. Maybe their squeamish pleasure is derived from their social upbringing, their previous life experiences; spectators might enjoy watching how the two men derive power from inducing pain and suffering towards these obviously indigenous characters. This could especially be true if these spectators find pleasure in seeing how both Juana and Culberto suffer because they particularly enjoy being witnesses to the disparity in well-being.

Spectators’ emotional engagement to this sequence, whether a rage that awakens a desire for altruistic action or enjoyment that results in sadistic pleasure, to name two opposite possible emotions, is the direct result of what the sequence may trigger in them.⁷⁰ Now as an example and because each person’s life experience is different, I can only speak for the judgments and reflections this sequence produced for me. While watching the sequence I felt alarmed, shocked and could not stop wondering why Carrera chose to depict Juana’s death in this way. When I first watched the movie, this sequence haunted me for many days after. Now, that I have watched the film over thirty times I can feel my heart racing in anticipation of this sequence. When it eventually comes, I

⁷⁰ I am using two emotions and possible post-empathic reactions as possible examples, but we must be aware that others could be produced.

cannot help but lose myself in it as it continues to deeply disturb me, but I cannot explain why that is. Perhaps it is the fact that witnessing one human inflicting such degree of pain in another human, without disregard for their life, speaks a greater truth about human nature: some humans are in crisis, in pain, and will go to great extremes to make sure they can inflict and reproduce the same feeling in others the same, if not more. Just as Culberto perhaps felt used and discarded by Juana's rejection, he morally chose to do the same to Juana. What perhaps is even more alarming is that Culberto's friends, the actual sadists, relish in torturing Culberto and making him reject the value of Juana's life, they invert Culberto's own values, and instead of killing him, kick him out to live with his guilt.

After having reacted to this sequence, perhaps we can also consider how this sequence suggests that this type of attitude towards violence may not only be systemic, but also endemic. If we consider how Culberto is left to live with his guilt, we can hypothetically argue that this feeling may consume him, or transmute into a pain, which in turn may cause him to repeat this same sequence. There is a story in the movie, told by Blanca about a village that on every full moon would congregate for a ritual. Then one day a tiger came and ate someone from the village, this happened a second time, and a third, so, by the fourth time the villagers had come to accept that the tiger would eat someone, and they were no longer surprised. This story in combination with the sequence previously discussed supports the idea of ritualization of moral paradigms, in which human life is no longer valued, thus promoting an ethos of violence, where the status quo is a complete disengagement with the violence.

In a way, Carrera's editing constructs the film's narrative in a manner that we are placed in van, by being witness to Juana's murder we may be able to think about what we would do if given a choice between our own life and that of another. This may then lead us, as spectators, to conclude that if we found ourselves in particular circumstances, even we would be capable of murdering another human being.

DIGITAL COMMENTARY POSTS AS A FORM OF REFLECTIVE JUDGMENTS

In order to provide an idea of how subjective reflective judgments may produce a social and collective debate about this film and the type of violence it represents, in this section I will provide a couple of examples of reflective judgments taken from YouTube discussion boards. I am aware that these examples are by no means scientific, may be misrepresentations of people's reactions, and do not include the faction of the population that does not write their reactions on discussion boards. Regardless, the existence of these judgments on very public social media suggest the possibility of a collective debate that with time, may lead to a social shift in peoples' engagement towards Los Feminicidios and violence in general.

A review of blog boards and commentaries to critical reviews reveals how spectators were emotionally engaged in the film. Their responses are an indication of how for some their previous life experiences led them to form reflexive or determinant judgments about the film. It is more than evident by reading a sample⁷¹ of commentaries that the film played into the affective responses of its viewers, resulting in both positive and negative moral affects that consequently were expressed as judgments. If we consider

⁷¹ See Appendix Ref 7 "YouTube postings in reaction to *Backyard*"

that these affects are in fact derived from an aesthetic narrative editing technique in which by mimicking real-life interactions we are able to empathize with the characters, then we can argue that affects in general may be used as an arena for political representations and actions.

In summary, the sample provides a wide range of judgments stemming from political beliefs like sexism, racism, apathy, and a lack of disqualification to social responsibility, which can all be linked to a lack of engagement towards an ethical and moral responsibility for human life. For example, helldren expresses that “La analogía del ‘Tigre’ es como de niño de primaria. Un tema tan delicado tratado de manera mercenaria y oportunista por el Sr. "Carrera" aprovechando la couyuntura para disque ‘alzar la voz’ contra las atrocidades cometidas en Ciudad Juarez.” By comparing the story of the tiger, which directly correlates to the attitude of a lack of engagement towards violence that is ritualized, to an analogy that could have been made by an elementary school boy, helldren reveals how his particular political beliefs do not agree with the way Carrera represented his own political beliefs on Los Feminicidios. Helldren finds Carrera’s representation mercenary and opportunistic in the name of calling attention to Los Feminicidios. If we analyze helldren’s judgment as stemming from the affect of disgust towards raising social awareness about Los Feminicidios, then we can infer that he lacks a moral and ethical awareness about a collective social problem.

Also besides considering the political implications of affects, lets evaluate the judgments that stem from these. Half of these commentaries seem to form determinant judgments expressing how the film was a crude and a false representation of Mexico,

suggesting they stem from negative affects such as pain, disgust, fear, anguish, etc. While the other half result in more reflective judgments that stem from positive affects such as interest and curiosity. In the latter case spectators' sense of how the film mirrors the social reality, which includes them as a factor that contributes to Los Feminicidios. The commentary of hugodomingueznieto hints at his lack of action as a form of complicity, indicating a general political representation of citizens' lack of accountability in the violence. The blatantly emotional response of TodoQueen links the movie to the social reality of Los Feminicidios including the popular notion that women need to be taken care of in order to be safe, characterizing the overtly sexualized political perspective. Papel66's anti-Semitic comments seem to even link the representation of Mexico to how it is depicted by Jewish artists, which exemplifies a deeply racist political point of view. All of these commentaries are judgments derived from affective responses influenced by affects shaped by previous life experiences, including preconceived notions, which are the result of how we as spectators empathically react and engage with film, in this case with Carrera's *Backyard*.

The film also may lead other spectators like hugodomingueznieto to think about their own role and attitude towards violence around them by representing how Culberto (who was not a bad person) raped and killed Juana. Culberto's actions could be ours, thus, suggesting that ordinary people like us can act with a thoughtlessness, callousness, rage or ignorance that can result in depriving another human the basic right to live. This type of reaction, as discussed in previous chapters can be avoided by reading fiction or imagining alternate solutions to hypothetical scenarios depicted on a screen. These ways

of training our brains help us understand our potential for emotional responses that lead to actions some people would easily classify as evil. It is as if Carrera aesthetically constructed a narrative mirror for spectators to imagine what could result of their indifference towards these woman killings, hinting, at the idea that the general public is as much at fault as the government, the police, transnational corporations, assassins in perpetuating a culture where the killing of women has continued to be accepted as normal. It may be shocking to think that each of us is responsible for accepting this attitude. What may even be more telling of our lack of ethical engagement is to consider how many of us may not want to talk about this possibility. Perhaps by starting discussions about how it may be uncomfortable to consider our own complicity in atrocity, we can start to unravel the cognitive and social structures that limit our ability to freely express ourselves.

Chapter 4: Documentaries and Altruistic Actions to Change the World

Documentaries were another form of film narratives that had an essential role in raising awareness about Los Feminicidios. For the most part these documentaries sought to educate people about the main theories regarding the human rights violations that were occurring in Ciudad Juarez. The main lines of discussion centered on the neoliberal power relationships of the maquila industry and the government, the lack of organized investigations, poor research methods, underdeveloped infrastructure, Ciudad Juarez's status as a border town and threatening practices that kept citizens in silence. These documentaries also "became an important tool for organizing strategies and raising funds" (Staudt 87), which suggests the films had a strong rhetoric capable of persuading viewers to take real world action.

In this chapter I analyze how one of the documentaries⁷² about Los Feminicidios, Lourdes Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (2001), effectively persuaded audiences to take altruistic action in the form of generating forums for discussion, donations, and support groups. I also examine the ethical implications of moving viewers to altruistic action, questioning if these actions create opportunities for moral learning that further our understanding of Los Feminicidios. I focus on Portillo's *Señorita Extraviada* (2001) because it was the first documentary to visualize Los Feminicidios. I chose to analyze it because it had wide critical acclaim and is one of the most cited documentaries in studies

⁷² Some of these include: *¡Ni una más! V-Day in Juárez* (2004), *Doble Injusticia-Feminicidio y Tortura en Ciudad Juárez* (2005), *Bajo Juarez* (2006), *Juárez: crims sense resposta* (2006), *On the Edge: The Femicide in Ciudad Juárez* (2006), *La Batalla de las cruces* (2006).

about Los Feminicidios, indicating that academics found its arguments persuasive, valid and well documented. Perhaps the most interesting facet of this documentary is that it was used to raise awareness of issues affecting the US/Mexico border, which resulted in the creation of screening events, the formation of community coalitions and economic support for victims and their families.

A WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

Lourdes Portillo is best known for her Oscar-nominated documentary *Las Madres: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (1985). Indeed, it could be argued her fame as a human rights documentary filmmaker increased the exposure *Señorita Extraviada* received on the festival circuit and at human rights cinematic screenings after she presented the film at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2001. In an explanation of the documentary on her website, Portillo states that in *Señorita Extraviada* she “took on the grisly story of hundreds of kidnapped, raped, and murdered young women of Juárez, Mexico” (Portillo, “Index”). Due to the limited amount of information available to help her research, she “drew upon literary devices of allegory, metaphor and poetry, translating them into visual imagery to create both a profile in courage of the women and their families and a requiem that will outlast the eventual solving of the murders” (Portillo, “Index”). The film received wide recognition, winning various awards, including the Documentary Special Jury Prize at Sundance Film Festival (2002) and Best Mexican Documentary at the Ariel Awards (2003). While on the festival circuit, it was

viewed by audiences “on college campuses, and by civil liberties groups,” in Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, South Africa, and the United States (Portillo, “Films”).⁷³ In the book *Violence and Activism at the Border: Gender, Fear, and Every Day Life in Ciudad Juárez*, Kathleen Staudt explains that *Señorita Extraviada* set the precedent for other documentaries on Los Feminicidios. In Mexico, *Señorita Extraviada* had what Carlos Bonfil, film critic for *La Jornada*, calls “una difusión discreta” (La Jornada, 2002): it was shown at La Muestra de Cine Mexicano de Guadalajara and La Cineteca Nacional in 2002, then in a couple of activist screenings and at some academic events.⁷⁴ On July 15, 2002, Fernanda Familiar showed it on her program “Qué tal Fernanda,” which aired on Sky Cable, in hopes of reaching a wider audience. In general, the documentary was promoted by word of mouth and gained visibility within activist and academic communities.

In contrast to the discreet distribution that *Señorita Extraviada* had in Mexico, in the United States it was part of an extensive marketing campaign for the *POV* series on the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). On August 20, 2002, *Señorita Extraviada* premiered on *POV*, a television program that showcases independent films “with a cumulative audience average of 2.5 million viewers per program, [...] reaching over 15,000 people directly” (PBS, “POV”). Staudt explains that by airing on PBS the documentary was “brought [...] into viewers homes” and “although the film presents no

⁷³ For detailed screening information, see: http://www.lourdesportillo.com/films/films_senorita.php?category=showings&film=senorita

⁷⁴ See <http://www.cimacnoticias.com.mx/noticias/02jul/02072601.html>

gratuitous violence or dead bodies, segments stick in viewers' memories"(89).

Additionally, the documentary was part of a national community engagement campaign to "stimulate a national consciousness on U.S. Mexico border issues, highlighting the rich confluence of cultures as well as the unique responsibilities that we have toward one another as neighbors" (AMDOC, Case Study). *POV* was committed to reaching a wide number of viewers as well as promoting community engagement. Their Communications Department developed and distributed about "8,000 press kits that included press releases, producer fact sheets, and artwork from the films." They also hired "Reyes Entertainment, a top Latino national press firm, to translate [our] materials into Spanish and distribute materials to culture desk editors and bookers that focus on garnering a lion's share of the Latino market" (AMDOC, Case Study). This marketing tactic, including an interactive website, guided materials and community outreach, resulted in 40 screening events across the United States, creating further international publicity for Portillo and drawing attention to Los Feminicidios.⁷⁵

POLITICAL DOCUMENTARY AFFECT

Documentaries, unlike long and short fiction films, present a philosophical conundrum that questions the very idea of truth, reality, and the ability to move people to action. Documentary filmmakers often claim to represent facts to an objective reality, or at the very least capture a social problem in order to tell audiences something that is worth knowing about as "they aspire to reach a wide public in order effect change" (Keen 117). Their filmic representations are often biased, shaped by their subjectivity and

⁷⁵ See Appendix Ref. 8—"Materials provided by *POV*"

arguments. More often than not, documentary filmmakers use techniques such as careful sequence editing, coloring, and splicing specific images with cultural symbols in order to accentuate the emotions of those they represent. John Carter, a widely published scholar of Communication Studies, explains that

in documentaries, images, interviews and commentaries work largely within the terms of display and exposition. Our involvement here is different from the way in which we are spectators to a 'visible fiction.' We may be the addressees of direct spoken address, images may be offered to us as an illustration of explicit propositions, we may be cued to watch sequences as witness to the implicit revelation of more general truths. (243)

The strategic placement of these images, interviews and commentaries promotes the filmmaker's political ideology, and in a way it is what moves viewers to agree with the presented argument, join a cause, exhibit prosocial behavior and feed the suspicion that mainstream media fails to provide a complete picture of the truth, whatever that may be. Moreover, unlike fictional films, documentaries, especially those about social injustice, tend to draw more niche audiences that are educated and may even have backgrounds in public policy, community outreach, and human rights activism.

Señorita Extraviada had great success in the festival circuit as well as in the community outreach *POV* campaign, suggesting that its audience was primarily composed of those heavily involved in documentary film artistry, their communities, and activists or educated people. Most importantly, they were people who made an effort to go see this type of film. This type of audience, in particular, has a set of internalized values (concern for others, awareness of social injustice, etc.) that makes them more

susceptible to experience empathy as a step in the process leading to altruistic action.⁷⁶ It is important to be aware that throughout this analysis I refer specifically to this group: people whose pre-ethical judgments, internalized values, and previous life experiences engaged their emotions and persuaded them of Portillo's argument, thus increasing the possibility of taking real-world action after watching the film.

Portillo does not shy away from visualizing her political ideology in the central narrative of *Señorita Extraviada*. In fact, it shapes the melodramatic story of victims and aggressors, of good against evil. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag states "ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings" (86). Portillo provides an archive of black and white photographs of the dead women, images of Ciudad Juárez, maquilas, police cars, police shields, desert landscapes, Catholic iconography and symbols, such as a shoe, a police shield, and strands of hair, which come to represent the different theories surrounding Los Feminicidios. Furthermore, these images all encapsulate common ideas that, when strategically juxtaposed against such images as filmed testimonies of the victims' surviving family members and experts, newsreel testimonies of the falsely accused culprits, and representatives in governmental agencies and authorities, function to trigger feelings that amplify viewers' responses.

Señorita Extraviada parallels the structure of an unsolved mystery show in which viewers are engaged by a narrative of deceit, abuse, and disbelief through the voice-over

⁷⁶ See Eisenberg, Fabes, and Spinard, "Prosocial Development."

of an omnipresent narrator who provides facts while visual evidence is presented in the way of testimonies, newsreel clips, images of newspaper clippings, and specific objects pertaining to the crime. Additionally, music plays a key role in prompting an empathic reaction from viewers. Corner points out that in documentary films “music is regarded as primarily emotional in its effects, either by way of signaling appropriate levels of emotion, or more indirectly, by providing support for an interiority which cannot itself be visualized or perhaps even spoken (inner life)” (244). The soundtrack for *Señorita Extraviada* was scored by Academy Award winning composer Todd Boekelheide and was written “for piano, a string quartet with double bass, 2 marimbas, brass, percussions, and mixed choir” (Boekelheide, “Documentaries”). The film has four main tracks: *Prelude*, *Ciudad Juarez*, *Voces Sin Echo*, and *Testimony*.⁷⁷ The first is a haunting melody reminiscent of unsolved mystery shows, the second a bustling melody infused by quick marimba beats, the third a bass-heavy and slower version of the second, and the last a melody sung by a choir that sounds like the Gregorian chants that one might hear in a cathedral. The titles of these melodies are fitting descriptions of the type of music and images they accompany. For example, Portillo uses the haunting melody of *Prelude* when showing images of the desert, desolate landscapes, and women on the street, and also whenever she has just finished talking about the government and the police. When she depicts shots of the maquilas or Ciudad Juarez’s busy streets, we hear the fast paced *Ciudad Juarez* and in some cases *Voces Sin Echo*. The last melody, the somber *Testimony*, is used in conjunction with the pictures of the dead girls and frames of black

⁷⁷ To listen to the tracks access: <http://www.tobomusic.com/players/indiv/senorita/index.php>

crosses on pink backgrounds, all images that allude to religious iconography, and again when it functions to “counteract the horror and evil of the crimes” (Portillo, *PBS*, “Ask the Filmmaker”), usually after hearing a testimony, for example. The music appeals to spectators’ emotions and amplifies the effect produced by the testimonies; it may suggest anxiety in the images of maquilas and Ciudad Juárez, and it might even add a spiritual dimension to viewers’ reactions.

As the documentary begins, we hear *Prelude*, its spectral tones accompanying a blurred translucent image of a young woman’s face in front of what appears to be outlines of warehouse buildings. Her ghostly facial profile and the music emotionally cue viewers, foreshadowing the investigative journey that may resolve a crime. Then the title *Señorita Extraviada* appears on the screen in bold white and yellow letters. The word “extraviada” is yellow, bold and underlined, a visual aesthetic gesture to ensure the viewers are aware that the story about to unfold concerns contrasting stories about the missing. Portillo begins to structure her narrative by making her political ideology evident in her voice-overs, presenting the evil players responsible for Los Feminicidios. In the sequence after the opening, the screen shows images of Ciudad Juárez, busy streets, old cars, a shoe, a POV shot observing a girl’s back from toe to head, and dirt roads, before the camera finally pauses on mirage images of girls crossing the street. It fades out to a twilight sunrise or sunset in the desert, and then we hear Portillo’s voice say, “vine a Juárez para presenciar el silencio, y el misterio que rodea a las muertas de cientos de mujeres.” She complements her narration with the testimony of an old woman, and the image on the screen shows a woman facing the screen sitting with whom could be

her grandson on her lap. Then, “Eva Arce, whose daughter was assassinated, testifies about her own abduction as a young woman and being sold to gang rapists by a girl friend for fifteen pesos but fortunately left alive” (Staudt 89). The testimony makes it evident that “violence against women did not begin in 1993” (Staudt 89). We see a shot of Eva writing on a note pad. Portillo resumes her narration, telling us about how when she first arrived in Ciudad Juárez no one wanted to speak to her. She stops narrating and we hear the melody of *Testimonio* as images of black crosses over pink paint, newspaper clippings, a map of Mexico with a focus on Ciudad Juárez, and warehouses fill the screen. Then, abruptly, we see shots of young women and façades of maquilas belonging to American multi-national companies while Portillo says, “para algunos estadounidenses Juárez es el lugar donde todo lo prohibido está disponible, para los mexicanos es un hogar y el lugar donde trabajan.” The contrast between the images and sounds in this sequence may prompt viewers to immediately begin to associate the pictures of women as the victims and maquilas as aggressors; Portillo further develops this theory later in the film when depicting the case of a maquila worker, Sagrario, who goes missing after having several model-like pictures taken by the maquila where she worked.

In the essay “Searching for Accountability on the Border: Justice for the Women of Ciudad Juárez,” Christina Iturralde, a lawyer at the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Educational Fund, explains that Portillo “expounds on the possibility that these corporations, at least at a managerial level, might in fact have more involvement in supporting the possible web of actors at play in these murders that one might assume” (254). In fact, Portillo certainly does not shy away from suggesting that the women are

victims of the evil oppression, complicity and infrastructure brought on by NAFTA and the maquila industry. To further accentuate the innocence and victimhood of the dead girls, Portillo chooses to depict the government as a collaborative villain in complicity with the maquilas and their own corrupt officials. She portrays the government as ineffective, and subsequently evil. It is important to consider what Portillo may imply by evil in this case, as it has come to mean multiple things up to this point. In the book *The Life and Death Debate: Moral Issues of Our Time*, theologians J.P. Moreland and Norman L. Geisler argue that

to permit murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have hindered it is an evil. To watch an act of cruelty to children without trying to intervene is morally inexcusable. In brief, not resisting evil is an evil of omission, and an evil of omission can be just as evil as an evil of commission. Any man who refuses to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally. (135)

Therefore evil, in this case, is the result of an omission, the authorities' lack of action to protect its citizens. In two scenes that appear almost sequentially within the first fifteen minutes of the documentary, Portillo incorporates two news clips with interviews of the governor, Francisco Barrio, and the Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua, Jorge López. In the clip of Barrio's interview, viewers witness him saying: "Se ha encontrado un patrón muy parecido. Las muchachas se mueven en ciertos lugares, con ciertos tipos de gente, y entran en confianza con clientes o gentes de bandas, que luego se convierten en sus agresores." Portillo opposes Barrio's comment with her account of feminist groups taking to the streets to protest his comments and sarcastically stating that the Attorney General of the State of Chihuahua, Jorge López "propuso una curiosa solución." As the

camera fades out from the image of feminists protesting, a small zócalo decorated with election banners takes its place. As a male voice states “que la comunidad aplicará un toque de queda,” there is a fade out, and then viewers see Jorge López sitting against a black backdrop facing a reporter that viewers cannot see. This positioning in a sense has the Attorney General talking to us, as if we were the ones interviewing him. When asked by the reporter how an enforced curfew would work, considering that a city like Ciudad Juarez depends on the industry of maquiladoras and that many women start work at 5 or 6 in the morning, often ending their shifts at midnight, the Attorney General sits back in his chair, scorns, moves uncomfortably and says:

bueno, creo es cuestión de verlo, claro que al que tiene que trabajar no se le puede imponer eso, pero vamos haciéndolo con el resto que sí podemos. Y el que va a trabajar, bueno es muy claro la ropa que lleva el que va a trabajar—como viste el que va a trabajar—y es muy claro eso.

There is an awkward silence, and then the eerie melody of *Prelude* plays again as Portillo juxtaposes López’s statement with the images of a maquila uniform half buried in the desert and a black work shoe, suggesting that the dead women, contrary to what Lopez had implied, were dressed for work. Thus, Portillo effectively subverts these authority figures, discrediting them and creating doubt in their ability to resolve the situation by showing images that reveal the hypocrisy – intentional or unintentional- in their statements.

To further exemplify the inefficiency of the government, Portillo also includes news clips showing Sharif, the first main suspect of Los Feminicidios, giving his version of the events, as well as clips of reporters talking about Sharif’s arrest. There is a voice-

over of a male reporter explaining that the government hoped Sharif would be identified from that point on as the rapist and killer of the women. The image of Sharif entering a police vehicle fades out, and a sequence of pictures of crosses and women walking on the street fills the screen as Portillo's voice-over says that, despite Sharif's arrest, the killings continued. After a ten-second sequence of pictures of the victims, Irene Blanco, Sharif's defense lawyer, appears onscreen and questions how her client could have been considered guilty if the killings continued.⁷⁸ Blanco's testimony allows viewers to consider the possibility that the judicial system framed her client and Portillo supports her claim using two key news clips. In one, Ramon Galindo, Mayor of Ciudad Juarez, takes credit for a raid to capture the new killers, claiming that Sharif paid these eight people, known as Los Rebeldes, \$1000 pesos to kill women. A few scenes later, after more testimonies from family members and a sequence of images of the Virgin of Guadalupe, an altar, and other religious allusions accompanied by the religious tones of *Testimonio*, Portillo presents a news clip reporting a third set of killers, Los Choferes, who were denounced by a woman they left alive after having raped her. Again, the government claims that Sharif was the mastermind behind the killings, except this time he paid them \$1200 dollars. Portillo discredits the government's argument against Sharif by presenting this story in fragments. This technique allows her to contrast it to the testimonies of the families, and especially to the testimony of Sharif's lawyer. Portillo pieces together for the viewer the perspective that Sharif's imprisonment is rather farcical because it is

⁷⁸ As mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 1 the accusation of Sharif as the mastermind of Los Feminicidios created wide polemic. See Sergio González Rodríguez (2002) and Victor Ronquillo (1999).

probable that the government, in its attempt to wash its hands of any responsibility, used him as a scapegoat. The narrative construct leaves viewers with this conclusion about Sharif and the government's role in his imprisonment. We must agree with Portillo, otherwise we would be ignoring the presented evidence from news clips of governmental officials, Sharif, Los Rebeldes, and Los Choferes.

Portillo also crafts her melodrama of good versus evil by providing opportunities for viewers to empathize with good, in this case, the surviving victims and family members. One of the techniques Portillo uses to ensure this identification happens is to depict these people individually. She positions them face forward to the camera. This placement permits audiences a clear view of the people's faces and their facial expressions, thus creating the opportunity for viewers to read into their affects, as well as creating a greater opportunity for viewers to empathize with and have sympathy for them. Moreover, these testimonies accentuate the dire circumstances lived by these people, the impotence they feel, and the incongruencies of a judicial system that is supposed to help them, all the while appealing to the viewer's ethical affect of justice and possibly even producing frustration.

Furthermore, Portillo seems to differentiate, through the careful placement of the testimonies, the good from the evil, thus suggesting that the good are the victims and their families, those who choose to denounce the killings, who do something to try to solve the crimes, who take matters into their own hands, whereas the bad are not only the actual killers, but also part of the Mexican government's web of interests, those who do seem not care, who do not talk about the killings, who do not investigate the crimes. In

order to illustrate my point I will provide two examples of fragmented testimonies, those of Eva and María, which are strategically placed between the sequences to illustrate both the government and the judicial system's incompetence.

As previously mentioned, we meet Eva in the opening testimony of *Señorita Extraviada*. Portillo places snippets of Eva's testimony throughout the film so as to emphasize how, when faced with an unresponsive judicial system; Silvia's mother must take matters into her own hands. A fragment of Eva's testimony follows a clip about Sharif and Los Rebeldes and a sequence of pictures of some of the victims and the desert. First we hear Eva's voice as a picture of her daughter fills the screen. Then there is a fade-out and a shot of a nightclub as Eva tells spectators that her daughter sold makeup to dancers. The night of her disappearance she had gone to collect payment from some of them. We then see Eva for the second time.



Figure 1: Eva tells viewers the dancers refused to help her.

This freeze-frame of Eva's facial expressions cues viewers and may lead them to empathize with her testimony. In her facial expressions, some viewers may read clues for

emotions such as melancholia, apprehension, and even anger. Their reading of her facial affects, as stated in previous chapters, all depends on what viewers empathize with based on their own pre-ethical and previous life experiences. For some viewers the emotional familiarity of her expression may draw upon their previous life experiences, or as Sontag says a “sense of the present and immediate past” (85). Additionally, Eva’s avoidance of looking directly at the camera suggests a certain level of pain that does not allow her to make eye contact with the camera, thus adding a layer of pathos in her testimony.

Whatever viewers draw from Eva’s facial expressions and subsequently feel, these sentiments are amplified by listening to Eva say: “unas bailarinas me dijeron que no iban a hablar, que iban a hablar en contra de Silvia porque a ellas no les convenía decir la verdad porque estaban amenazadas.” The fact that Portillo chose to show a shot of Eva for this part of her testimony, instead of showing images like she did when Eva narrates her daughter’s disappearance, suggests that by doing so she had a greater chance of appealing to the viewer’s emotions while at the same time illustrating how even the police are ineffective. The viewers witness how it is Eva who must go talk to the strippers in the hope that they may tell information that leads to her daughter.

As further evidence of how the mothers of the victims have been doing the government’s job, Portillo provides even more clips of Eva in later fragments. In these segments, Eva narrates that, after being told by Suly Ponce, the Head of the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Women’s Homicides, that there were no further lines of inquiry to keep Silvia’s murder file open, she decided to do her own research. Then she explains how she brought the police a notebook with names, and a possible lead of a woman

named Chatanelle who “facilitaba encuentros para la PGR,” but that nothing was done because the police were part of the same judicial group as the PGR. In other words, viewers are presented with testimonial evidence that the girls are missing because the police are also involved in their abuse.

Perhaps in order to keep viewers emotionally invested in the victims’ families and to accentuate the inefficiency of the judicial branch of the government, Portillo alternates clips of Eva’s testimony with clips of María. Maria tells viewers how one day she called the police because there was a problem with her neighbors, but that the police decided to arrest all of them unless they paid a \$250 peso bribe. María was incarcerated by the police and subsequently raped by a policeman and a man known as El Diablo, who seemed to be well-known at the police station.

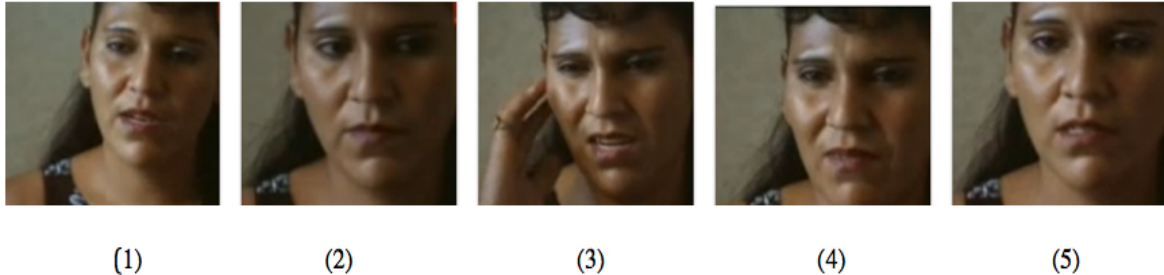


Figure 2: The sequence illustrating freeze-frames of María’s facial expressions while she explains how a policeman and El Diablo raped her.

A careful observation of these film stills not only reveals how María is affected by retelling the story, but also provides an affective map that allows viewers to further identify the authorities as evil. Some viewers may read expressions of nostalgia, avoidance, anxiety, disgust, guilt, pain, sadness, and distress.

Compared to Eva's affects, María's seem to be connected to memories she is recalling and reliving. In frames 2, 3, and 4 María is telling spectators, "el policía me tomaba muy feo, me ultrajaba, y me apretaba y yo, pues, llorando." In frame 2 María is looking at the lower left corner, as if she were embarrassed by what happened in that cell, while at the same time her grimace may indicate that emotionally she was in that jail reliving the events of that day. Her facial expression does not show positive affects such as joy or surprise; rather, her sternness may lead spectators to perceive a certain feeling of disgust, anger or apprehension. In frame 4, there is no doubt that her expression shows negative affect—the frown, the squint in her eyes, and her hand on the side of her face all indicate that she is distressed, thus suggesting a desire to reverse the cause of her hurt. Some viewers might be able to feel empathy with her pain and at the same time sympathy for her situation. This feeling is then reinforced by María's expression of anger and disgust in frame 4. These three freeze-frames show the most emotion, and are a stark contrast to frames 1 and 5. In these frames María's facial expressions may hint at signs of depression and perhaps even a certain resignation turned into hopeless indifference.

In later clips of María's testimony, we learn that she accused her aggressors and sought justice, resulting in the detention of three men and one woman, but Portillo's narrative voice clarifies for the viewers that "los policías que violaron a María nunca fueron condenados." By capturing the consequences of the judicial system's ineffectiveness and lack of responsibility regarding Los Feminicidios, Portillo allows viewers to condemn the government's judicial branch as evil. This injustice may lead viewers to further empathize with and feel sympathy for María. Again, not all viewers will have the same

collective memory or reactions to the images in the film up to this point, but the plethora of images Portillo shows cement the story in viewers minds: Los Feminicidios are a constant occurrence; they will continue to happen unless we choose to pressure the government to responsibly investigate the crimes; we cannot sit still and be witness to such atrocity; we must take action.

Señorita Extraviada's melodrama succeeds in moving viewers to identify with the good (the victims, the families, the experts), and condemn the evil (the authorities and governmental agencies), as well as to promote Portillo's political ideology. However, we must question what happens after we are persuaded to condemn the government. How do we carry on the message to create real world altruistic action? What happens once viewers have been persuaded? Do they take the initiative and mobilize? Do they join the cause because they find it impossible to stand by passively? Do viewers reflect on their reactions and then effect meaningful action that might inspire others to create change? In the next section I evaluate the aforementioned national campaign launched by PBS's series *POV* in the United States in order to try to respond to some of these inquiries.

GUIDED ALTRUISTIC ACTION

The *POV* campaign, which sought to encourage people to organize screening events, resulted in a total of forty viewings in the United States. This mobilization suggests that at the very least *Señorita Extraviada* moved forty people to organize these screenings for their communities. These events consisted of screening Portillo's film, in some cases holding a Q&A session with the director and other activists, and often created

discussions focused on intercultural links between the United States and Mexico that often extended past the allotted time for debate.

In many instances the communities formed coalitions to support the victims' families, to protest the killings of women in Ciudad Juarez, to donate money to Casa Amiga to help raise awareness and build support systems in Mexico, and to write letters to President Bush, which, in effect, “create[d] guerilla street theatre about the murders and organize[d] local components of a national campaign of protests to bring awareness to the situation” (AMDOC, Case Study). For example, in Houston the TV network KUHT in collaboration with the Houston Area Women’s Center, Nuestra Palabra, and the Hispanic Women In Leadership held a screening of the film for fifty people that became overcrowded. Estela Jones, who served as KUHT’s Outreach Coordinator reports:

Attendees were glued to the screen. We anticipated and prepared for 50 people and were extremely pleased to have to set up chairs for the overflow as another two-dozen or more individuals arrived. The screening/discussion extended past the two-hour allotment, with attendees clustering in small groups afterwards to continue their own private discussions. Representatives included, Latino community leaders, FBI-Houston, Independent School Districts, activists such as Cissy Farenthold, and concerned individuals from the community. *Señorita Extraviada* was also chosen as HoustonPBS' Encore [*sic*], which offers viewers the opportunity to select their favorite show of that week for rebroadcast. (AMDOC, Case Study)

This event later yielded two coalitions committed to raising awareness and economically supporting the victim’s families. In San Antonio, the screening at the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center was followed by a post-screening panel discussion with Portillo, Elvira Arriola, an activist for Women on the Border, Patricia Castillo, an activist for the P.E.A.C.E Initiative, and Lisa Sánchez González from the University of Texas at Austin.

Additionally the center had an open forum where audience members could record “Talking Back Video Letters.”⁷⁹ The Art Escuela Coordinator for the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center at the time, Vicki Grise, reported on the event:

About 250 people attended our screening; with more being turned away...this event really galvanized our community to pool our resources so we can protest this atrocity. Our screening spurred two additional screenings in town and for the rest of the month our phone was ringing off the hook from other community organizations in southern Texas that wanted to screen the film. Due to the incredible success of our event, our youth were further inspired to create guerilla street theatre about the murders and organize local components of a national campaign or protest to bring awareness to the situation. (AMDOC, Case Study)

In this instance, the Esperanza Peace and Justice screenings may have been successful because of the increased level of post-viewing interaction with Portillo and the activists in an environment where prosocial action was encouraged, thus creating a pleasant, encouraging experience that may have given everyone present hope that change was possible. Attendees spoke about the documentary to other people provoking a domino effect. The key here was the way these discussions capitalized subjective opinions and mobilized them. In this case people were watching and discussing together, rather than alone on TV, in a movie theater or reading a book by themselves. Talking about the issues with others right after watching the documentary cemented a collective impulse to act. In a sense it was like peer pressure –since the activist was right there and others were exited by it, thus, individuals became enthusiastic and joined the cause. This excitement over the film prompted other community centers to organize screening events for the film, thus suggesting that simply seeing a social documentary is not enough, and that the

⁷⁹ Talking Back Video Letters to *POV* invites viewers to weigh in on their opinions, these reactions may later appear in a nationally broadcasted “Talking Back” segment on *POV*.

experience should be guided by discussions that provide interactive opportunities for people to learn how altruistic actions matter to the people in need of help.

Although the *POV* campaigns did lead to altruistic responses and to some degree generated enough hype for events to be organized around the country, this success was not sustainable. The film and the subsequent discussion may have generated much excitement regarding the possibility of change, yet it is unlikely that these events had a permanent effect in the attendees, or that they shifted the perceptions of violence against women in the communities where the documentary was screened. In part this may have been because the campaign had very short-term oriented goals. In order to permanently continue to challenge attitudes that perpetuate violence against women, community centers and activists need to commit to organizing discussions about violence on a regular basis, consistently providing opportunities for reflective judgments. These kinds of commitments are often difficult to uphold, especially when there is a lack of funding and people become preoccupied with their day-to-day needs. Furthermore, we must question precisely what happened to those communities that vouched economic support by donating to Casa Amiga, especially once Ester Chavez was accused of embezzling the funds intended for victims' families. What happened to those guerilla theatre troops? Did community centers continue to encourage discussions about violence against women after their screening events? In all likelihood, the focus of the communities shifted after the hype died down, and Los Feminicidios may have become part of an ugly collective memory, something that only happens in Mexico because the Mexican government allows it to happen.

In order to ground these speculations we can argue that the discussions about *Señorita Extraviada* sponsored by the *POV* campaign were centered on helping the victims' families, on how the government was not doing its job, on taking action and creating citizen coalitions to help families and NGOs to raise awareness, and talking about US/Mexico border issues. These topics helped visualize Los Feminicidios in the United States and they also mimicked the lines of discussion of researchers and activists in Mexico introducing these more critical theories to be considered by people who may have never before had the opportunity to assess them. Granted, blaming the government for failing to protect its citizens' rights and also denouncing the active role of the maquila industry in Los Feminicidios are ultimately two sides of the same coin, which arguably may limit lines of reflection. However, at a very basic level, discussing these theories after viewing them enacted on the screen and condemned as evil opens the possibility of understanding the violence of the woman killings as the result of not pressuring the government to step up to its responsibility. Seeing *Señorita Extraviada* and having a discussion might also illustrate that activism on Los Feminicidios reached an impasse: Activists, researchers and families demanded action, so the government would establish a special task force. Then activists and special human rights groups would demand further responsibility, but the government established laws without any commitment to enforce them, and so the cycle continues to repeat itself to this day.

The aforementioned topics of discussion not only promote the possibility of gaining an understanding about how the social and political mechanisms promote an

ethos of impunity for violence, but they also present an opportunity for moral learning.

According to Lara, in *Narrating Evil*, this type of learning

can only occur when we are subject to a public dialogue through open debate, where our judgments are permanently challenged and revised [...] it is through these public deliberations that we realize that every historical atrocity always brings something new that needs to be understood about the ways we inflict human cruelty. (165)

If viewers with deeply altruistic values understand this deadlock then they would gain further moral understanding that the only way to shift perceptions is to take responsibility for their own contributions to the perpetuation of Los Feminicidios and to continue to talk about Los Feminicidios in order to get other people thinking about the attitudes that allow such crimes to go unnoticed.

These types of discussions may be hard to create especially if we were to suggest we should assume responsibility for partially contributing to the killings. When we consider that the *modus operandi* in Mexico's public sphere is for the Church and the NGOs to be responsible for the moral interventions of citizens, the possibility to have these types of discussions might even seem unlikely. Nevertheless, Lara explains that

by exploring the difficulties that arise in our quest for moral learning, we might become conscious of the contradictory aspects of human action and narratives that come after them. If instead, of believing that it is possible to erase evil actions from our human world, we allow ourselves to change the way we understand human actions, through the specificities of all historical atrocities, and point out the subtle and difficult ways humans still find new method to cause harm to others, we might be able to dispel a maelstrom of ciphers. (168)

If we were to openly and publicly discuss topics such as these, to share our own empathic experiences and subsequent reflective judgments in open forums, we could unravel our

own role and attitudes in relationship to the social and political mechanisms that allow such atrocities to happen and possibly be able to change political paradigms. Perhaps only then, we can form reflective judgments that will contribute to our moral and emotional learning, which, with time and critical discussions, will allow us to construct a new understanding of our responsibility in engaging in prosocial behavior. Only then, by contrasting our personal subjective understandings with those of others, will we permanently change our collective paradigms and attitudes and subsequently shape more ethical collective memories.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation is a case study about the cultural production produced to visualize Los Feminicidios in Mexico. It has stressed the importance of creating an approach that considers both pathos (emotions) and logos (thoughts) as a way of understanding our ethos (attitudes) of violence. This study set out to determine how, by combining pathos and logos in the analysis of a cultural text, we can break through the theoretical impasse, which thus far has resulted in exceptionalisms such as subaltern subjects, colonial condition, identity politics, disposable people, and sexual minorities. These epistemic forms of analyses have been limited to categorizing as evil the social and political mechanisms that may cause this violence. My approach drew upon Aristotle's influential *Nicomachean Ethics*, Victoria Camps' *El gobierno de las emociones* (2011), María Pía Lara's *Narrating Evil* (2007), and socio-political interpretations, research on neuroscience, empathy and neurohumanism in order to explore what it means to have a pathos-infused understanding of ethos.

This study contributes to the already existing works about this gendered violence by analyzing narratives about Los Feminicidios through this pathos-infused lens. It adds the central focus that an appeal to emotions and the imagination may play a part in triggering ethical behavior and possibly produce a shift in the treatment and attitudes towards these crimes. In a more general perspective it also suggests that narratives about violence not only tell a story by exploiting the topic as a form of catharsis, but also that these cultural texts are opportunities in and of themselves for readers and viewers to empathize with characters and their situations, to try on diverse moral personas in order

to practice how we would react to violent actions. This practice provides insight into our potentialities for violence that transmute into reflective judgments, which ultimately teach us how to govern our emotions, helping us to identify what feelings to experience in given situations and avoiding acting out in the impulse of an emotion. This pathos-infused interdisciplinary approach to narrative has found that, although reflective judgments may occur at a subjective level, if we were to share our reflections about narratives in group settings, such as classrooms, book clubs, blog postings and screening events we could create critical debates that inundate the public sphere force us to reevaluate our own social, political and ethical paradigms.

These discussions are opportunities for moral learning in which we are able to challenge our attitudes towards violence. As this study has shown, when we think about evil we equate it to the atrocities and cruelty humans inflict upon other humans. We tend to think about evil as something outside of ourselves, as something we cannot neither understand nor control. These opportunities for moral learning, can help us evaluate our own role in perpetuating deeply rooted beliefs that base themselves on the fatalistic idea of evil and redefine our notions of violence not on the act itself, but rather on the motivations behind it, which imply ethical, political, moral and cognitive processes.

We must also consider the possibility that there might be resistance to discussing violence. In particular if we were to suggest that we are partially responsible for contributing to the killings, implying that we like the aggressors have a potentiality for evil. For example, the NGOs and activists have consistently insisted that the way the Mexican government acts with impunity is evil, but we could also argue that the desire of

NGOs, victims' families and activists for prosocial action is evil in that they have contributed to the creation of further license for the Mexican government to callously stop being responsible for protecting its citizens' basic right to live. By doing the government's job, these entities also augment the government's lack of engagement with the violence suffered by its citizens, as proven by the continued killings of women and the state-endorsed War on Drugs. Some may claim this is a radical example, but the reflectiveness in this exercise only further supports the idea that in order to shift our moral perspective that fatalistically classifies some people as good as some as evil requires a drastic effort in understanding by involving the capacity to imagine different outcomes. We all have the potentiality to harm others to the point of depriving them the basic right to life. As shocking as it may be for each of us to think that we all play a part in Los Feminicidios, what may be more telling of our complicity in atrocity is our lack of ethical engagement and refusal to explore the variety of motives for acting out in thoughtlessness, callousness, rage, ignorance, sadism, hatred, hurt or limited care.

Although this dissertation is a form of activism denouncing our lack of engagement and responsibility in Los Feminicidios, we must consider its speculative limitation. In order to understand the emotive and thought process of some who has done something unimaginable, requires a leap in imagination, and a conscious understanding of our empathic process that may only work in theory. Many of us are unaware as to how empathy can provide us the knowledge to understand our emotions. We blame others, especially those agents in power as acting out of self-interest, without thinking about the common good, but we fail to realize that we also exhibit these attitudes in particular

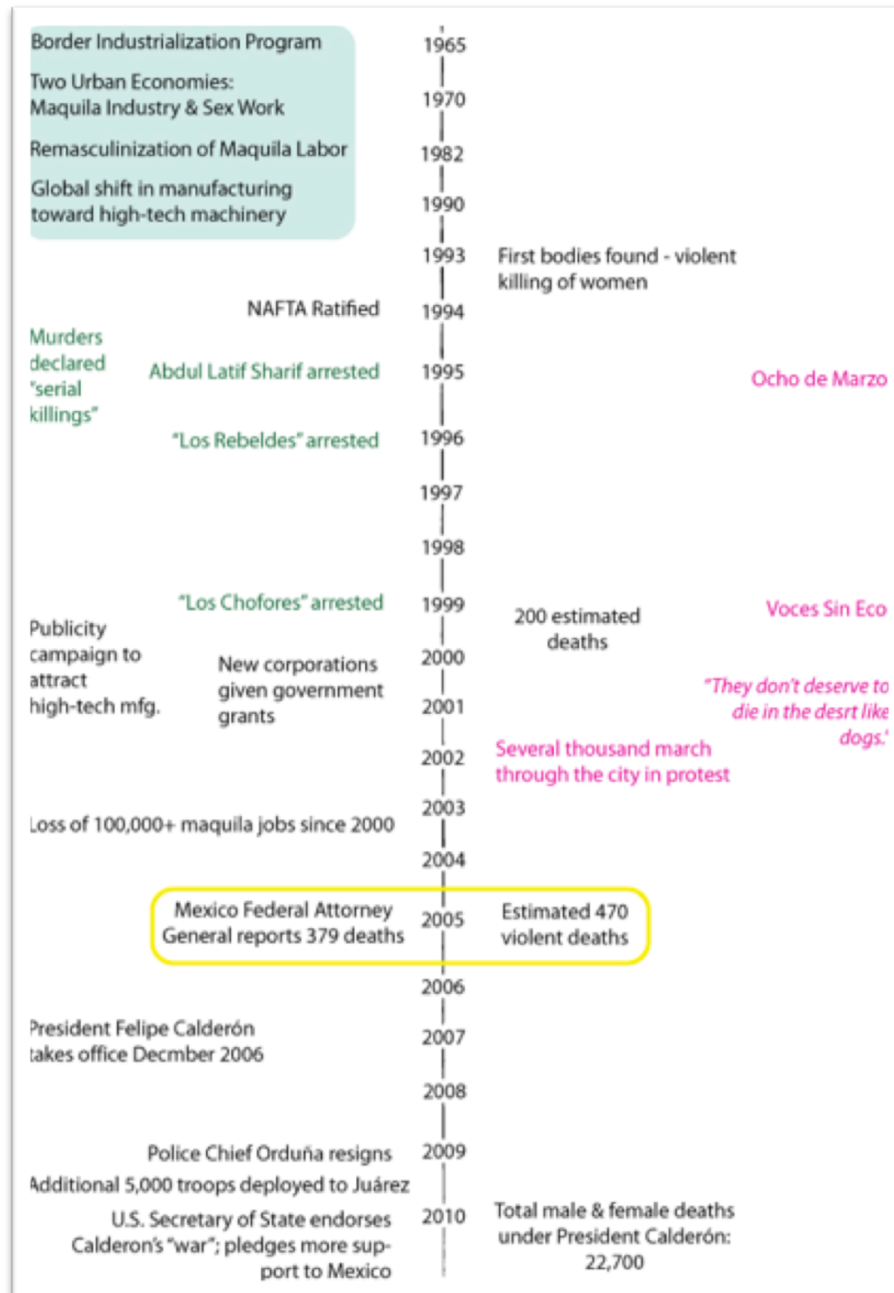
situations. We are often accomplices in atrocity because we are too consumed by the trivialities of our day-to-day lives to care about respecting humans, making us as unethical and bigoted as those we condemn. However, how can we hold people particularly preoccupied with surviving on a daily basis morally accountable for the suffering of others?

Our failure to understand how our moral value system is defined in terms of engaging in charity, abstaining from vice, being frugal and meek, and imposing self-discipline, limits our capacity for social change. These virtues presuppose that we are capable of controlling our desires even in the most extreme circumstance, but this expectation is unrealistic, as we often see violence as glamorous and more appealing. After all, why should we worry about being good, when we can act out to instantly gratify our desires, even if that means hurting another human being. In this era of social networking and interconnectedness we must promote a social accountability that at the very least does not tolerate hurting another human by denouncing postings promoting bigotry, hatred, thoughtlessness, sexism, and racism. The recent case of fashion designer John Galiano's anti-Semitic remarks and subsequent social outcry, tweets promoting homophobic remarks and subsequent responses to inform and educate, are indicative that we have started holding ourselves accountable suggesting a slow shift in paradigms that promote hurting others. However, further work needs to be done to diminish the current trend of humans hurting humans in Mexico and the rest of the world. We will succeed, if we link diverse theoretical approaches to specific, concrete examples of how violence is

normalized, how we are also accomplices in atrocity, and provide opportunities for reflective judgment within the public sphere.

Appendix

Ref. 1-Chronology of Los Feminicidios



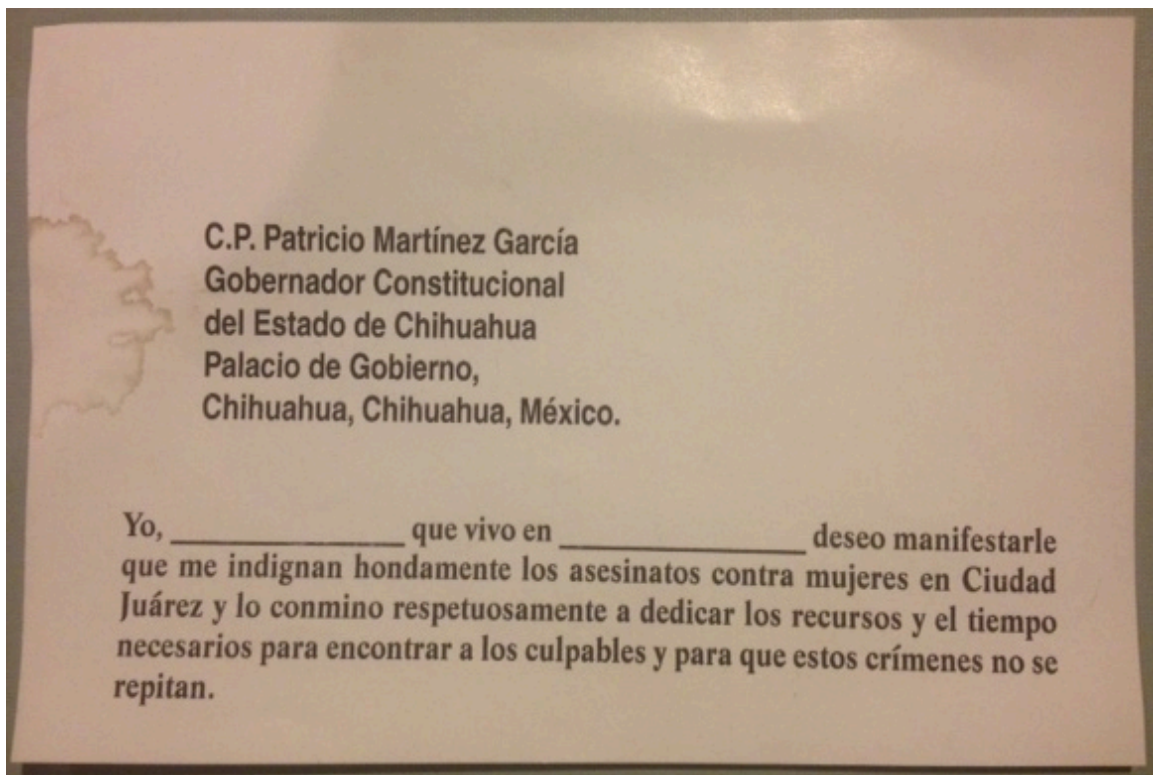
Source: *Crisis Juárez*. <<http://crisisjuarez.wordpress.com/category/uncategorized/>>

Ref. 2- Collected Hypotheses on Los Feminicidios

Anexo	
<i>Hipótesis sobre la autoría de los asesinatos</i>	<i>Fuentes/emisores de las hipótesis</i>
Crimen organizado	
1. Tráfico de órganos	Autoridades/periodistas/testimonios de la ciudadanía
2. Pornografía sádica <i>snuff</i> (política del miedo)	Periodistas/comunidad académica e intelectuales/testimonios de la ciudadanía
3. Mensajes del narco a las autoridades	Líderes de la comunidad/comunidad académica e intelectuales
4. Ejecuciones relacionadas con el narco	Periodistas/comunidad académica e intelectuales
5. Venganzas entre las bandas	Periodistas/comunidad académica e intelectuales/testimonios de la ciudadanía/Iglesia católica
6. Complicidad de policías	Periodistas/testimonios de la ciudadanía/ Iglesia católica (algunos sectores)/agencias de inteligencia
7. Selección de víctimas mediante catálogos de fotografías de trabajadoras de maquila	Cineastas/familiares de asesinadas
8. Crear un clima de inseguridad para apuntalar una cultura del terror	Periodistas/comunidad académica e intelectuales/organismos internacionales
9. Beneficiar a familias oligárquicas de la zona	Periodistas/agencias de inteligencia/testimonios de la ciudadanía
Patologías psíquicas y sociales	
10. Raptos hechos por <i>juniors</i> para orgías	Cineastas/dramaturgos/testimonios de la ciudadanía/familiares de las asesinadas
11. Ritos satánicos para sacrificar mujeres	Iglesia evangélica/periodistas/comunidad académica e intelectuales/funcionarios de gobierno
12. Crímenes por imitación	Agencias de inteligencia/funcionarios de gobierno/policía
13. La naturaleza de los hombres	Testimonios de la ciudadanía/líderes de la comunidad
14. Orgías de magnates	Agencias de inteligencia/testimonios de la ciudadanía/Iglesia evangélica
15. Crímenes pasionales	Funcionarios de gobierno/policía
16. Venganzas entre familias	Agencias de inteligencia/policía
17. Asesinos seriales provenientes de Estados Unidos	Agencias de inteligencia/testimonios de la ciudadanía
18. Fetichismo	Policía/periodismo
Hipótesis sociológicas y de género	
19. Recelo masculino por la competencia laboral	Comunidad académica/ intelectuales/periodistas/testimonios de la ciudadanía
20. Aumento de la presencia de las mujeres en los espacios públicos (visión crítica)	Comunidad académica
21. Defensa del patriarcado ante la amenaza del crecimiento de la influencia femenina	Comunidad académica/ intelectuales
22. Misoginia	Periodistas/comunidad académica/intelectuales/partidos políticos
23. Racismo	Comunidad académica/organismos internacionales/testimonios de la ciudadanía
24. Proyecto de reducir la inmigración sureña	Comunidad académica/Iglesia católica/líderes comunitarios
Crímenes de Estado	
25. Falta o ineficiencia de servicios públicos y pobreza	Líderes comunitarios/partidos políticos/comunidad académica/funcionarios/organismos internacionales
26. Clima de impunidad	Empresarios/comunidad académica/líderes comunitarios/periodistas
27. Falta de planeación y prevención	Líderes comunitarios/comunidad académica
Punto de vista moral/ cristiano	
28. Pérdida de los valores morales	Iglesia católica/Iglesia evangélica
29. Vestimenta femenina	Testimonios de la ciudadanía/funcionarios/escuelas de enseñanza media/Iglesias
30. Uso de espacios no propios para mujeres	Empresarios/policías/funcionarios/Iglesias/partidos políticos
31. Relajamiento del pudor femenino	Iglesias/partidos políticos/testimonios de la ciudadanía
32. Desintegración familiar	Iglesias/periodistas/partidos políticos

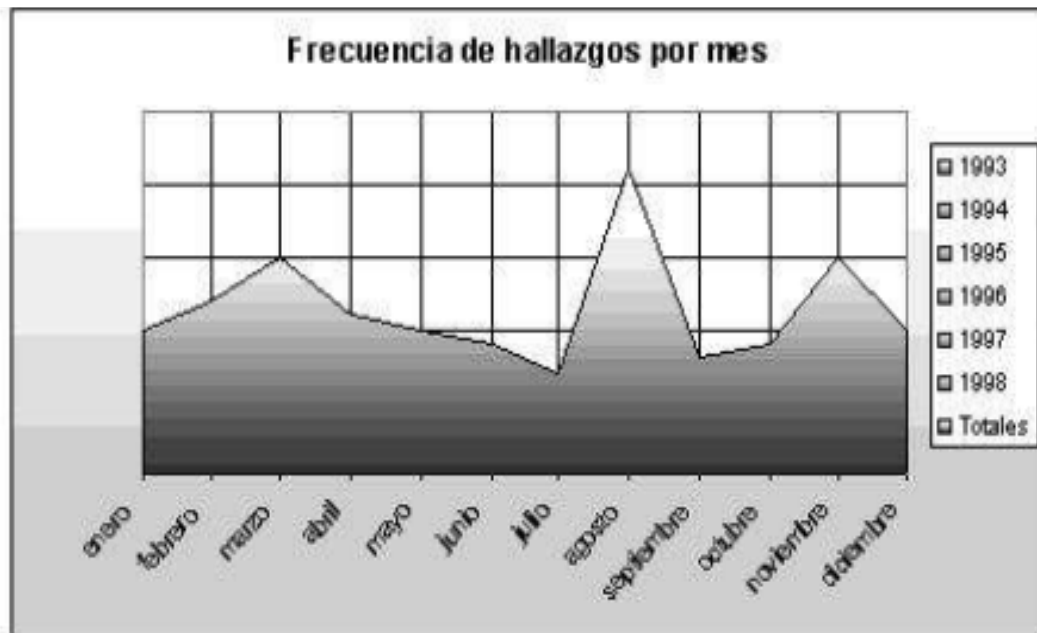
Source: Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba, Patricia Ravelo Blancas. "La Batalla de las Cruces: Los crímenes contra mujeres en la frontera y sus interpretes" *Desencantos*, Fall 2003: 122-133. Print.

Ref. 3-Postcard included in *El silencio de la voz que todas quiebra*



Source: Benítez, Rhory, et al. *El Silencio Que La Voz De Todas Quiebra: Mujeres Y Víctimas De Ciudad Juárez*. Ed. A.C, AZAR. 1st ed. Chihuahua 1999. Print.

Ref. 4- Monthly Distribution of Crimes



Lugares de localización de los cuerpos.

Source: Benítez, Rhory, et al. *El Silencio Que La Voz De Todas Quiebra: Mujeres Y Víctimas De Ciudad Juárez*. Ed. A.C, AZAR. 1st ed. Chihuahua 1999. Print.

Ref. 5-Articles 1, 5, 9 11 of the Mexican Constitution:

ARTICULO 1: EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS TODO INDIVIDUO GOZARA DE LAS GARANTIAS QUE OTORGA ESTA CONSTITUCION, LAS CUALES NO PODRAN RESTRINGIRSE NI SUSPENDERSE, SINO EN LOS CASOS Y CON LAS CONDICIONES QUE ELLA MISMA ESTABLECE.

ESTA PROHIBIDA LA ESCLAVITUD EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS MEXICANOS. LOS ESCLAVOS DEL EXTRANJERO QUE ENTREN AL TERRITORIO NACIONAL ALCANZARAN, POR ESTE SOLO HECHO, SU LIBERTAD Y LA PROTECCION DE LAS LEYES.

(ADICIONADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 14 DE AGOSTO DEL 2001)

QUEDA PROHIBIDA TODA DISCRIMINACION MOTIVADA POR ORIGEN ETNICO O NACIONAL, EL GENERO, LA EDAD, LAS DISCAPACIDADES, LA CONDICION SOCIAL, LAS CONDICIONES DE SALUD, LA RELIGION, LAS OPINIONES, LAS PREFERENCIAS, EL ESTADO CIVIL O CUALQUIER OTRA QUE ATENTE CONTRA

LA DIGNIDAD HUMANA Y TENGA POR OBJETO ANULAR O MENOSCABAR LOS DERECHOS Y LIBERTADES DE LAS PERSONAS.
(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO, PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 04 DE DICIEMBRE DEL 2006)

ARTICULO 5o.- A NINGUNA PERSONA PODRA IMPEDIRSE QUE SE DEDIQUE A LA PROFESION, INDUSTRIA, COMERCIO O TRABAJO QUE LE ACOMODE, SIENDO LICITOS. EL EJERCICIO DE ESTA LIBERTAD SOLO PODRA VEDARSE POR DETERMINACION JUDICIAL, CUANDO SE ATAQUEN LOS DERECHOS DE TERCERO, O POR RESOLUCION GUBERNATIVA, DICTADA EN LOS TERMINOS QUE MARQUE LA LEY, CUANDO SE OFENDAN LOS DERECHOS DE LA SOCIEDAD. NADIE PUEDE SER PRIVADO DEL PRODUCTO DE SU TRABAJO, SINO POR RESOLUCION JUDICIAL.
(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974)

LA LEY DETERMINARA EN CADA ESTADO CUALES SON LAS PROFESIONES QUE NECESITAN TITULO PARA SU EJERCICIO, LAS CONDICIONES QUE DEBAN LLENARSE PARA OBTENERLO Y LAS AUTORIDADES QUE HAN DE EXPEDIRLO.
(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974. MODIFICADO POR LA REIMPRESION DE LA CONSTITUCION, PUBLICADA EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 6 DE OCTUBRE DE 1986)

NADIE PODRA SER OBLIGADO A PRESTAR TRABAJOS PERSONALES SIN LA JUSTA RETRIBUCION Y SIN SU PLENO CONSENTIMIENTO, SALVO EL TRABAJO IMPUESTO COMO PENA POR LA AUTORIDAD JUDICIAL, EL CUAL SE AJUSTARA A LO DISPUESTO EN LAS FRACCIONES I Y II DEL ARTICULO 123.
(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974)

EN CUANTO A LOS SERVICIOS PUBLICOS, SOLO PODRAN SER OBLIGATORIOS, EN LOS TERMINOS QUE ESTABLEZCAN LAS LEYES RESPECTIVAS, EL DE LAS ARMAS Y LOS JURADOS, ASI COMO EL DESEMPEÑO DE LOS CARGOS CONCEJILES Y LOS DE ELECCION POPULAR, DIRECTA O INDIRECTA. LAS FUNCIONES ELECTORALES Y CENSALES TENDRAN CARACTER OBLIGATORIO Y GRATUITO, PERO SERAN RETRIBUIDAS AQUELLAS QUE SE REALICEN PROFESIONALMENTE EN LOS TERMINOS DE ESTA CONSTITUCION Y LAS LEYES CORRESPONDIENTES. LOS SERVICIOS PROFESIONALES DE INDOLE SOCIAL SERAN OBLIGATORIOS Y RETRIBUIDOS EN LOS TERMINOS DE LA LEY Y CON LAS EXCEPCIONES QUE ESTA SEÑALE.
(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 06 DE ABRIL DE 1990)

EL ESTADO NO PUEDE PERMITIR QUE SE LLEVE A EFECTO NINGUN CONTRATO, PACTO O CONVENIO QUE TENGA POR OBJETO EL MENOSCABO, LA PERDIDA O EL IRREVOCABLE SACRIFICIO DE LA LIBERTAD DE LA PERSONA POR

CUALQUIER CAUSA.

(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 28 DE ENERO DE 1992)

TAMPOCO PUEDE ADMITIRSE CONVENIO EN QUE LA PERSONA PACTE SU PROSCRIPCION O DESTIERRO, O EN QUE RENUNCIE TEMPORAL O PERMANENTEMENTE A EJERCER DETERMINADA PROFESION, INDUSTRIA O COMERCIO.

(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974)

EL CONTRATO DE TRABAJO SOLO OBLIGARA A PRESTAR EL SERVICIO CONVENIDO POR EL TIEMPO QUE FIJE LA LEY, SIN PODER EXCEDER DE UN AÑO EN PERJUICIO DEL TRABAJADOR, Y NO PODRA EXTENDERSE, EN NINGUN CASO, A LA RENUNCIA, PERDIDA O MENOSCABO DE CUALQUIERA DE LOS DERECHOS POLITICOS O CIVILES.

(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974)

LA FALTA DE CUMPLIMIENTO DE DICHO CONTRATO, POR LO QUE RESPECTA AL TRABAJADOR, SOLO OBLIGARA A ESTE A LA CORRESPONDIENTE RESPONSABILIDAD CIVIL, SIN QUE EN NINGUN CASO PUEDA HACERSE COACCION SOBRE SU PERSONA.

(REFORMADO MEDIANTE DECRETO PUBLICADO EN EL DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 31 DE DICIEMBRE DE 1974)

ARTICULO 9o.- NO SE PODRA COARTAR EL DERECHO DE ASOCIARSE O REUNIRSE PACIFICAMENTE CON CUALQUIER OBJETO LICITO; PERO SOLAMENTE LOS CIUDADANOS DE LA REPUBLICA PODRAN HACERLO PARA TOMAR PARTE EN LOS ASUNTOS POLITICOS DEL PAIS. NINGUNA REUNION ARMADA TIENE DERECHO DE DELIBERAR.

NO SE CONSIDERARA ILEGAL, Y NO PODRA SER DISUELTA UNA ASAMBLEA O REUNION QUE TENGA POR OBJETO HACER UNA PETICION O PRESENTAR UNA PROTESTA POR ALGUN ACTO A UNA AUTORIDAD, SI NO SE PROFIEREN INJURIAS CONTRA ESTA, NI SE HICIERE USO DE VIOLENCIAS O AMENAZAS PARA INTIMIDARLA U OBLIGARLA A RESOLVER EN EL SENTIDO QUE SE DESEE.

ARTICULO 11. TODO HOMBRE TIENE DERECHO PARA ENTRAR EN LA REPUBLICA, SALIR DE ELLA, VIAJAR POR SU TERRITORIO Y MUDAR DE RESIDENCIA, SIN NECESIDAD DE CARTA DE SEGURIDAD, PASAPORTE, SALVO-CONDUCTO U OTROS REQUISITOS SEMEJANTES. EL EJERCICIO DE ESTE DERECHO ESTARA SUBORDINADO A LAS FACULTADES DE LA AUTORIDAD JUDICIAL, EN LOS CASOS DE RESPONSABILIDAD CRIMINAL O CIVIL, Y A LAS DE LA AUTORIDAD ADMINISTRATIVA, POR LO QUE TOCA A LAS LIMITACIONES QUE

IMPONGAN LAS LEYES SOBRE EMIGRACION, INMIGRACION Y SALUBRIDAD
GENERAL DE LA REPUBLICA, O SOBRE EXTRANJEROS PERNICIOSOS
RESIDENTES EN EL PAIS.
(MODIFICADO POR LA REIMPRESION DE LA CONSTITUCION, PUBLICADA EN EL
DIARIO OFICIAL DE LA FEDERACION EL 6 DE OCTUBRE DE 1986)

Source: *Constitucion politica de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos: Constituion politique des Etats Unis du Mexique : Political constitution of the Mexican United States*. 1962.

Ref. 6-- Death in the Desert -- Murder victim on the city's outskirts:



Source: Bailleres, Jaime. Harper's Magazine December 1996, subsequently published in Bowden, Charles. *Juárez the Laboratory of our Future*, New York: Aperture 1998.

Ref. 7— YouTube postings in reaction to *Backyard*:

c.d juarez se ha convertido en un botin de los antigobiernistas de izquierda para atacar a mexico.es una sucia pelicula donde se ensucia a mexico,sabina berman es una cerda judia malagradecida, ya basta que se nos denigre de esa forma.

[papel66](#) 1 year ago

Simplemente esta película es el perfecto ejemplo del intracendente "Ariel"... Es ridícula, zero convincente, inverosímil la actuación de la Srita. "La Reguera..." La analogía del "Tigre" es como de niño de primaria.. Un tema tan delicado tratado de manera mercenaria y oportunista por el Sr. "Carrera" aprovechando la coyuntura para disque "alzar la voz" contra las atrocidades cometidas en Ciudad Juarez. Ver la "O" por lo redondo me parece injustificable. I don't buy it!!!!

[helldrenn](#) 1 year ago

Me parece una de las películas más fuertes que he visto, y no por las escenas, sino por la temática social que aborda. Considero que la forma de tratar un tema tan espinoso como el de las mujeres asesinadas en el país es muy acertado, y además, ayuda a crear conciencia en las jovencitas de que deben ser más cautelosas al transitar por las calles... uno ya no sabe qué clase de enfermo mental puede encontrar!! Muy buena película, la verdad, me conmocionó... pero la vería de nuevo..

[melkruspe](#) 1 year ago

Ademas también que matan y violan a nuestras mujeres a lo wey por que nadie nos cuida. Siempre hemos estado expuestas a lo peor por que el pinche gobierno de mierda nomas cierra los ojitos y hacen como que no saben nada los muy putos.

[TodoQueen](#) 2 years ago

Es una pelicula que creo todos debemos de ver, nunca antes me habia sentido tan reflejado y al mismo tiempo asqueado de la sociedad a la que pertenecemos, estrujante y felicidades a todos los que hicieron posible este gran trabajo, sin duda va màs allà del entretenimiento

[isra54](#) 2 years ago

Es el momento de recobrar la dignidad humana. Ví la película y salí molesto conmigo mismo por no hacer lo que me corresponde como ciudadano mexicano. Todos debemos actuar.

[hugodomingueznieto](#) 2 years ago

Ref. 8—Materials provided by POV:

Delve Deeper Into U.S.-Mexico Border Issues

This multimedia resource list provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by two upcoming P.O.V./PBS programs: "*Señorita Extraviada*" by Lourdes Portillo (August 20th at 10pm) and "*Escuela*" by Hannah Weyer (August 27th at 10pm) (check local listings).

ADULT FICTION ON BORDER LIFE

Set on either side of the Mexican-American border, the life and landscape of the Border region is an intrinsic element in all of these stories.

Bannister, Jo. *Unlawful Entry*. New York: Severn House, 1998.

Boswell, Robert. *American Owned Love*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1997.

Castillo, Ana. *So Far From God*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993.

Cisneros, Sandra. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1991.

Fitch, Marina. *Border, The*. New York: Ace Books, 1999. [Young Adult]

Fuentes, Carlos and Alfred MacAdam. *The Crystal Frontier*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.

Limon, Graciela. *Memories of Ana Calderon, The*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 1994.

Lopez-Medina, Sylvia. *Cantora*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1992.

Padilla, Mike. *Hard Language*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 2000.

Straight, Susan. *Highwire Moon*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

ADULT NONFICTION ABOUT BORDER LIFE

The social and economic issues found in the U.S.-Mexico border region are complex. The following titles discuss immigration, industrialization, and the unique cultures that have developed in this constantly changing area.

Byrd, Bobby; Byrd, John William. *Puro Border: Dispatches, Snapshots and Graffiti*. El Paso, TX: Cinco Puntos Press, 2002.

Davidson, Miriam. *Lives on the Line: Dispatches from the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2000.

Herzog, Lawrence A. *Shared Space: Rethinking the U.S.-Mexico Border Environment*. La Jolla, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 2000.

Hoobler, Dorothy. *The Mexican American Family Album*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Langewiesche, William. *Cutting for Sign*. New York: Pantheon, 1993.

Martinez, Oscar J. *Border People: Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1994.

Rotell, Sebastian. *Twilight on the Line: Underworlds and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. New York: Norton, 1998.

Urrea, Luis Alberto; Lueders-Booth, John. *By the Lake of Sleeping Children: The Secret Life of the Mexican Border*. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER READERS

Children of families living along the border, often migrants, face stresses unlike any other, yet as illustrated in the following stories they strive for and find happiness in the most dire of circumstances.

Brimmer, Larry Dane. *A Migrant Family*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1992.

Dorros, Arthur. *Radio Man = Don Radio: A Story in English and Spanish*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Hoyt-Goldsmith, Diane; Migdale, Lawrence. *Migrant Worker: A Boy From the Rio Grande Valley*. New York: Holiday House, 1996.

Mora, Pat. *Tomás and the Library Lady*. New York: A.A. Knopf (Distributed by Random House) 1997.

Thomas, Jane Resh. *Lights on the River*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1994.

DOCUMENTARIES ABOUT BORDER LIFE

The following are documentary films that explore the different people, cultures, and issues found along the U.S. - Mexico border.

"Forgotten Americans, The." Produced and directed by Hector Galan in association with Southwest Texas State University. San Marcos, TX: Southwest Texas University, c. 2000. 60 min. (Captures a day in the life of people living along the Texas-Mexico border).

"Go Back to Mexico!" Produced and Directed by Hector Galan. Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation; distributed by PBS Video, c. 1994. 57 min. (One woman's attempt to illegally immigrate from Mexico to the United States).

"Natives: Immigrant Bashing on the Border." Produced by Jesse Lerner, Scott Sterling, and the University of Southern California at the Center for Visual Anthropology. New York: Filmmaker's Library, c. 1991. 28 min. (A documentary on the xenophobia of some Americans living in California along the U.S.-Mexico border).

"Ties That Bind, The." A film by Jose Roberto Gutierrez. A Co-production of Maryknoll World Productions and the Hispanic Telecommunications Network. Maryknoll, NY: Maryknoll World Productions, c. 1996. 56 min. (The human drama behind the current debate over U.S. immigration policy).

WEB SITES TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT LIFE ALONG THE BORDER

The sites listed below are gateways to further information for and about the people living near the U.S.-Mexico border, including Latino and Chicano culture, education, history and government.

www.borderbase.org

BorderBase is a bilingual directory of governmental organizations, agencies, and non-profit institutions that conduct work along the California-Baja California border. The BorderBase project seeks to promote cross border collaboration and understanding by providing a simple networking and information tool for local border communities.

www.utep.edu/border/inf.html

The Borderlands Encyclopedia. A useful web-based multimedia instructional resource on contemporary issues of the U. S.-Mexico border.

www.rcf.usc.edu/~cmmr

The Center for Multilingual Multicultural Research, located at the University of Southern California. Areas of interest include the USC Latino and Language Minority Teacher Projects, bilingualism and English as a second language, multiculturalism, and Latino/Hispanic resources.

www.hispaniconline.com

Hispanic Online. This commercial site offers the Latino community chat rooms, events, issues of interest, message boards, and news.

Continued on reverse side

Delve Deeper Into U.S.-Mexico Border Issues

SEÑORITA EXTRAVIADA (MISSING YOUNG WOMAN) By Lourdes Portillo

Someone is killing the young women of Juárez, Mexico. Since 1993, over 270 young women have been raped and murdered in a chillingly consistent and brazen manner. Authorities ignore pleas for justice for the victims' families and the crimes go unpunished. Most disturbingly, evidence of government complicity remains uninvestigated as the killings continue to this day. Crafting a film that is both a poetic meditation and a mystery, "Señorita Extraviada" is a haunting investigation into an unspeakable crime wave amid the disorders and corruption of one of the biggest border towns in the world. An Independent Television Service (ITVS) and Latino Public Broadcasting Co-Presentation.

P.O.V. premiere on PBS, Tuesday, August 20, 2002 at 10 p.m. (check local listings).

In "Señorita Extraviada," we see how strongly foreign-owned factories, known as maquiladoras, impact the local community. To learn more, explore the following resources.

ADULT NONFICTION

Benitez, Rohri. *El Silencio Que la Voz da Todas Quiebra: Mujeres y Víctimas de Ciudad Juárez*. Chihuahua, Mexico: Ediciones del Azar, 1999. [Spanish]

Bowden, Charles. *Juarez: The Laboratory of Our Future*. New York: Aperture, 1998.

Fatemi, Khosrow. *The Maquiladora Industry: Economic Solution or Problem?* New York: Praeger, 1990.

Iglesias Prieto, Norma. *Beautiful Flowers of the Maquiladora: Life Histories of Women Workers in Tijuana*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1997.

Kamel, Rachael; Hoffman, Anya. *The Maquiladora Reader: Cross-Border Organizing Since NAFTA*. Philadelphia, PA: American Friends Service Committee, 1999.

Whitechapel, Simon. *Crossing to Kill: The True Story of the Serial-Killer Playground*. London: Virgin, 2000.

DOCUMENTARIES

"Borderline Cases." A film by Lynn Corcoran. Ole, PA: Bullfrog Films, c. 1997. 65 min. (Problems caused by factories along the U.S.-Mexico border which did not need to comply with environmental regulations).

"Maquila." A film by Saul Landau and Sonia Angulo. Pomona, CA: College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences and Media Vision at California State Polytechnic University. Distributed by The Cinema Guild, c. 2000. 55 min. (Presents the pros and cons of the maquiladora [or maquila], an export manufacturing program established by the Mexican Government in the 1960s).

"Performing the Border." A film by Ursula Biemann. New York: Women Make Movies, c. 1999. 43 min. (This experimental work investigates the growing feminization of the global economy and its impact on Mexican women living and working in the border area).

ESCUELA

By Hannah Weyer

A moving follow-up to P.O.V.'s "La Boda" (The Wedding), the saga of the Luis family continues as Liliana and Elizabeth, two of the Luis family daughters, try to make their way in 21st century America. For Liliana who begins her freshman year in high school, this means dealing with the harsh demands of work in the fields, constant travel and endlessly changing schools, classes and friends as she migrates with her farm-worker family between California, Texas and Mexico. For Elizabeth, a limited education and the struggle to secure citizenship for her husband combine to create an uncertain economic outlook. In this compassionate portrait, "Escuela" continues the story of one Mexican-American family's drive towards a better future.

P.O.V. premiere on PBS, Tuesday, August 27, 2002 at 10 p.m. (Check local listings).

Many of the people living along the Border are migrant agricultural workers. The following resources demonstrate how the transitory nature of their livelihood affects everything from education, as shown in "Escuela," to how they are viewed by society.

ADULT FICTION

Chacon, Daniel. *Chicano Chicanery*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press, 2000.

Chavez, Denise. *Face of an Angel*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994.

Guerrero, Lucrecia. *Chasing Shadows*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000.

Islas, Arturo. *Migrant Souls*. New York: W. Morrow, 1990.

Troncoso, Sergio. *Last Tortilla and Other Stories, The*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1999.

Villanueva, Tino.; Hoggard, James. *Chronicle of my worst years = Crónica de mis años peores*. Evanston, IL: TriQuarterly Books, 1994. [poetry]

ADULT NONFICTION

Hayes, Curtis W.; Bahruth, Robert.; Kessler, Carolyn. *Literacy Con Carrito: A Story of Migrant Children's Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

Murphy, Arthur D.; Blanchard, Colleen. *Latino Workers in the Contemporary South*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

Tywniak, Frances Esquilbel. *Migrant Daughter: Coming of Age as a Mexican American Woman*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.

Valle, Isabel. *Fields of Toil: A Migrant Family's Journey*. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1994.

Premiering this Fall :

P.O.V.'s *BORDERS*, an original Web-series, is PBS's first showcase dedicated to exploring interactive storytelling. It will creatively consider both literal and conceptual aspects of the question 'what is a border?' The series will feature the original work of artists, filmmakers, writers, photographers and others. Check the website for more information: www.pbs.org/pov.

ALA AmericanLibraryAssociation





STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO ORGANIZING A **POV** SCREENING



POV
www.pbs.org/pov



Source: PBS. "Pov: Señorita Extraviada". (August 20, 2002).
<<http://www.pbs.org/pov/senoritaextraviada/>>

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