ORIENTATION TOWARDS HOME
OR THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMAD

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What are the ways in which the subject is influenced by its location? How is subjectivity formed in relation to space and what are the different implications of changing that space? To answer these questions I analyze concepts of subjectivity and gender and their intersections with notions of space such as belonging, transgressing boundaries, and orientation. I explore this theoretical path through a comparative study of the transgressive writing of four salient authors from across Latin America: Clarice Lispector, Diamela Eltit, Carmen Boullosa and Ana Clavel. My dissertation is therefore an analysis of the multiple connections between subjectivity and space, especially focused on gendered and corporal aspects as they manifest in contemporary Latin American literature. Feminist and queer theorists such as Judith Butler, Sarah Ahmed, Kathryn Bon-Stockton, Rosi Braidotti and Elizabeth Grosz, support my analysis in achieving new understandings of the intersections of the three vectors that guide me- space, subjectivity and gender.

Throughout my four chapters I analyze the relations between subject and the space that surrounds it, while coining a new term- -subjective space. "Subjective space" is a hybrid term that allows me to look both at the way the subject is influenced by its location, and how, in turn, it is spatially constructed. Can there be a common thread to

the way these theories and literary texts explore the formation of the subject and its constitution in space? What can be gained by thinking of this constitution in spatial terms? Following this path of analysis will lead me to a new theoretical location, where I hope to gain insight into the centrality of space to the subject and the subject's impacts on space.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in a small town in the Negev desert in Israel, Dafna was a voracious reader, going through all the books she could find at the local public libraries. Her appetite for stories was nourished by her grandmother's tales of a childhood in faraway Iraq. After a seven month journey in Latin America, Dafna went on to complete a major in Romance Studies and Gender Studies at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, from where she graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2005. She pursued her graduate studies at the University Of Calgary, Canada at the department of French, Italian, and Spanish, from where she graduated at 2007. After moving to Ithaca, New York she studied at Cornell University at the department of Romance Studies, with a minor in Feminism, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She received her second MA from Cornell University at 2010, and her PhD in 2013.

For my best travelling companion, from now on we are no longer alone

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Pois existe a trajetória,
e a trajetória não é apenas um modo de ir. A trajetória somos nós mesmos.
(P 176)

The path is wiser than the wanderer.
Once you have found it don't forsake it, for it is always right.
(Azaria Alon)

Mapping Subjective Space

Walking in an unfamiliar place makes you painfully aware of space and your relation to it. One might feel disoriented, look for signs and routes to take, or experience the liberty of not belonging, free of a specific (local) set of social standards. Putting one foot in front of the other, you search for the right turn, the bus stop you need, the entrance to the building--where is it you needed to go again? Unfamiliarity with a place, being a visitor, a stranger, a newcomer, a foreigner, has a disorientating effect, as if you were constantly trying to fit yourself into the space that surrounds you. This is the moment to take out your map, that two-dimensional record of layered information that is supposed to tell you how, when, and where to go. Whether surrounded by desert cliffs and rocky ravines where forgotten histories lie, or by concrete and glassy walls of high-rises encasing indifferent strangers, you try to map yourself into space. Whether it is a worn out piece of paper you consulted many times before, marked with dust and sweat, or the beaming surface of your smart phone that keeps insisting you are still ten blocks behind, the map feels like your only recourse. Finding yourself on the map, placing your imaginary position in space in relation to recorded information puts you in constant contact with an invisible multitude of others. You are here, on the corner of this street and that avenue, on the path to that peak, someone has been here before, there is a road, you are not lost. Cartographies carry the weight of others, always putting one in relation to other travelers, offer a situated knowledge of sociality. Mapping our location is a way to find paths into space, to conceptualize our location, to belong.

Why is positionality so crucial to one's feeling of security, or lack of it, and how is it that the places in our itinerary have such an effect on us? What is it that makes space such a primordial part of the way we understand ourselves? What are the numerous, sometimes contradictory ways in which space informs our very being, and how can we conceptualize the relationship between subject and space? My work is a constant effort to decipher these enigmas, a journey that is itself the goal. I follow a path on which texts are sometimes clues, and other times doors that open into other texts. Clarice Lispector's G.H. leads me to Ana Clavel's Antonia; Rossi Braidotti's notion of "the Nomadic Subject" is complemented by Sara Ahmed's theoretical approach to the Other; Kathryn Bond-Stockton's idea of the Queer Child points back to Carmen Boullosa's tormented child. Throughout this dissertation I introduce texts to each other in order to create a dialogue between theories, as well as to think theoretically with texts that are usually read as literary productions. In my writing I see questions as open roads: sometimes they lead me in the right direction, sometimes they are the cause of productive disorientation. I will now spread the map of the pages to follow, unfold its creases, and draft the road that will lead in other directions to other roads.

This journey starts with the theoretical term "Nomadic Subjects," which was for me the first to capture the uniqueness of the intricate relationship between subject and space. Rossi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* aims at destabilizing monolithic ways of understanding the subject through a nomadic analysis. For Braidotti the nomadic subject is political fiction, a way of rethinking the origins of the subject while blurring the boundaries that prevent us from crossing usually divided established categories (4-5). Nomadic consciousness is the ability to have multiple belongings and transgress

boundaries, so that the analysis of spatial metaphors becomes a theoretical endeavor to deconstruct the subject. This is why Braidotti employs cartographic imagery throughout her writing:

> I think that many of the things I write are cartographies, that is to say a sort of intellectual landscape gardening that gives me a horizon, a frame of reference within which I can take my bearing, move about, and set up my own theoretical tent. It is not by chance therefore, that the image of the map, or of map-making is so often present in my texts. The frequency of the spatial metaphor expresses the simultaneity of the nomadic status and the need to draw maps; each text is like a camping-site: it traces places I have been, in the shifting landscape of my singularity (16-17).

Through reflecting on her own writing Braidotti demonstrates the prevalence of the spatial focus in nomadic thought. In this way her theoretical approach to a feminist deconstruction of the subject is in itself a cartography of ideas. The image of the map is, therefore, a way of fixing the writer's experience. The places she has been and the ideas that she has/had go hand in hand with the nomadic and cartographic project. Put differently: "The nomad's identity is a map of where s/he has already been; s/he can always reconstruct it a posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary" (14). Does Braidotti mean that the impact of space on the nomadic subject is always in the past tense? Where will the nomadic subject continue after tracing her steps in this imaginary cartography, and how can we envision the road ahead? I embrace Braidotti's valiant effort to rethink the construction of the subject through a feminist lens, and want to further explore subjectivity’s spatialized component. In my understanding, a nomadic subject is a new being, one that is not just "subject" or merely "nomadic." That is to say, the term itself offers a unique amalgam of the terms that interest me--subject and

space--vis-á-vis Braidotti's analysis of a nomadic way of thought and a reconceptualization of the subject as one that is fluid, plural, hybrid.[1]

Taking part in a similar discourse of geographically-aware feminism, Gloria Anzaldúa transforms the hybrid being subject/space into a highly contested political term. Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the borderland as a symbolic term that permeates culture as well as the subject is a signpost on the road that leads to an analysis of the relationship between subject and space. Her development of the space of the borderland is intertwined with the subject's effects on that space: "A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (3). The idea that residues of emotions can define a place reflects the relationship of subject and space, so that the borderland seems to be an emotional landscape.[2] This relationship affects both space and the subject so that both acquire mythic proportions: "1,950 mile-long open wound/ dividing a pueblo, a culture,/ running down the length of my body,/ staking fence rods in my flesh,/ splits me, splits me,/ me raja me raja" […] (2). In this remarkable image the flesh becomes the actual borderland, the same one that is filled with the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. In fact, seeing the border as an open wound that runs down the writer's own body transforms a seemingly simple line on the map into a layered symbolic presence in the subject's experience of its corporal self. The bodily roots of the subject/space conjunction here resonate with Bradotti's nomadic subject, with her endeavor to rethink subjectivity through corporeal concepts (2-3). But Anzaldúa's borderland is

[1] A more detailed analysis of Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjects can be found in the first chapter.

[2] I am reminded of Björk's lyrics to "Joga": "Emotional landscapes,/ They puzzle me,/ Then the riddle gets solved,/ And you push me up to this/ State of emergency,/ How beautiful to be,/ State of emergency,/ Is where I want to be." For Björk the emotional landscape is linked with an inner sense of emergency, a puzzling location in which she desires to dwell.

different from Braidotti's understanding of the way nomadic subjects transgress boundaries in that it charges the crossing of a border with a more immediate set of implications. While the nomadic subject is a theoretical fiction, a concept that allows an analysis of an interdisciplinary and deconstructing nature, it should also be taken in its literal sense. Meaning, coming from both sides of the border, can have painful implications. Drawing the map of the subject's multiple belongings should leave room for the fence rods, as well as for the cultural residues of both sides of the border.

These two thinkers and their theoretical vectors point me to a road that calls for further exploration. The intricate relationship between space and subject, the endless examples of this reciprocal dyad and its inherent location in current thought, open a space for new conceptualizations. The aim of this dissertation, then, will be to explore the questions asked above through a concept that I hope will carry the weight of both Braidotti's nomadic subject and Anzaldúa's borderland. "Subjective space" will be my contribution to this dialogue, a concept that strives to explore the dark sides of the subject through spatialized lenses and shed a light on the subjective sides of space. It is not only a reciprocal employment of space/subject, but an effort to create another category altogether. The subjective space is the missing link, so to speak, between the two concepts, one that I hope will become a useful tool in theoretical and literary analysis.

Subject

Before I explore new connections between subject and space, I would like to further orient my conceptual map and draw the theoretical legend upon which my research is based. My view of the highly contested term "subject" is influenced by

Michele Foucault's as well as Judith Butler's theoretical work. In Foucault's seminar on the subject, published later as *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, he traces the origins of the construction of the subject to Greek and Hellenist thought. Trying to find an alternative to Christian ways of understanding the subject, Foucault describes a relationship of the subject to itself, a formation of the subject as a practice that has to be constantly maintained. Foucault presents here an immediate preoccupation with the question of the subject and subjectivity and in particular the processes and practices by which individuals come to know themselves as subjects of desire.[3] According to Foucault, the subject comes into being through a constant process the Greeks named *epimeleia heautou*--"care of the self." Subjectivity, understood as the faculty of the subject, is thus a deliberate effort, never a static modus one "has" or achieves, but rather a practice, almost a form of labor:

> […] the *epimeleia heautou* is also a certain form of attention, of looking. Being concerned about oneself implies that we look away from the outside to… I was going to say "inside." Let's leave to one side of this word, which you can well imagine raises a host of problems, and just say that we must convert our looking from the outside, from others and the world etc., towards "oneself." The care of the self implies a certain way of attending to what we think and what takes place in our thought. (10-11)

The care of the self is the process through which the subject becomes, implying that there is something in the subject that can be aimed at itself, a required reflexivity. What I find appealing in this analysis of the Greek origins of the subject is the way Foucault presents the subject (enacted through this act of reflexivity) as a split entity that can exit itself and return inwards. In this specific quote Foucault implies

[3] This, of course, is part of a lifelong effort on Foucault's part to theorize desire and sexuality in relation to the construction of subjectivity through careful research into what is considered to be normative or non-normative sexual behavior (*History of Sexuality*).

directionality to be an essential component of the subject.[4] In other words, I see here a spatial perception of the subject, determining subjectivity as the result of a dual movement of the subject upon itself.

This spatial perception of subjectivity is articulated through an array of descriptions Foucault finds in ancient Greek texts that, according to him, show that the care of the self is not merely a question of knowledge:

> Some, in fact, refer to cognitive activities, to attending to, looking at and the possible perception of oneself: paying attention to the self; paying attention to the self; turning around to the self […]; examining oneself. But with regard to the care of the self there is also a vocabulary referring not merely to this sort of conversion of looking, to this necessary watchfulness over the self, but also to an overall movement of existence, which is encouraged and called upon to pivot on itself, as it were, and to direct itself or turn round towards the self (85).

The practice of the care of the self through which subjectivity is gained is primarily a directionality, an intention, an aim. In this way, the subject is both the target of the care of the self, but also the being that produces the process. This split in the subject that eventually produces subjectivity is spatialized to the extent that the subject is described as that which can almost be external to itself. Thus the subject is understood as a spatial unit that needs to pivot on itself, a circular play of movement and vectors that never reaches an end. If subjectivity is a process of exiting and entering, then the subject is always a result of splitting and unifying with itself. This theorization of the

[4] Foucault's research on the subject is part of his expansive work on the relationship subject/truth, an approach to alternative constructions of the self that is not embedded within Christian morality. Part of this interest manifested in his groundbreaking work on sexuality and the body. Given Foucault's previous interest in the body as a socially contested site, I am tempted to read this quote as implying a vision of the subject as a spatial unit that the self can exit, therefore posing the body as the site where subjectivity transpires.

subject exalts movement and process that is aimed from the inside out and vice versa. Subjectivity is, then, both a process and its outcome, a spiral of internal and external movement that is maintained by continuous work.

A close reader of Foucault, Judith Butler takes on another paradox related to the formation of the subject. In the *Psychic Life of Power*, Butler analyzes the numerous implications of the Foucauldian term "power" and its effect on the formation of the subject. Butler's work in this text is aimed at another moment in Foucault's writing: his research on the subject in contemporary time rather than his focus on 2nd century Greek thought. Nonetheless, Butler's analysis perceives a similar multidirectional motion that characterizes the formation of the subject. She calls the process of becoming a subject "subjection," a paradoxical term that seeks to explain, according to Butler, an interplay of power enacted on the subject both from without and within. Subjection is thus both the subordination of the subject to power and the subject's main condition for existence:

> [If] we understand power as forming the subject as well, as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbor and preserve in the being that we are (2).

This dual impact of power on the subject transforms subjection into a complex site of the subject's emergence. Power that appears as external essentially presses the subject into subordination, and thus assumes a psychic form that constitutes the subject's self. In a way, what Butler sees here in Foucault is a concept similar to the "care of the self"; the formation of the subject depends on a trajectory that generates the

inside/outside dyad.[5] Although the Greek model leaves more room for agency, both models posit the subject as a result of a continuous process, either through a presumably conscious effort (in Greek thought) or by resistance and attachment to power (in contemporary contexts).

Much like Foucault's description of the Greek subject, Butler also describes subjection in spatial terms. Although power is first viewed as external to the subject, it is also the condition for the subject's emergence and enaction:

> The form this power takes is relentlessly marked by a figure of turning, a turning back upon oneself or even a turning *on* oneself. This figure operates as part of the explanation of how a subject is produced, and so there is no subject, strictly speaking, who makes this turn. On the contrary, the turn appears to function as a tropological inauguration of the subject, a founding moment whose ontological status remains permanently uncertain (3-4).

Subjection is the turning of the subject on itself through power. Opposing power, but also exerting power on itself, the subject comes into being. Therefore, subjection is directionality, the turning of the subject inwards. Like the care of the self, subjectivity is formed through a spiral movement; its root is perhaps not clear, but once initiated, this process results in the construction of the subject. At the same time, subjection in Butler is not a desired state one reaches, but a constant turning, a struggle against the very thing on which the subject depends. This dynamic ontology marks the relationship of the subject with its exterior: in the Greek model it is simply turning

[5] Gilles Deleuze refers to Foucault as a new cartographer obsessed with the thought of the outside. In his view, the formation of the subject comes from the folding of the outside force into itself, so that interiority is always the result of external forces. In this way, subjectivity is a dimension that is derived from power and knowledge without being dependent on them (101). I do not necessarily conceive of Foucault's work as mainly preoccupied with exteriority, but rather as centered on the relations between the inside and outside of the subject.

inwards without specifying what lies on the outside; in the more contemporary model the outside is clearly characterized as power.

I take from Foucault and Butler an emphasis on the construction of the subject, a focus on the minute steps in that process of becoming. In both their writings this process can be read as an almost geometrical spatial mobility. In the Greek model it is a spiral directed inwards, like a childish drawing of a hurricane; in the more recent model it is an interplay of two forces aimed at one another. Nonetheless, what seems to hold and define the movement that brings the subject into being is the distinction between interiority and exteriority, what I understand as the (loosely defined) limit of the body. In a way, in the care of the self what is seen as "inside" and "outside" is what lies beyond the corporal boundaries of the body that holds the subject. In the case of subjection the body is a more contested site and less a non-distinct surface, especially if we read Butler's later work on the topic of the body (*Bodies that Matter*). At the same time, the body is where the subject dwells; it is where power exerts itself as well as the center of the subject's opposition.[6] The interiority of the subject, the site where motion is both directed and emerging, raises another set of questions: how is it that spatial and kinetic descriptions have such a privileged role in understanding the subject? What is it that makes us conceive of the subject as the site of motion, even when it is clearly a theoretical directionality rather than a physical one? And finally, if we theorize the subject as spatially constructed, or rather, think of the space of the subject, what does this contribute to our understanding of both concepts? What can be gained by thinking of space as subjective, or of the subject with spatial terms?

[6] The topic of the subject's dwelling in corporal roots has been developed by several other scholars, among whom is Gayle Salamon in *Assuming a Body*.

Space

In this part of my conceptual map, theories of the subject encounter the terminology that so often serves as their building blocks. My spatial roots draw from a line of feminist thinkers who focus on the politics of location, asserting that a specific experience of space is forever linked with the subject's positionality. Feminist thinkers such as Caren Kaplan, and feminist and queer theorists Adrienne Rich, Sara Ahmed, and Judith/Jack Halberstam all point to the centrality of spatial thought for the re-conceptualization of the feminist subject. While theories of the subject tend to generalize and neutralize "the subject" to such an extent that the latter seems like a universal, disembodied being, a politics of location (and identity politics to some extent) strive to specify particularities of space. This is to say that a man from the Andes will have a different set of affiliations, power relations etc. from a woman who was raised in European settings. What at first sounds like a simple statement acquires more complexity when we consider that space is a lived experience, so that space itself is gendered:

> I would contend that space and time are not, as Kant suggests, a priori mental or conceptual categories that precondition and make possible our concepts; rather, they are a priori corporeal categories, whose precise features and idiosyncrasies parallel the cultural and historical specificities of bodies (Grosz 2001, 40).

If space is not an objective and abstract concept that preconditions one's way of understanding the world, then it is inherently linked with corporal as well as subjective specificities. In other words, the subject's body, and in fact her own set of experiences, origins, and histories are not only part of herself; they are also part of the category of space itself. In this way, the concept of space is actually made out of

bodies, as it is made out of subjects.

Elizabeth Grosz's analysis of space invites a new perspective of the relations between subject/space/body. While the notion that space is gendered has already been established by feminist and queer theoretical geographers, what Grosz adds here is the idea that there is no purely objective space. In *Volatile Bodies* Grosz traces different ramifications of the concept of the body from a feminist point of view. Her reading of Merleau-Ponty is especially relevant: "Merleau-Ponty begins with a fundamental presumption, not a Cartesian dualism of mind and body but of their necessary interrelatedness. He claims that phenomenology wants to understand the relations between consciousness and nature and between interiority and exteriority" (86). If indeed phenomenology's focus is on trying to create a unified understanding of interiority and exteriority, then the body in this case is the meeting point of both categories. Phenomenological vocabulary uses tropes such as perception, seeing, or the flesh to explain one's relation to her surroundings in a way that does not create a dichotomy of subject and space (86-91). This is why, according to Grosz, phenomenology serves feminist theories vis-à-vis their emphasis on the body and the importance of specific subjects in perceiving the space that surrounds them.

In fact, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology ties together more than space and body. As Edward Casey affirms in *The Fate of Place*, the body for Merleau-Ponty is the actual origin of space. To be more exact, the movement of an individual subject's body produces space itself (229). The body's movement is linked with space in a way that calls for an analysis of the corporeal experience of space before space can be theorized. Reciprocity between space and body is not only a result of the body's dwelling in space as a container, but is actually the source of space itself. If we

wanted to be simplistic we could infer that there is no space without corporeal movement. Furthermore: "Such experience of our own body's movement is 'pre-objective'--a key word that also applies to the world we come to know through this very same experience" (229). I find the use of "pre-objective" quite telling in this context, since it suggests an alternative to an objective, and I would add "geometric," analysis of space. Pre-objective, in my view, points to a subjective-oriented analysis of the experience of the lived body in space. If we understand the pre-objective as subjective, then Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology is, in fact, a study of the subjective experience of space, theorized through corporeal concepts. Although the phenomenology of space has struggled with trying to reach universalized conclusions through an analysis of subjective experience, it has not traditionally focused on the gendered implications of specific bodies, or on the definition of the subject itself. I do not wish to fill this gap by merely thinking about the gendered specificities of bodies and how these specificities affect the experience of space (and our understanding of space), but rather, I want to examine the way the subject is spatialized, or space is subjectified.

Subjective Space

My search for the spatialized parts of theories of the subject and the subjective parts of theories of space is a mirroring act, intended to reflect the more concealed assumptions of each of these two theoretical pillars. "Subjective space" allows a dialogue between two charged terms. It is the way the subject projects and perceives the space that surrounds it--much like Anzaldúa's emotional residue of the borderland. Following phenomenological theory, the experience of space is subjective in the sense

that it is guided by the subject's perception, and therefore requires an analysis of the way the subject resides in space. For this kind of analysis, Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* will serve to explain concepts such as inhabition, horizon, and orientation. Spatial metaphors enrich the reading of subjective experiences of space, since they reflect the poetic side of such experiences.[7] Nevertheless, what subjective space adds to this type of analysis is the mirroring effect reflecting back to subjectivity. The experience of space cannot simply be a projection of the subjective self into space; it has to have effects that are far reaching on the way we read space itself.

The other side of this mirroring is the way the subject is understood through spatial theory. Both Butler and Foucault use an understanding of the subject that is encased in a distinction between interiority and exteriority. The subject is that which turns upon itself, or that which resists subjection; however, it is a being that has interiority, an inside that is distinguished from an outside. We can therefore read the subject as a spatial entity, enacted into being by spatial imagery and understanding itself through a similar set of tropes. Subjective space is, on this side of the mirror, the way subjectivity is constructed, the understanding of the subject itself as a location to be analyzed as spatialized. The building blocks of the subject--the distinction between inside and outside and the relation to movement--are not neutral, all encompassing concepts, but rather embodied and corporeal efforts to read the subject in an alternative light, influenced by Braidotti's text. Subjective space is the space of the subject, or, in fact, the subject as space, such that while the focus is on subjectivity, it

[7] Gaston Bachelard's *Poetics of Space* is an example of a spatial analysis based on the primal importance of poetic images. In spite of his Euro-centric reading of the space of home and its relation to the subject, he advocates a detailed research into poetic images of home.

is seen through a spatialized lens. The corporality and gender of the subject mold its movement on itself, transforming the way it is constructed.

In fact, following the paths of space and subject we have wandered above, I can now map out the way subjective space unifies both sides of the mirror. Reflecting space and subjectivity, subjective space is the hybrid daughter born of their union. The reflexive subject turning on itself becomes subject through a movement in space, is constituted in space. This same subject clearly lends itself to Merleau-Ponty's pre-objective experience of space: if the subject is the origin of space and the movement of the lived body brings space into being, then we can say that the care of the self is in fact this movement. In other words, the reflexive notion of subjectivity is in itself a movement (in Foucault's research, a cognitive and a physical practice), the same movement through which space emerges. The subject comes into being through movement directed at itself; space is in turn produced by the same movement. As such, subject and space are codependent, and cannot be understood separately. Subjective space is, therefore, not a location but rather a reciprocal movement through which we can understand the subject's dependence on space for its existence. How does this codependence affect the way we read space and subject? What does subjective space allow for in terms of critically understanding texts and how can we use it in a way that is gender oriented? I would like to examine subjective space in the works of four contemporary Latin American writers, chosen for the way their writing manages to explore different aspects of subjectivity and space.

The first chapter of my dissertation visits Clarice Lispector's novel *The Passion According to G.H.* (Brazil, 1964). My analysis follows Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjects, reading the inward journey of the protagonist as a way of confronting racial stereotypes and breaking down subjectivity itself. The protagonist's

experience of the physical space around her keeps getting smaller. Shrinking spatial circles account for the protagonist's concentration on her own subjective experience in a way that suggests that a confined space enables and opens a view to the subject's inner spaces. The nomadic process that takes place in this text occurs in the most familiar and mundane space, which does not diminish its effects on the subject. Throughout the novel and all the way to its end the reader accompanies the protagonist's journey and crosses boundaries of subjectivity, gender, and otherness in such a way that all of the above are transformed and redefined. Lispector's economic language and her ontological focus are the first path I embark on in my theoretical journey towards a conceptualization of subjective space.

The road leads my analysis to remote territories of extreme otherness where I strive to decipher the spatially entrenched connection between subject and abject. In my second chapter I analyze a subjectivity that is constantly positioned as other and even abject, questioning traditional understandings of the subject. Diamela Eltit's *El cuarto mundo* (Chile, 1988) begins in an even more confined space as it narrates the formation--in the basic corporal sense--of twins in the womb. Similar to Lispector, Eltit chooses to overlay an economic narrative onto the subjective experience of this dyad in their effort to establish boundaries. Using Grosz's theory of the reciprocity between space and subjects, I analyze how the subjects in the text are formed through an interaction with intrauterine and urban spaces. At the same time, the novel clearly shows Eltit's unique representation of the Latin American subject as one that is Other, marginalized, and distinctively different from canonical understandings of the Western subject. How are the forming of the subject and its othered location explored through questions of growing up? Does the depiction of a young subject allow for a broader understanding of what it means to be a subject?

Boullosa's *Antes* (Mexico, 1989) focuses on young subjects and their formation, using themes and poetic qualities similar to Eltit while taking a different narrative path. In this novel, the space presented is the family home, populated by a haunted little girl whom we follow from birth to puberty. The nightmarish and childish voice of the protagonist is terrified of beings that may not be real, keeping the reader in a skeptical space of belief and disbelief. We are led to seek clues throughout the course of the protagonist's childhood, wanting to understand the creatures that haunt her. The "clavitos" (small nails) resonate with her fear of puberty, as well as sexual maturity, a reading that is reinforced by the novel's ending in which we find her lying in a pool of blood. The girl's reaction to threat is to diminish the space she inhabits, as if confining herself to one room can help her to maintain boundaries in which she feels safe. Growing up is a process of learning to inhabit space and to be oriented in a certain way, with no guarantees of wellbeing. While her parents and school try to orient her towards the route expected of young girls, she chooses to dwell in nightmarish experiences, blurring the boundaries of reality. The novel's surrealist aspect and descriptions of fears that take shape in space express the protagonist's queerness, as does her refusal to settle into well-trodden paths of heteronormative adulthood. How can growing up take a queer direction, and how can the child be oriented differently? I pursue this path using Ahmed's understanding of how a body experiences directionality, how it is directed by certain social understandings of space. At the same time, Kathryn Bond Stockton's theory of the Queer Child offers a rich line of thought that enables me to examine this unique protagonist in a new light. The text has a haunting effect on the reader because the queer child's experiences call into question the subject's orientation towards sexual normativity, as well as normative spatial strategies.

Arriving at the final chapter of my dissertation, I analyze in detail the gendered and transgressive subject that is at the center of *Shipwreck Body*, by Ana Clavel (Mexico, 2005). If we take the body as the most intimate form of dwelling, what happens when it changes and crosses the gender divide? The novel tells the story of Antonia who wakes up and discovers her body changed; she now dwells in the body of a man. The unexplained overnight change destabilizes gender in a way that points to the embodiment of the subject and the performativity of gender, without the sometimes painful experience of transgendered people. As Antonia ventures outside of her home for the first time she is confronted with the need for tropes, symbols, and performative acts that will help her mark herself as a socially-read gendered person. As part of the protagonist's process of finding out what it means for her to become a man while continuing to identify herself with her given name, she develops a fetish for urinals. These objects of exclusively masculine spaces embody for her a kind of un-corporal masculinity. As the novel progresses they keep becoming in a nomadic process of change and slippage; at first masculine, they then take the form of feminine body parts that symbolize heterosexual (sexual) orientation, and by the end they become a representation of the feminine fetishized gaze. This continuous nomadic process brings out the amorphous and unstable nature of orientation in space and of gender itself. If we cannot explain Antonia as a gendered and a sexed subject, how can we understand other subjects?

I use Sarah Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* to analyze this unique protagonist and her search for sexual and spatial orientation. This search towards understanding masculinity is enacted by the usage of visual art and the image of the urinal that appears in the text as an anthropomorphic object, masculine at times and feminine at others. In this sense, what Clavel's novel offers a new way of approaching the

gendered subject as one that is neither lost nor oriented in space, but both, pointing to the centrality of space in the understanding of gender. Can a subject whose bodily belonging changes be perceived as oriented? Is there an appropriate (sexual) orientation that corresponds with a biological body? Can a subject be oriented through space if they do not have a fixed gender, or are they doomed to reside in a labyrinth constantly searching for the way out?

Following these four paths of analysis will lead me to a new destination, where subject and space become more unified than before. This destination is the end of the road in my dissertation; however, it is not the peak of a mountain, nor an urban home. Rather, it is another intersection, the crossroads of subjective space that ties Lispector's and Eltit's fascination with the abject to Grosz's reciprocity between subject and space, Boullosa's subject in formation to Clavel's protagonist's search for sexual orientation, keeping in mind the nomad's relation to the crossing of boundaries. If the spatialized understanding of the subject is the leading factor in constructing the self, then the texts that I chose will take me to a new theoretical location. Following these texts will be, much like Braidotti proposes, a cartographic journey across boundaries into the as yet unknown realm of subjective space, an intersection of theories and texts where I hope to gain insight into the centrality of space to the subject and the subject’s impacts on space.

Chapter 1

Into Subjective Space in *The Passion According to G.H*

From the first sentence the reader's attention is always directed at the minute accordance or discordance between subject and world in Clarice Lispector's texts. One of the most famous women writers of Latin America and certainly a woman whose work and personal life continually produce much academic and biographical research, Clarice Lispector's rich texts still present a promise. Since her literary debut in 1944 Lispector has garnered attention, partly for her challenging and often puzzling lyrical prose, and partly due to her unique life story, one that places her as an outsider (arriving to Brazil as a baby from the Ukraine). Her approach to the Portuguese language, on the other hand, clearly positions her as a talented writer who has managed to question and renovate written Portuguese in a way that only a handful of writers have succeeded in doing (the celebrated Joao Guimarães Rosa, for example). Lispector is thus an outsider and an insider at the same time, the daughter of immigrants who gained an insider's insight into Portuguese literature. The challenge that Lispector poses for the critical reader is often translated into negation: as Debra Castillo notes in *Talking Back*, the author is often defined through what she is not--she is not really Brazilian, she doesn't write like anyone and no one can write like her, she is not a feminist, and does not write in any one literary genre (185-187). Admittedly, it is easier to talk about Lispector's work through what it is not, since it is so exceptional and different from many other texts one encounters.

At the same time, the challenge that her texts poses for the reader results in an almost inexplicable proliferation of biographies, archived photos, and interviews with the author's friends and family, as if trying to account for the allusiveness of her

literary work by trying to explain Lispector's life as an anomaly.[8] These biographies and the aura they create can lure the reader away from a serious analysis of Lispector's texts and into the half-magical world of historically unfounded gossip.[9] I take this tendancy of Lispector's texts to cause such reception as an invitation to a more engaged literary analysis of her texts. Therefore I would like to ascertain the qualities that transform Lispector's writing into an artifact of an "insider" or an "outsider" of a certain place; that is, why is exteriority or belonging the privileged way to relate to this author? In order to answer this I will follow the unique exploration of space and subjectivity in the author's most renowned text.

A Paixão Segundo G.H. (The Passion According to G.H.) marks a significant turn in the author's oeuvre, as it is characterized, unlike her prior work, by a strong first person narrator whose main focus is a minutely observed inner process. The grounds for this subjective process can be summarized in two lines, if one was trying to focus solely on narrative events. The mundane story of a middle class woman who wants to clean the recently fired maid's empty room and encounters a bug there is only the setting for the subjective process that the narrator so intensely experiences. Thus, the center of the text is not "what happens" but rather the impact of the little that does happen on the self, the narrating subject. According to Claudia Nina in *A palavra usurpada, exilio e nomadismo na obra de Clarice Lispector*, the only book that analyses Lispector's work through the lens of nomadic theories, *Passion* is

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[8] The most recent biography to date is *Why This World* by Benjamin Moser, a book that starts with a map of the Lispector family's life and migration using the same font as the map in the *Lord of the Rings* fantasy book series, a detail that resonates with the mythological air the writer tries to convey.

[9] The question of Lispector's birth date stands out among all the biographic preoccupations. As Marta Peixoto concludes in *Passionate Fictions*, the author knowingly claimed to be born in 1925 instead of 1920 when publishing her first book: "Lispector's reason for equivocating may have been vanity, even literary vanity, in a wish to appear more precocious at the time of her literary debut in 1944" (xvi).

actually a transitional text that lies at the end of what Nina calls "the exile cycle" referring to texts that were written when the author was living abroad that share a strong sense of being away from a homeland (122-123). According to Nina, the cycle that lies beyond the exile cycle is the "nomadic" one, which is characterized by a strong first person narrator immersed in an ontological quest. This change in the author's writing positions *Passion* at the cusp of an inward turn for which Lispector is widely known, meaning that her later work--including this text--has gained much critical attention for its exploration of a subject represented through parsimonious and sometimes fragmented language (Fitz). Benedito Nunes finds these same qualities of the text to be some of the most original in modern Brazilian fiction: "É uma lente de aumento reveladora, que também abre para o leitor e para o critico, pelo poder de envolvimento da narrativa, a fronteira entre o real e o imaginário, entre linguagem e mundo, por onde jorra a fonte poética de toda ficção" (xxiv). Calling *Passion* a novel that opens the frontier between real and imaginary defines the text as a threshold that invites blurring the line between language and world, precisely the line I wish to explore in this chapter. At the same time, as both the turning point in the author's oeuvre and a corridor to a more porous understanding of the function of literature, the text calls for a critical reading of its spatial aspect. Recalling Foucault's work on historical constructions of subjectivity and the "care of the self" (*Hermeneutics of the Subject*), the narrator in *Passion* experiences a turn towards the self, an inward rotation that focuses our reading on the unchartered territories of subjectivity.

In spite of the use of spatial imagery in readings of Lispector's work, most critics focus on biographic examination. In fact, Nina's text is one of the few to point critical attention to the centrality of space in Lispector's work, inviting a more thorough analysis of her texts in general and in her key work in particular. What can

be gained through a spatially focused reading of *Passion* and what, if at all, is the relation between subjective exploration and the way Lispector treats space in her text? Is there a correlation between the physical space of the protagonist/narrator and the subjective processes she undergoes? Is this an example of subjective space, a place where the subject and space are intertwined in such a way that opens both of them for further analysis?

Passion is a fine example of the author's economic language that can be read as a breaking down of subjectivity itself. The narration is triggered by absence, though not in the traditional gendered analysis that deciphers the location of Woman in Western thought as symbolized by lack. After her black maid quits, the protagonist, G.H., decides to venture into the deserted room in the back of her otherwise familiar apartment with the pretence of reclaiming her private space. In the maid's empty room G.H. is confronted with her own racial stereotypes, which sets her on a nomadic journey inwards. She is obsessively focused on the most subtle specifics of her own thoughts and inner feelings, making the confrontation with the limits of race a call for crossing borders. The text focuses on the subjective experience of the protagonist, while being saturated with spatial images that make the inner journey a road into subjective space. G.H.'s perception of the actual physical space around her keeps getting smaller and more confined--from the apartment to the maid's room, from the room to the (empty) closet where she encounters a bug. These ever shrinking spatial circles echo the protagonist's concentration on her own subjective experience, suggesting that a confined space enables and opens a view to the inner parts of the subject. While there is a growing focus on the subject and the processes it experiences, this focus is accompanied by a diminished space so that going inward is both metaphorical and spatial.

In order to dive into this subjective space, I follow a nomadic path, using Rossi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects* as a cartographic and theoretical guide. In *Nomadic Subjects* Braidotti places her theory in dialogue with a line of feminist thought on the politics of positionality that call for an articulation of the complex yet defined set of spaces of enunciation of specific voices and texts, such that the case of Brazilian women retains its own particularities in relation to North American gender theories. Inspired by Deleuze's work on the topic,[10] Braidotti argues for a nomadic way of critical thinking: "[…] the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior" (5). The movement of the nomadic figure inspires Braidotti in articulating her perception of the subject in today's society as one that holds multiple affiliations, definitions, belongings and desires and consensually resists a fixed, monolithic definition. The nomad is constantly in a process of changing, transforming, redefining herself, becoming something new. It is not the figure of the person in exile or the fugitive that inspires this frame of thought, but rather the dislocation of the nomad, which is not voluntary per se, but a way of living, a constant preoccupation with ongoing change. Throughout *Nomadic Subjects* Braidotti explores this concept, defining and redefining it the same way she suggests we do we our own subjectivity. The nomadic subject, according to Braidotti, emerges from a multitude of identities and definitions of race, sex, sexual orientation, and nationalities and cannot be reduced to one definition. What is important is the becoming, the process of

[10] Braidotti criticizes Deleuze's work for not being aware enough about sexual difference, especially when he writes about "becoming woman," reading it as a privileged becoming for a subject that is undoubtedly male: "In other words, it seems to me that Deleuze's theory of becoming is obviously determined by his location as an embodied male subject for whom the dissolution of identities based on the phallus results in bypassing gender altogether, toward a multiple sexuality. This, however, may not be the option best suited to female embodied subjects" (122).

transforming into something new, and not necessary reaching a definite goal: "Nomadic shifts designate therefore a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge" (6). Thus, the nomad figure brings together "unlikely encounters," intersections of different experiences and representations, until an alternative subject is created. It is a way of rethinking the subject, inspired by a spatial metaphor and a sense of multiple belongings.

For Braidotti, the figure of the nomad and nomadic modes of thought in general are clearly ways of articulating an understanding of the subject that is alternative to the canonical phallocentric notions of subjectivity. As such Braidotti's is a political endeavor: "The nomadic subject is a myth, that is to say, a political fiction, that allows me to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges" (4). The nomad offers an alternative story, a narrative that tells of other beings, of subjects that are constructed along the lines of transgression of boundaries, crossing the limits between established ways of thought. Echoing Foucault's work on subjectivity and on power (a point I elaborated on in the introduction), Braidotti affirms that:

> If it was there [in language] before "I" came to be and will be there after "I" disappears, then the question of the constitution of the subject is not a matter of "internalization" of different codes but rather a process of negotiation between layers, sedimentations, registers of speech, frameworks of enunciation (14).

Although a more attuned reading of Foucault (as Judith Butler shows in *Subjects of Power*) reveals that it is not only through an exterior relation to power that the subject is constituted but rather by a double enactment of exteriority and interiority, Braidotti adds to this theory of subjection a vision of a subject that is layered. In other words, the nomadic subject in question is not only a play of exterior forces that press it into

being, or even a dual play of an inner opposition to external power, but a multifaceted being. This theory, or "political fiction" to use Braidotti's words, tells of a subject that is represented as a space where different registers and sedimentations are in constant negotiation. Thus, the subject is characterized through a relation to the positions and spaces it inhabits in a net of belongings and origins between which it constantly moves, while at the same time being constructed as multifaceted and layered.

Space stands out in my reading of *Nomadic Subjects* as being the privileged way of understanding both the construction and structure of the subject and its relation with other theories of subjectivity that the writer critiques. In fact, Braidotti briefly analyzes how the subject crosses various boundaries and taboos such as human/non-human in *Passion*. In her reading, G.H's story exemplifies a pervading connectivity between subject and space: "In this environment, G.H. will experience total depersonalization, or the failure of her socialized identity; this process of dissolution of the boundaries of the self is an experience both of expansion and of limitation of her subjectivity" (192). In spite of these intriguing statements, Lispector serves for Braidotti as a brief literary example, one on which she does not expand. Furthermore, Braidotti does not further develop the role of space in this alternative approach to subjectivity, nor does she expand on the topic of the spatial structure of the subject aside from fleeting commentaries. I wish to step through this open door I see in Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects* into Lispector's text, resisting a monolithic reading of the nomadic process the subject goes through in favor of focusing on this process's relation to space. As such, this is a dual (though not dichotomist) track; one trail follows the interiority of the subject, until the other treads the space that surrounds it, until at some point they collide.

The nomad in her own home

Much like other Lispectorian texts, *Passion* begins with an epigraph that is directed to "possíveis leitores"--a challenging invitation from the author written in the form of a poem: "Mas eu fiacria contente se fosse lido apenas/ por pessoas de alma já formada." From the beginning the author uses a conditional mode that opens the text as a door calling to potential readers. As readers we are therefore warned that we have to be of a "well formed soul," meaning a solid self that can withstand the destabilizing effects of the pages to follow:[11] "Auqeles que sabem que a aproximação/ do que quer que seja, se faz gradualmente e penosamente- atravesando inclusive/ o oposto daquilo que se vai aproximar." Lispector is thus pointing to the centrality of self in the text and then directing our attention to what will become a constant preoccupation: concern with an approximation to an undefined object and then transgressing its border. This ideal, well formed reader knows that in a nomadic search process the progression can be painfully slow, and that a growing proximity can cause one to lose perspective. The author thus prepares us for the heightened focus on the self, the subjectivity of the searcher who will be, in this case, the protagonist. Making clear that the danger of the search lies in transgressing a limit and reaching the other side, Lispector lays out a nomadic reading of the inner journey on which we will embark along with the protagonist.

The text opens in the middle of the page with six consecutive hyphens and then: "- - - - - -estou procurando, estou procurando" (11). The graphic symbols of the hyphens create a sense of continuation, as if we were entering the text in medias res,

[11] This invitation/warning to the reader is reminiscent of the famous Talmud fable in which four men enter an orchard and the only one to leave with his full capacities is the mature and knowledgeable one--the well formed adult. According to this particular Jewish philosophy, the orchard symbolizes the occult and the impact it has on different scholars such that one must have a solid self before entering.

jumping into an ongoing motion that had started prior to the reading (or writing) itself. The gerund verb form that follows emphasizes the search as a primordial part of the being; the first thing we learn of this first person narration is that it is in process. In other words, there is a motion in the space of the page, an "I" and a search. The object of this search is unknown to us, and will remain undefined. This is a nomadic search precisely because it is undefined, although it is not deprived of a sense of place since there are certain stops along the way. One of these stops is the reference to being: "Se eu me confirmer e me considerer verdadeira, estarei perdida porque não saberei onde engastar meo novo modo de ser- se eu for adiante nas minhas visões fragmentárias, o mundo inteiro terá que se tranformar par eu caber nele" (11). This still unnamed protagonist points our attention to her fictiveness, or at least to her questioning of the realness of her being. If she were to consider herself "real," whatever that means in this case, she would be lost, disoriented, without knowing how to encase herself in the world. The world will therefore have to change in order to fit her in, as is if it were an exterior containing a special form. Nevertheless, this questioning of the reality of the subject is not necessarily related to the nature of the text (usually read as fiction), but rather to the fictive nature of the subject. What we usually understand as the subject, or subjectivity, is not real, in the sense that it is not unified. As Judith Butler affirms in *The Psychic Life of Power*: "[…] the subject ought to be designated as a linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation" (10). Following Lispector, if the narrator were to consider herself "real" in the sense of a unified existence, she would be lost, would be unable to find her place and would therefore have to question how the world relates to her. This is, indeed, a text about the search for accordance between subject and world, a search that entails a

transformation for both.[12]

The narrator's nomadic process involves the method of searching. For once, she clearly refers to what I read as an alternative corporeality, as she mentions a loss of something that was not needed, a third leg that in fact impeded the narrator's movement (11). "Essa Terceira perna eu perdi. E voltei a ser uma pessoa que nunca fui" (12). This is a characteristic Lispectorian puzzle; the direct reference of the image remains vague for the reader, though the significance of the metaphor is not lost. The sense of loss is powerful, and so is the importance of mobility, strengthening my reading of the nomadic search and the spatial presence of the road in this text. Following the loss of this impeding third leg is the wonderful return to something one never was before--a discovery of self that is based on mobility. This first section of the text is consequently dominated by images of walking and traveling, highlighting the importance of roads, disorientation, and getting lost and finding oneself (13, 14). In other words, newfound mobility permits the narrator to be the self she never was, as well as to wander the roads freely. This is not to be read as a simplistic and ideal roaming about, but rather as a metaphoric search for a way inward, a nomadic search that manifests itself through language and writing.

Writing takes, from this stage onward, a privileged place in the connection between the subject and movement, subject and world. The narrator is trying to find a way to express something that has happened to her: "Terei que fazer a palavra como se fosse criar o que me aconteceu?" (21). The need to create and mold words in her effort to tell the story is a meta-literary trope pointing to the materiality of the words

[12] The word "transformation" here is one of the first references to Kafka's famous short story "The Metamorphosis" about the travelling salesman who is transformed into a bug overnight. There are several correlations between *Passion* and "Metamorphosis," and while critical readings of the text usually focus on the figure of the bug, here our attention is called to the trope of transformation.

themselves. She continues: “Entender é uma criação, meu único modo. Precisarei con esforço traduzir sinais de telégrafo- traduzir o desconhecido para uma língua que desconheço, e sem sequer entender para que valem os sinais” (21). The act of telling is merely the translation of an experience into a language the narrator does not even know. Thus, understanding is not really possible but is still the only way to travel this road, following signals that are strange and unknown. The telegraph (tele: “far” and graph: “writing”) is an appropriate metaphor in this context since it draws an image of a writing that is transferred through space, divided into lines that trace a determined place. Having to translate the staccato signs of the electric telegraph is, indeed, like translating the unknown into another foreign language. This in an artistic task, one that ties together the subject’s creativity with the way writing is transferred, according to the metaphor, through wires and poles spread over the country. Much like the inventor of the telegraph and the Morse code, Samuel Morse (who was also a painter), the text depicts the cartographic nature of writing, a message that passes through a certain space. The actual signals that pass through this telegraph, the form of the letters and the materiality of language, take on ontological significance for the narrating subject: “[…] mesmo quando eu fazia esculturas eu já tentava apenas reproduzir, e apenas con as mãos. Fiacarei perdida entre a mudez dos sinais? (21). This is the first “real”--as in autobiographic--detail we are provided regarding the narrator; she used to be a sculptor, something she will return to mentioning briefly in the following pages. Here, however, the act of telling is compared to the reproduction of form; creating sculptures is like producing a story with an unfamiliar language, forging matter into form, translating an idea into physical presence. The language that is created is a way of telling something that cannot be transmitted, something that is lost in translation, so that the narrator herself questions whether, once she reproduces

this language, she will be lost between the silences of the signals. With the metaphor of the telegraph we can consider language as a code that is transmitted across space in a cartographic line of meaning, a delicate connection that can be severed or lost at any point. Being lost in translation can be, for this protagonist, a reference to a point in the middle of the route between the utterance of the message and its reception.

Right from the first section of *Passion*, even prior to any occurrence, we encounter the poles in the telegraphic line of the text that will be chief actors: being, space, and language. Language with its capability of being transmitted across space is central to Lispectorian texts, as is noted by Fitz in *Sexuality and Being in the Poststructuralist World of Clarice Lispector:* "When we read a text like […] *Passion According to G.H.* […] we find ourselves participating in a paean to human existence as defined by language, a poststructuralist poem that, by showing us how words ceaselessly make and remake us, finally transcends being as stasis and becomes being as process" (30). Fitz focuses on the workings of language; however, this quote stands out for my reading since it points to the nomadic aspects of the text. In other words, the visible connection between language and being in *Passion* describes not only the centrality of language in the formation of the subject, but how this privileged connection is punctuated by silences and signals that are combined to create meaning, a nomadic and precarious process much like the telegraph. In the Lispectorian text, the process of crafting words causes events that become central to being, and requires a spatial form of its own. This form can be compared to Morse code signals, a meaning that is composed of silences and a limited array of signals. How can meaning be transmitted through space in such a limited way and what happens if we focus on the silences that compose language instead of words?

Encasement is crucial to this spatialization of language and being. As Castillo

notes regarding another text by Lispector--*Agua viva*--although the English translation of the book's title is *The Stream of Life*, the Portuguese refers both to living water and to a medusa, a microorganism that is encased with a membrane, a thin protective carapace like the cockroach in *Passion* (193-194). This is crucial for my reading of the text, since it emphasizes spatiality and the importance of being encased within thin boundaries. Much like this membrane, the narrator experiences herself and her sense of identity through a certain encasement, as we learn upon learning her name: "O resto era o modo como pouco a pouco eu havia me transformado da pessoa que tem o meu nome. E acabei sendo o meu nome. É suficiente ver no couro de minhas valises as iniciais G.H., e eis-me" (25). This wonderful image of the suitcases with the narrator's name on them stresses two aspects of the text that are of interest: on the one hand we witness the becoming and the process the subject goes through in order to be transformed into the person who bears a certain name, as if finding a way to be in accordance with a placeholder that is one's name in a specific society. The initials on the suitcases place the subject within a determined social discourse and by doing so they function as the binding act and the performative repetition of a name, a way to claim a unified (coherent) and easily read subjectivity. A woman of a certain economic class is characterized and expected to be a person of means, someone who travels with the right luggage. On the other hand, the transformation into oneself that Lispector suggests, as in the discursive function of a name, is inscribed on the narrator's suitcases, containers that hold her belongings when traveling. In this manner, the subject is depicted as a continuous and disrupted occurrence that struggles to fit into the way it is labeled and named, a subject that carries a precarious connection with traveling. G.H. is, therefore, not only an artistic middle class woman who has the means to travel; she is also a subject that questions the relation between

the name and what it holds. These are sedentary suitcases that constantly serve as reminders of a nomadic negotiation of being. Although these suitcases remain closed in the text, every other aspect of the outer shell of the subject is being unraveled.

The importance of the membrane that encases the subject becomes even more crucial when we focus on the actual space of the narration. Throughout the text Lispector depicts a series of physical limits to the narrator: she is located within her apartment and will only go into smaller spaces. Another way of pointing our attention to the importance of limits and the framing of the subject is the captivating metaphor of the photo of herself: "Essa imagem de mim entre aspas me satisfazia, e não apenas superficialmente. Eu era a imagem do que eu não era, e essa imagem do não-ser me cumulava toda: um dos modos mais fortes é ser negativmante" (31). It is this reference to the image of the self, placed within the frame of a photo, that brings to mind the limits to the image, the visible borders that satisfy the narrator. This frame functions as quotation marks in the sense that they mark a beginning and an end to the image, but also help tie together the photographic image--the visual aspect of the protagonist--with the act of writing and the materiality of punctuation marks. In this sense, what the narrator sees in between the borders of the photograph is the image of what she no longer is: a direct reference to the loss of that third leg and the continuous process of subjective change. This image of "not-being" is a reflection of the protagonist, a negation of self that serves as a reverse mirror, one that reflects the opposite of the viewer. Negation is therefore one of the first steps the protagonist takes in the process of her nomadic becoming, reflecting on what she is not in relation to images and boundaries. With our attention set to boundaries and containing limits, we continue reading and encounter more space.

The apartment in which G.H. lives is similar to the quotation marks on the

edge of the photo, as well as to the suitcases with her initials. Most analytic readings of Lispector take the descriptions of the apartment as an indirect characterization of the protagonist--her way of life, her social standing, etc. However, the connection between the narrating subject and her space take on ontological force when we view them as the terrain in which the nomadic process takes place. As mentioned before, the story begins when G.H decides to clean and tidy the recently vacated maid's room herself: "Arrumar é achar a melhor forma" (33). Organizing is given the importance of finding the best form for something, not only in relation to the untidy, empty room, but to the search for form that drives the text. When we remember that the protagonist is a sculptor, the search for form receives a new meaning. The final object of this cleaning and organizing expedition is G.H. herself: "Depois, da cada cauda do apartamento, iria aos poucos "subindo" horizontalmente até o seu lado oposto que era o living, onde- como se eu propia fosse o ponto final da arrumação e da manhã- leria o jornal, deitada no sofá, e provavelmente adormecendo" (34). That is to say, the culmination of cleaning the apartment and tidying the maid's room which is supposed to be filthy (34) will be a turn to herself. This is not just a spatial term, but also has an inward directionality. Reading the newspaper is the final exercise in the search for form as G.H. tries to organize her own being according to the unmentioned norm of a middle class woman who keeps abreast of worldly news. Cleaning is finding the best form, not only for the space the narrator inhabits, but for being itself.

Space has specific descriptions and a determined location. It is an apartment in Rio de Janeiro, on the 13th floor in a high-rise building:

> Olhei para baixo: treze andares caíam do edifício. Eu não sabia que tudo aquilo já fazia parte do que ia a acontecer. Mil vezes antes o movimiento provavelmente iria ao fim, e eu não pressentia.
>
> Olhei a área interna, o fundo dos apartamentos para os quais o meu

> apartamento também se via como fundos. Por fora meo prédio era branco, com lisura de mármore e lisura de superficie. Mas por dentro a área interna era um amontoado oblíquo de chuvas, janela arreganhada contra janela, bocas olhando bocas (35).

This seemingly descriptive paragraph of a building in an urban area--an apartment that overlooks a patio with surfaces of marble and glass--takes on a different meaning through the reflective narrating voice. The look down from the window is already part of what's about to happen; the movement of looking outside as if from a tower marks the first steps taken in the direction of the protagonist's becoming. Likewise, the look towards the patio shows a play of surfaces and perspectives; her own apartment can be seen as a center for her gaze, but also as background for others. This grid of urban scenery is a mixture of manmade surfaces that seem smooth and even, but from the inside is in fact an assembly of organic openings, mouths facing each other. This view of the building inside which the protagonist is located is a mixture of interiority and exteriority, as well as organic and inorganic, closed and open surfaces, at the same time that it is the only reference to an actual space that is not the apartment interior itself. Thus, even the view outside directs the reader's attention to the symbolic nature of space, or the subjective space in which windows can seem like open mouths. Going into one of these mouths, like going into one of the suitcases, moves the narrator's journey as well as ours in shrinking circles that focus on the smallest, albeit not insignificant, details of space and subject.

Bugs and other Others

Yet, what is this story really about? What is Lispector telling, or rather, what's going on in this book that is beyond (or beneath) questions of space and subjectivity? The simplest answer: G.H. wants to clean the maid's room; inside it she encounters two surprises that make her question her beliefs and stereotypes. The maid's deserted

room is the center and scenery for the rest of the nomadic process the protagonist undergoes. It is located at the back of the apartment, the place where one deposits unnecessary objects, one's personal maid being one of them in this case. Crossing into this room, entering this space, triggers a physical feeling of inconvenience since G.H. was expecting to find it messy, not clean and tidy as the maid had left it (37). Lispector is very subtle in the way she portrays the protagonist's stereotypes of the maid; however, there is no doubt that the key element that sets in motion the intense process she will go through is the encounter with her perception of otherness: "Na minha casa fresca, aconchegada e úmida, a criada sem me avisar abrirá um vazio seco. Tratava-se agora de um aposento todo limpo e vibrante como num hostipal de loucos onde se retira os objetos perigosos" (38). Thanks to the maid's care for her own space, G.H. opens the door onto another space, this different space inside the protagonist's apartment in which there are other conditions and another kind of weather. Contrary to the humidity desired by G.H. that is so characteristic of Rio de Janeiro's climate, the room is now dry and empty. This emptiness reminds the protagonist of a mental hospital where "dangerous objects" are placed, a container that invites and holds non-normative ways of being.[13] In other words, the maid has managed not only to clean and organize the room, but also to change its climate, and in that way it has become challenging and dangerous for G.H. The maid is not quite gone, as her impact on the space that supposedly is under G.H's control is still felt. She is a powerful presence in the apartment, even when she is not physically there.

In addition to the different climate, the protagonist experiences another

[13] Foucault's work on this topic in *History of Madness* comes to mind, especially his research on the ship of fools with its function as the vessel that contains all who are suspected of being insane (8-10). Being an enclosed space that is constructed to confine the abject in a never ending journey across the water, the ship of fools is an example of a nomadic form of being founded on a journey.

transformation since even the physical location of the room now seems to her "estar em nível incomparavelmente acima do próprio apartamento. Como um minarete" (38). Space--or the experience of space--is transformed so that the room feels like it is as high as a minaret. This reference to the minaret is the first of many that carry the weight of other cultures, exotic places, and faraway lands. Much like the suitcases, the text constantly alludes to traveling to other places without the protagonist's physical travelling, as if marking Foucault's other spaces--hetero topias--that are superimposed on common places. Even before G.H. transgresses into the domain of the maid she experiences this space, which is supposed to be a representation of her presence, as different, oriental: "Não ser inteiramente regular nos seus ángulos dava-lhe uma impressão de fragilidade de base como se o quarto-minarete não estivesse incrustado no apartamento nem no edificio" (38). After a description of the angles and shapes of the room, the protagonist reaches the conclusion that the room appears as if it wasn't set in the apartment. This classic Lispectorian subjunctive phrase cannot be taken lightly, since the journey that G.H. begins in this space exactly traverses the most foreign and strange lands of her own being. The author's "as if" brings together two kinds of spaces at the same time; the reader realizes the room is part of the apartment but also that it is experienced as being elsewhere. In this way the same space is part of two different sets of meaning: the here and the there. The physical space of the room in relation to the apartment and in relation to G.H.'s own experience of space has changed, and so are the rules inside it.

To top these climactic and spatial changes, on the walls inside the protagonist finds the first surprise, a charcoal drawing of three images: a naked man and woman, and a dog. It's a creation in the artistic as well as in the mythic sense, a footprint, an evidence of a free and mindful self: "O desenho não era um ornamento: era uma

escrita" (40). What is so alarming in a drawing on the wall? What does it say? What is so threatening for the protagonist in finding these three figures? The answer lies in the way the protagonist views the maid's presence in her space. G.H. tries to remember her face but cannot: "Quis lembrar-me de seu rosto, e admirada não consegui- de tal modo que ela acabara de me excluir de minha própria casa, como se me tivesse fechado a porta e me tivesse deixado remota en relação à minha moradia" (40). Using the familiar subjunctive mode, Lispector poses an unlikely possibility--as if--stressing the subjective effect that this room has on G.H. We are aware of the fact that room is not closed and does not shut her out in her own apartment, yet we can relate to the protagonist's perception. The subjunctive mode is an effective trope in this context, since it keeps the reader's attention on two foci, much like G.H. herself: the sentence can refer to two spaces or two different experiences of reality. The subjunctive is part of what triggers the protagonist's inner journey and what directs our attention into the subjective space. The transformation of the room is threatening precisely because it changes the actual space, so that for G.H. it is as if she has been left outside, as if this room was taken from her possession since she no longer controls its appearance.

In a way, the protagonist's encounter with this space is an impossible meeting between a middle class, presumably white woman with her usually quiet black maid. When she describes the maid preceding this encounter she uses adjectives such as "dark," "invisible," "quiet," "with features of an African queen"--all stereotypic ways of looking at otherness in relation to the protagonist (41). At the same time, following the discovery of the drawings, Janair is named for the first time, becoming "a primeira pessoa realmente exterior de cujo olhar eu tomava consciencia" (40). This is a powerful meeting between the two, one that is enabled only through absence. The drawing on the wall, the writing in fact, is the first step in an impossible dialogue

between two women who used to share the same space and never, we assume, broke the social standards of a relationship between an employer and an employee. G.H. imagines Janair's message to be one of hate, something that may very well be true when one considers the power relations between the two, although we of course never find out. Nevertheless, Lispector raises here a charged encounter between subject and other, one that for G.H. becomes the first time she acknowledges her maid as having her own subjectivity. In other words, this is an example of what lies between the subject and what she perceives as an exterior, exotic object (as we saw in the references to the oriental minaret), inviting the consequential transformation of that Other into subject.

The otherness of the black maid, who had recreated the room as a dried desert in contrast to Rio de Janeiro's humidity, brings me to rethink the category of Other as personified through the spatially characterized concept of Orientalism. Working through texts by Eduard Said and Frantz Fanon, Sarah Ahmed offers a fresh and relevant insight into the term: "The Orient is the 'not Europe' through which the boundaries between Europe and what is 'not Europe' are established as a way of 'locating' a distinction between self and other" (2006, 114). Ahmed is talking here about an otherness that is established through space, as well as the production of whiteness on the cultural and corporal level. The other, then, is what establishes the boundary of the speaking subject, assuming that the definition is generated in "Europe." The Orient is that faraway land that lies beyond the boundaries of what is perceived as center, so that the distinction between self and other is constituted in space. In addition, otherness is associated according to Ahmed with the mobility and directionality of bodies, such that the "Orient" is a horizon, a potentiality of an action, something to reach or from which to distance oneself. In this sense, othering is not

simply a form of negation (the Orient is everything that Europe is not), but a form of extension I can reach with my body (115). The Other here in Ahmed is linked to the construction of race and the distinction between "white" and "non-white" subjects; however, it can of course be understood through many different categories that are based on the distinction between subject and other. For example, the assertion that: "Whiteness is only invisible for those who inhabit it, or for those who get so used to its inhabitants that they learn not to see it, even when they are not it" (133). The same can be said about the invisibility of gender when one inhabits or is accustomed to passing as the dominate gender; when one does not inhabit the "proper" body or gender performance, normative gender categories become visible through processes of othering. In any case, inhabiting the right body, according to Ahmed, is what allows an individual to have social mobility--moving "up" in the world depends on what is below (138). Inhabiting a "black, quiet, and invisible" body like Janair's serves as the Other to G.H.'s body, it is no surprise that Lispector's protagonist does not provide any details as to her own appearance. Being the speaking subject and presumably white, she only needs to mention the maid's otherness to distinguish herself.

Mobility is especially interesting when we consider that the protagonist's apartment in *Passion* is located in a tall building from which the protagonist looks down, as if to remind us of the foundations that lay beneath her. The maid's disappearance is also telling since she did not go in any specific direction but simply is not there, such that her absence is the strongest presence in the room, as communicated through the drawings. In other words, she did not move "up" or "down" from her position as a maid, but is simply gone, vanished into thin air.

The otherness of this maid is even more difficult for G.H. to encounter since it

is located and even encased in her own home. As Ahmed affirms when speaking of the experience of traveling as an Other: "While the stranger may not be 'at home,' the stranger only becomes a stranger by coming too close to home. The politics of mobility, of who gets to move with ease across the lines that divide spaces, can be re-described into inhabitable spaces, as spaces that are inhabitable as they extend the surfaces of such bodies" (142). In other words, certain bodies feel more at home than others in certain spaces when referring to race, and strangers become Other when they are close enough to be different, to be a threat to the inhabitants of a certain space. Janair's lingering existence in the apartment is a threat to G.H. because it is so close, affecting the protagonist's own space. Her body, silent or not, reflects otherness by simply extending itself into space, a process that also accounts for G.H.'s strong reaction to the charcoal drawings: black markings on her white wall. Nevertheless, G.H. specifically says that through the encounter with Janair she experiences for the first time the existence of someone external to herself. In this sense, Janair functions as a transmission agent, allowing the nomadic journey to take place without being able to benefit from its results. Nomadism requires signs and messages in an unfamiliar language, but they only have room for one, and that one is G.H.

The maid's name and its allusion to another culture can also offer some insight into her function in the text. Olga de Sá analyzes further this absent character:

> A empregada, pelo nome (Janair/Janaína, outro nome de Iemanjá) e por seus traços, leva o leitor a associá-la a ritos africanos. Por outro lado, nomeando as múmias do Egito, os hieróglifos, os sarcófagos, o deserto, as salamandras e os grifos, o texto fornece-nos elementos de ambiência oriental (Edição crítica, 220).

Within the Brazilian context where society is multiracial and yet plagued with an un-even distribution of economic and social power, the maid is still black, and the employer is still white. Nonetheless, Janair is marked as Other through two spatial

belongings: on the one hand she is of African descent, and on the other she is associated with the "Orient." This duality of belongings also manifests through the name that Lispector chooses for this character since Janair, or Iemanjá in the Afro-Brazilian tradition, is in fact an Orisha, a feminine deity who is the mother of the ocean and the patron saint of shipwreck survivors, as well as the feminine principle of creation. Janair also echoes the word "Janeiro," the month of January in Portuguese, named after Janus, the Roman male deity responsible for beginnings. Janus is depicted in Roman art as having two faces that point to the east and to the west, so that he is symbolically facing the past and the future. Janair is therefore not only a combination of two spaces--Africa and the Orient--but also a mixture of religions and of genders. She is the hybrid Other that is in charge of creation and new beginnings, facing east and west, oriented and "westerned" at the same time.

Recognizing the protagonist's positionality in space and her directionality in relation to Janair is part of the process G.H. undergoes: "Eu me preparara para limpar coisas sujas mas lidar com aquela ausência me desnoerteava" (43). In Portuguese the word for "oriented" is "norteada," as if the Other by which one positions oneself is the north and not the east as it is in the English language. One could say that speaking from a peripheral location that was "discovered" late in world history, Brazilian Portuguese marks "otherness" as what lies over there, in the north, possibly North America. Following Ahmed's logic, the north functions here as a directionality of the body, a horizon of possibilities as well as a conceptual boundary. As the main trigger for the nomadic transformation that G.H. experiences, Janair has a privileged position as the character that represents corporeal and spatial otherness: a mixture of European and African cultures and of creations and beginnings. Though not even present, Janair is the first Other that becomes personified for the protagonist, the first one to become

subject. Finally, we must not overlook the first impression that Janair's name gives, referring us back to the name of the actual city where this nomadic process takes place: Rio de Janeiro. In spite of the alternative--or queer--spelling, Janair refers to Janeiro in a way that links the maid's presence to the physical place of narration. Lispector's choice of name brilliantly portrays a union of faraway otherness and an inherent connection to the space of narration as well as of the writing itself. The other-turned-subject can be seen, in fact, as a personification of the city Rio de Janeiro, though this might be a farfetched conclusion. Nonetheless, the many possibilities that this name proposes for the reader turn the missing maid into the only subject that G.H. recognizes, as well as a multiple and layered being with contradicting histories and nomadic belongings.

This process of subjectification of the Other becomes more detailed and intricate when we reach the second surprise that G.H. encounters in her nomadic becoming. The room, violated by Janair's transforming effects, now feels like a threat: "era uma violentação das minhas aspas, das aspas que faziam de mim uma citação de mim. O quarto era o retrato de um estômago vazio" (42). G.H. reminds us of the photo and the importance of framing herself inside clear margins, and through that image she now explains how the membrane was breached and why she feels violated. Entering the room is like going into an empty stomach that can swallow her whole, a vacant space and not a comforting one--not holding, but restraining. This stomach is part of the imagery that depicts a structured subject, layered and filled with hollow spaces. Being part of the apartment, this particular space forces us to consider the house not only as a representation of the protagonist's personality, but as an actual body. Dealing with the unexpected emptiness has a disorienting effect for G.H. that parallels her encounter with a different notion of otherness than she had expected. Her

own position within space is changed, becomes uncertain and confused. This is why she goes in with even more intent and looks for something she can clean, for at least messiness will help her verify her previous expectations of the space where the maid used to be. From the clean and empty room she turns to the even smaller space of the closet, opens the door, and sees a bug. This insect and its effects on the protagonist take a substantial role in the text, so much so that the image that one is left with after reading the book is the encounter between G.H. and the bug. In fact, on the cover of the latest edition of *Passion* there is a drawing of a faint woman and a bug, conjuring the importance this cockroach has for the reader.

In any case, the protagonist's first reaction is a direct reference to Sartre's influential text *Nausea* (1938). Sartre's existential preoccupations are echoed in Lispector's writing and in G.H.'s self-reflective process, as has been noted by other scholars (Fitz, 1985, 11, 37). However, the sickness the narrating protagonist feels is not the only, nor the prevailing reaction.[14] In the first instance of the encounter with the bug, G.H. experiences an avalanche of dark feelings: "A lembrança de minha pobreza em criança, com percevejos, goteiras, baratas e ratos, era de como um meu passado pré-histórico, eu já havia vivido com os primeiros bichos da Terra" (48). In another gesture towards the protagonist's past, the cockroach is linked with childhood memories of poverty and difficult living conditions, as if to explain the feelings it triggers. The protagonist's past is, for her, Prehistory: a time before time, distinguished from History, as we know, by the invention of writing. Prehistory, for her, is the time of primacy and suffering, before she was herself, before she became

[14] Ahmed: "Every experience I have had of pleasure and excitement about a world opening up has begun with such ordinary feelings of discomfort; of not quite fitting in a chair, of becoming unseated, of being left holding into the ground." (154) The protagonist's feeling of discomfort when she encounters both Janair's presence and the bug is a prelude, as we will see, to her revelation of new worlds.

who she is and certainly before knowing how to write and to search for form through sculpture. This brief moment provides part of the explanation for the feelings that follow: fear (52), hatred (53) and a desire to kill (53). "Levantei a mão como para um juramento, e num só golpe fechei a porta sobre o corpo meio emergido da barata - - - - - - - - - - - - - -" (53). This violent act of trying to kill the menacing being that peeps through the closet door ends the phrase with a succession of hyphens, a line of 15 gashes in the space of the page, like symbolic cuts in the textual space. The bug is almost cut in half by the closet door but it is not dead; it is stuck there, half way in and half way out, dying. It is, much like the previous words used to describe Lispector's writing, on the threshold, turning our critical gaze onto liminality. The immediate result of her violent actions against this otherness is paralyzing, fixing the threat in an intermediate condition that is both stasis and change. With respect to space this Other is immobile (it cannot disappear like Janair did); with respect to time the bug now goes into a slow process of dying. G.H. is capable of violence, and this revelation transforms her.

Part of the process of transformation lies in the protagonist's observations of the cockroach that are, for the most part, structural: "E eis que eu descobria que, apesar de compacta, ela é formada de cascas e cascas pardas, finas como as de uma cebola, como se cada uma pudesse ser levantada pela unha e no entanto sempre aparecer mais uma casca, e mais uma" (56). The bug is made of thin layers according to G.H., a series of shells or peels, like an onion. When we think back to the function of the margins in the photo, the encasing suitcases with her initials, and the importance of the space of the apartment, this image of the bug acquires greater meaning. This description of the bug reads as remarkably similar to the long series of cases and physical boundaries that are a crucial part of the protagonist's own being.

Through the spatial aspect of subjectivity Lispector establishes a similarity between the protagonist and this crushed, abject being. As Castillo has noted, Lispector frequently uses images of beings that are marked by a membrane or a boundary that barely holds them (like the medusa), and the bug is no different. However, the bug's skeleton is external to the body and not inside it as in mammals; it is the part of the bug that we see. Anatomically speaking, the bug is held together by its exoskeleton, making it a being that is held by physical boundaries, walls that sustain an inside. The cockroach inhabits its body quite literally, if we can say that, since it is kept by its skeleton. Having an exoskeleton enables movement and life, so that, unlike the human body that resides within its largest and most elastic organ--that is, the skin that can bleed and repair itself--the bug quite literally cannot live without the walls of its body. In other words, the cockroach is a peculiar example for Lispector to choose for this text as it has a different relation to its own boundaries, one that emphasizes their crucial importance.[15] While G.H. can question boundaries and transgress them in approaching this other, for the bug, exiting its own boundaries is part of another process, that of death.

We have now reached the final space of exploration. Starting with the large apartment, G.H. goes into the back room, and then her gaze is directed (oriented) into the closet. The bug, with its layers of dark matter and external skeleton, is the smallest physical space that G.H. explores, and as such it directs her to look inwards: "É que eu olhara a barata viva e nela descobria a identitade de minha vida mais profunda. Em derrocada difícil, abriam-se dentro de mim passagens duras a estreitas" (57). G.H.

[15] In a sense, the cockroach's exoskeleton resembles the metaphor of the egg that Lispector uses on several occasions. Specifically in the short story "Amor" (*Laços de familia*), the breaking of eggs symbolizes a rupture in the protagonist's relation with normative routines that sets her off on an existential search for meaning. However, in "Amor" the eggshells simply break and are not sustained on the threshold of a continued process of crushing as with the cockroach.

discovers in the bug she just now tried to kill a reflection of her innermost life, thus establishing a solid connection between the two beings. The discovery of her inner life, a subjective awakening, is described with an image of a series of passages opening inside the self that recall the mythological implications of Janair's name. For Lispector, the journey inside the apartment and into the smallest space that the protagonist can find is a way to direct our attention and the narration's focus to the inner space of the self, the subjective space that opens up for G.H. as well as for us, the readers. The encounter with these two others--the maid and the bug--awakens dark stereotypes and even violence for the protagonist, but its result is a long gaze into the inner parts of the subject. Framed by walls, doors and suitcases, G.H. has awakened and cannot go back now.

Can I also taste a bug?

With her eyes fixed on this bug, G.H. continues inwards, exploring her subjective space. Part of entering this space (of the room and of the self in extension) involves a construction of gender and its connection with subjectivity: "E quem entrasse de transformaria num 'ela' ou num 'ele.' Eu era aquela a quem o quarto chamava de 'ela.' Ali entrara um eu a que o quarto dera uma dimensão de ela. Como se eu fosse também o outro lado do cubo, o lado que não se vê porque se está vendo de frente" (60). For this particular self, entering this room means being read as a "she." In fact, the space has the capacity and the function of giving the I, the subject, a gendered identity, which the protagonist describes as a dimension. In this way gender is an aspect of the subject that is like dimensionality, a depth that is experienced as spatial and is narrated through writing. Notice the way Lispector introduces different gender options inside quotation marks to emphasize an arbitrary result; one can be

"she" or "he," and in this case the protagonist is a "she" without any further explanation. Writing allows the protagonist to visually encase gender options as if inside a suitcase or picture frame, since the "she" is distinguished from other words in the same sentences by quotation marks. At the same time, Lispector chooses the metaphor of dice, with their distinctive relation to chance, as if one becomes gendered depending on happenstance. The cube is an interesting choice in this case, since it enables a non-dichotomist representation of gender that allows for more options than the normative "male" or "female."[16] The author then clearly remarks that in this case the subject is a she (no quotation marks after the first time, to mark that the protagonist is already gendered) because she is seen from one perspective and that from a different perspective she can be of another gender. In other words, the entrance to this specific space and the understanding of space in general in this text determines the particular way in which the subject is constituted and gendered.

The movement of entering, on the one hand, is accompanied by its other, exiting; the protagonist enters the room and focuses inward on her subjective space, while the bug secretes "matéria branca" from its body. In this way, the process of focusing on the defined space of the subject is accompanied by the opening of other spaces, different terrains that account for nomadic processes. For example: "[…] eu estava saindo de meu mundo e entrando no mundo" (63). The encounter with otherness makes the protagonist leave her own inner world and enter "the" world, calling attention to the existence of what lies outside the self. This is not a peaceful or an easy process, since G.H. explicitly dots her experiences of epiphanies with painful

[16] Fitz mentions on several occasions that Lispector is an author interested in exploring the boundaries of gender as a category, including transgendered subjects, characters who, by means of the language that they use to inscribe themselves and that is used to describe them, go beyond gender-bound identities (2001, 55). A clear example is Lispector's short story "Where You Were at Night" in which the main protagonist is referred to as He/She and She/He alternately.

reactions: “Olhei para o quarto onde eu me aprisionara, e buscava uma saída, desesperadamente procurava escaper, e dentro de mim já recuara tanto que minha alma se encostara até a parede” (64). Although entering subjective space creates an unprecedented empathy with the other as well as revelations about the outer world, G.H. feels like a prisoner in this room. The feeling of restriction and searching for the way out is nevertheless leads to her soul, since it recedes inside herself and reclines on the wall in a remarkable contrast between the inside and outside of the subject. In a way, while the protagonist remains inside the room, she is also inside herself, marking subjectivity as a location of enunciation that is dependent on corporeal existence. The soul, in this case, is a way of distinguishing the self from the body, recounting the prior example of a gendering that occurs inside space--if the body is described as the space of the soul, with walls that hold it, then gendering also happens in conjunction with this specific space.

This sense of entering and exiting the body in a nomadic process is part of G.H.’s fight against the self (65), but it also levels the playing field between the protagonist and the bug: “Eu, corpo neutro de barata, eu com uma vida que finalmente não me escapa pois enfim a vejo fora de mim- eu sou a barata, sou minha perna, sou meus cabelos, sou o trecho de luz mais branca no reboco da parede […]” (65). G.H. is becoming. She is becoming an animal, becoming a bug, becoming Other. Being outside herself and identifying with the other is indeed symbolic in the sense that she still has her human form. Nonetheless, she is able to see her own body as if she were dwelling inside the bug. And this becoming, accompanied by actions and reactions, is an intense turning towards the self, constantly facing inwards. “É que por enquanto a metamorfose de mim em mim mesma não faz nenhum sentido. É uma metamorfose em que perco tudo o que eu tinha, e o que eu tinha era eu- só tenho o que sou” (67).

The becoming of the subject goes through an understanding and empathy with the most complete other the protagonist can find; it is a metamorphosis, a change of form that implies losing something. In becoming herself she loses her prior self, similar to the first example of the third leg that is now gone. In order to become new she needs to lose what she had before, and all she had was herself. Metamorphosis is a change of form, but here involves an inner form, as that which is changed and becomes in this text is the subject and not her corporality. Unlike Gregor Samsa, Kafka's protagonist in *The Metamorphosis*, G.H. does not become an actual cockroach with human interiority; she simply becomes other, tries to experience a corporality that is other. Becoming is a key part of the nomadic subject, as Braidotti explains: "Nomadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation, but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness" (5). And indeed, G.H. does not become similar to the bug by reproducing its form. Rather, she grows increasingly close to its being, trying to be as connected to the bug as she can. It is a blurring of a boundary without burning bridges.

This specific kind of proximity to the other is undeniably forbidden, as Lispector reminds us through the narrator: "Eu me sentia imunda como a Bíblia fala dos imundos. […] E por que o imundo era proibido? Eu fizera o ato proibido de tocar no que é imundo" (71). Taking as a point of departure the protagonist's new-found empathy for the bug, and in fact her feeling of being one herself, Lispector stresses the difficulty of this becoming. By recalling the biblical law of kosher and impure animals, G.H. places herself on the other side of the fence, so to speak, as one of the filthy, an abomination. After all, most insects including cockroaches are forbidden for eating in Jewish law. The image of the bug, therefore, is not only an abject animal that causes social reactions of disgust; it is determined by biblical law to be impure and

unclean. Lispector again emphasizes that her protagonist is familiar with Jewish law, while reflecting on the solidification of otherness through a particular animal.[17] Why is it that bugs cause such reaction, from biblical times till now? What is it in this specific animal that is so repulsive? Regardless of the answer, G.H. is determined to touch the abject being in her quest to get as close as possible to the Other.

Touching this abject other is, apparently, a part of becoming Other that G.H. must experience in her process. This other, like the first other, is a feminine being: "De vez en quando, por um leve átimo, a barata mexia as antennas. Seus olhos continuavam monotonamente a me olhar, os dois ovaries neutros e férteis. Neles eu reconhecia meus dois anônimos ovaries neutros." (91). In the Portuguese language a bug is already a feminine noun, and Lispector continually equates it to other feminine beings. There is something very powerful in the thought of two ovaries staring at the protagonist from the face of this dying creature and moreover, G.H. recognizes her own feminine corporality in them. In other words, the bug's eyes are now reminiscent of human physiology to such an extent that it reflects the protagonist's own corporality. G.H.'s inner organs seem to be on the surface of her body, reflected in the bug's imagined human form. While entering into the subjective space of the room had a gendering effect on the protagonist, the encounter with the bug, as well as being visibly reflected in the bug's eyes, takes this process further by exteriorizing G.H.'s feminine corporality. What is gendered in G.H. after entering the room has a way of reversing exteriority with interiority, in addition to questioning exactly which part of the self is gendered. These inter-subjective relations transform both sides; the bug is

[17] Lispector's connection with her Jewish heritage is a topic that needs more exploration. The author denied, for example, knowing Yiddish, but her elder sister, Elisa Lispector, confirmed that it was spoken at home and that the young Clarice understood that language (Peixoto, xvii). In *Passion* Lispector refers to both Christian and Jewish texts, showing her familiarity with both traditions. More can be found on the rich Christian-mythic aspect of the text in "Paródia e Matefísica" by Olga de Sá in the *Edição Critica*.

anthropomorphized, the woman becomes animal: "Para escaper do neutro, eu há muito havia abandonado o ser pela persona, pela mascara humana" (93).[18] The protagonist points to the gap she perceives between being and being a person, the latter being a mask one carries, a performance. In order to be in touch with her being she is obliged to abandon her previous human mask, her performance of a normative white woman of a certain class. Ironically, becoming other eventually puts the protagonist in contact with her own subjectivity.

This becoming, this new- found subjectivity, is found in the interval space of the process the protagonist undergoes so as to constantly establish connections between the subject and space. Much like the previous reference to a message sent through telegraph, becoming is also constituted through the gaps and silences that one is not accustomed to noticing. This is how the protagonist explains her nomadic process:

> Vou agora te contar como entrei no inexpressivo que sempre foi a mina busca cega e secreta. De cómo entrei naquilo que existe entre o número um e o número dois, de cómo vi a linha de mistério e fogo, e que é linha sub-reptícia. Entre duas notas de música existe uma nota, entre dois fatos existe um fato, enter dois grãos de areia por mais juntos que estejam existe um intervalo de espaço, existe um sentir que é entre o sentir- nos intersticios da materia primordial está a linha de mistério e fogo que é a respiração de mundo, e a respiração de mundo é aquilo que ouvimos e chamamos de silêncio (98).

As an author, Lispector frequently deals with silence as being the moment in which the subject reaches a culmination of their confrontation with themselves or with the world (*Apprenticeship or the Book of Delights*, *Family Ties*). However, in this example, silence takes on an almost physical existence established through spatial

[18] In *Apprenticeship or the Book of Delights* Lispector uses similar imagery of a protagonist who reflects on becoming animal, expressing the author's preoccupation with boundaries between human and nonhuman, as well as with hybrid beings.

imagery. What strikes me in this paragraph is the way in which Lispector describes the protagonist's nomadic process. It is as if all our senses are being aimed at perceiving what we usually cannot observe, the intervals, the space inside the hourglass, the nothing between two grains of sand. What we call silence is what G.H. sees as the intervals of the primordial matter of the world, the same primordial matter the bug symbolizes. In fact, subjective space is exactly this kind of feeling that is between feelings, in the sense that it is the space we cannot perceive, the thing that lies between things, the part of our being that constantly eludes us. Subjective space, much like the silences that enable a language to be spoken and understood, is a sensitivity that can illuminate unknown parts of the self. It is a map in reverse, following the silences of the telegraph and not its code of dots and lines. The bug, being the abject thing one usually avoids, is a conduit to the other side of how G.H. usually experiences life, in that that it aims her gaze into the "continuous breath of the world" that connects her with the other, the space where she encounters her other parts.

Inside this nothing that lies between the lines, G.H. finally reaches a place of expansion, where space itself opens up in a way that reveals the open terrains of the subjective search. From the window of that room she now sees an extension of roofs larger than Spain (105). In the following pages G.H. recounts a number of European and Mediterranean places, most of them parts of ancient empires: Asia Minor, the Dardanelles, Syria, Athens, Constantinople, the Black Sea (106-111). It seems that G.H. is trying to draw a map that is superimposed on the familiar space of Rio de Janeiro, as if spaces were images that can be pressed together; what this city needs, she says, is cartographic work (107). "Mentalmente tracei un círculo em torno das semi-ruínas das favelas, e conheci que ali poderia ter outrora vivido uma cidade tão

grande e límpida quanto Atenas no seu apogeu, com meninos correndo enter mercadorías expostas nas ruas" (108). This is a mental map that the protagonist draws, seeing the potentiality of another city existing on top of the common favelas, and the city she chooses to see is Athens. G.H. takes on a mental task, as she says, following a method of seeing that is not seeing, or double seeing, following residues or imprints of other spaces: "Meu método de visão era inteiramente imparcial … eu estava inteiramente preparada para surpreender a mim mesma" (108). In order to see, she has to be ready to surprise herself, for what she sees is based on imaginary clues and symbolic threads. Space takes on its own subjective meaning for the protagonist; while she is inside the subjective space G.H. experiences the space around her almost as a metaphysical location, where properties of actual places take on lives of their own. Following Ahmed's line of analysis, for the protagonist "the orient" is not a specific and empirical set of coordinates, but a grid of potentialities, a possible direction where the self can extend its body. If "orient" is what marks the distinction between subject and other, then the exploration of this imagined orient by G.H. marks her efforts to erode this space of separation, in addition to being tinted with her own preconceived notions of oriental otherness. The following example of the Sahara desert points to this duality of the function of "orient" for the protagonist:

> Para sustentar sem quedas meu ânimo de trabalho, eu procuraría não esquecer que os geólogos já sabem que no subsolo de Saara há um imenso lago de água potável, lembro-me de que li isso; e que no próprio Saara os arqueólogos já escavaram restos de utensílios domésticos e de velhas colonizações: há sete mil anos, eu havia lido, naquela "região do medo" desenvolvera-se uma agricultura próspera. O deserto tem uma umidade que é preciso encontrar de novo (109).

Taking into account the symbolic meaning of humidity and aridness in this text, it is no casual reference to the nature of the Sahara. That is to say, while Rio de Janeiro

and the apartment itself are characterized by humidity, the maid and her room's otherness are described with contrasting aridness. Therefore, when G.H. speaks of this remote space as a desert that remembers and sustains a long forgotten humidity, she refers in fact to the way even the most extreme example of oriental otherness can still be similar to the humidity at the center of the narration. One space can have two meanings, hold two different ways of life, and sustain different meanings for different inhabitants. In a way, G.H. depicts a cartography of otherness, of a specifically oriental otherness that is superimposed upon the place from which she narrates this story. Her experience of Rio de Janeiro is not only doubled with faraway and unfamiliar spaces she has only read about; it also alters both the place of enunciation and the "other" place.

This nomadic experience of space is not restricted to one space, that is, the maid's room or G.H's apartment, but goes beyond any one location. G.H. directly invokes the nomad figure as she recounts the Sahara: "Lembrei-me do que estava gravado em minha memória, e até aquele momento inutilmente: que árabes e nomads chamam o Saara de El Khela, o nada, de Tanesfrut, o país do medo, de Tiniri, terra além das regiões da pasagem." (111). Nomad Arabs of the Sahara desert have different names for the same space according to its function and the way they experience it. In the same way that G.H. can experience the maid's room as a desert and see traces of Spain or Damascus superimposed upon the favelas, the nomad can rename and redefine space. Braidotti would agree with G.H. on this point, for her theory shifting cartographies is part of what explains the nomad's relation to location and space: "The nomad's identity is a map of where s/he has already been; s/he can always reconstruct it a posteriori, as a set of steps in an itinerary" (14). Seeing the subject as a map or an itinerary of places s/he has been emphasizes the transitory

nature of knowledge, recognizing that one thinks differently in different places. However, more than that, for Braidotti the map is a way to understand the nomad, one that runs the risk of creating an othered and romanticized view:

> The nomad and the cartographer proceed hand in hand because they share a situated need--except that the nomad knows how to read invisible maps, or maps written in the wind, on the sand and stones, in the flora. […] The desert is a gigantic map of signs for those who know how to read them, for those who can sing their way through the wilderness (17).

Making cartographies is like recording the nomad's affiliation with space, one that is constantly shifting, especially in Braidotti's example of the gypsies or the nomadic tribes in the desert. In a way, the nomad's need to tell, narrate, or sing her way through the desert is crucial for Braidotti, thinking of her project of alternative modes of subjectivity that are not fixed or monolithic. At the same time, Lispector takes this nomadic subjectivity even further by speaking of a space that is doubled and folded by its mere association with her own vision, by seeing other spaces and by narrating the superimposition of different names for the space she imagines seeing. This is why the room and her subjective space are but an opening to vast otherness, to all these faraway places.[19]

On the Other side

Lispector herself has been associated with various nomadic readings, mainly focusing on the impact of her personal life on her writing. As a diplomat's spouse, the author lived in various countries and traveled the globe, including a stay of several

[19] Thinking of travels in space and Arab tribes of the Sahara may also be a way to point towards another metaphoric travel, that of Muhammad the prophet and his night journey. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad was magically transported from Mecca to Jerusalem, riding his mythological beast the Buraq to the temple mount, from which he ascended to heaven where he had a series of encounters with prophets and with God. Much like Muhammad, G.H. has a spiritual journey inspired by a beast, during which she crosses space into Middle Eastern lands.

years in Washington and in various locations in Europe. Her diplomatic passport often appears in biographies, so as to prove she was well traveled and informed about other cultures. This has influenced some scholars to associate her life with nomadism: reading the letters Lispector wrote while away from Brazil, Maria Aparecida Ribeiro suggests a connection between the author's travels and the way her protagonists experience space (*Clarice Lispector, Novos portes críticos* 111).[20] In fact, Lispector herself visited most of the places mentioned in *Passion* in the 1940s and 1950s, including the Sahara, a fact that can account for her effective portrayal of porous, superimposed spatial boundaries. Disregarding the biographic tone of these studies, our analysis shows the author to possess a highly attuned sense of space and an interest in the transgression of boundaries.

The boundaries that G.H. explores and transgresses, as well as her relation with otherness, are not external to the self, but rather quite internal. While the space that surrounds the protagonist unlocks the process she undergoes, it is the personal and subjective experience that influences her transformation. Speaking of the human part of her soul in reference to the bug's proximity, G.H. explains: "Toda a parte mais intingível de minha alma e que não me pertenece- é aquela que toca na minha fronteira com o que já não é au, e à qual me dou" (123). There is a clear boundary here that marks the line between the self and the not self, or, we might say, the subject and other. In this intimate journey of proximity to the other, G.H. is getting close to the parts of her self that are unattainable, inner parts that are perhaps the substructure of the subject. The becoming G.H. experiences has driven her as close to this boundary as possible, so much so that she is now experiencing an inner frontier between her own self and the other. This is a risky process in which the protagonist

[20] Claudia Nina explores the author's texts with nomadic theories with the main inspiration being Lispector's own journeys and how they manifest in her texts.

crosses to the other side in her quest, the same one that was alluded to in the epigraph. On the other side of this boundary lies the Other, but also the otherness that she experiences, the other she becomes: "Que podia eu ofrecer de mim- eu, que estava sendo o deserto, eu, que o havia pedido e tido? (131). The protagonist becomes the bug, as we saw, but she also becomes the other space, which is the desert. This becoming is described with a continuous gerund--was being the desert--as an undefined process that never quite ceases. As Braidotti explains when writing on nomadic aesthetics: "The nomadic tense is the imperfect: it is active, continuous; the nomadic trajectory is controlled speed" (25).

Becoming is, in itself, a space that the protagonist reaches in her process of transformation. According to G.H.: "E nem ao menos eu estava tocando na coisa. Estava apenas tocando no espaço que vai de mim ao nó vital- eu estaba dentro da zona de vibração coesa e controlada do nó vital" (137). Reaching the final stages of her process, after crossing several boundaries and thresholds, the protagonist now arrives at an experience of inner space, of being at the center of a zone in which one touches the space of otherness. For her, at this point when the bug is almost dead, her becoming resides inside a lifeless space, where the subject encounters the vibration of that which is only matter. The bug no longer represents living matter as it did before, at the same time that she herself is no longer the same being as she started, but still she manages to touch the insect through the space that's between them, and by touching it she feels inside space, at the core of existence. Crossing into the center of matter, living or still, is prohibited, as G.H. knows, and there is also the risk of remaining permanently inside: "a pessoa que ousa entrar neste segredo, ao perder sua vida individual, deorganiza o mundo humano" (143). This risk of losing oneself seems very grave when one thinks of the boundary the protagonist is crossing. After

all, who would like to remain on the other side of subjectivity, always connected to an abject otherness? "Mas por que não ficar dentro, sem tentar atravessar até a margen oposta? Ficar dentro da coisa é a loucura. Não quero ficar dentro, senão a mina humanização anterior, que foi tão gradual, passaria a não ter tido fundamento" (143).[21] Speaking from inside the process and at the center of the otherness she so desired beforehand, she realizes this will not last long, as she risks losing what she calls her humanization. If being close to living matter has to do with the nonhuman, then remaining with it too long will imply losing her status as a subject. In other words, the subject cannot sustain its identification with the other for too long, cannot dare to reside on the other side of the threshold between the two.

Nevertheless, G.H. desires to push the limit even further, and by doing that she sets the bar for acts of transgression. Lispector pushes her protagonist to the limit of all limits: she wants to taste the bug: "Eu que pensara que a maior prova de transmutação de mime m mim mesma seria botar na boca a massa branca da barata. E que assim me aproximaria do… divino? Do que é real? O divino para mim é o real" (167). Lispector is clearly in dialogue with Christian texts, and specifically with the sacrament of the Eucharist. Tasting the abject bug is like consuming the symbolic body of Christ--another limit Lispector crosses in this text, for paralleling a cockroach to the body of Christ is surely an upsetting comparison for a believer. At the same time, this act will serve as the final proof of the transformation of the protagonist into herself, her new self. What does she need to prove? Is there anyone that needs convincing that her nomadic journey has taken her to the other side of her own subjectivity? Or maybe it is the protagonist herself that needs to solidify and take this

[21] Guimarães Rosa's short story "The third bank of the river" suggests a similar approach to the same problem--that of transgressing an invisible boundary and reaching the other side through being immersed in the process of crossing.

transformation to its extreme. As we mentioned before, the final act of transgression is the most shocking and the one that constantly draws attention to this text. It seems that as readers, and Lispector knows this, we need this final transgression to occur, to seal the transformation and prove that something truly intense has happened.

On the other side of being, G.H. discovers--through her infamous act of physically and intimately touching the abject--that she is transforming herself, becoming Other in an expansion of her own limits. The road towards otherness has taken her through a subjective space, through an encounter with her absent maid, into a powerful nomadic process of proximity to a bug. One might say that even remaining in the same small space with a bug is an act of courage, irrespective of touching it with her tongue. One starts noticing bugs everywhere after reading this text. However, being in close proximity with otherness has pushed the protagonist's limits, has helped her transgress the boundaries of the self in such a way that she is forever changed. This transformation, as she specifically says, is into a new self; on the other side of the threshold her new subjectivity is waiting. We don't know much about this new embodiment of the subject, this newly formed subject, only that it has grown to such an extent that it can include parts of the other. The new subject is structured through ever-changing layers, established as an unstable process of a being that is human though not exclusively so since, as we've seen, it has established dialogue with the animal. G.H.'s new subjectivity traverses her animal parts and is therefore an inclusion of human and animal. However, it is still a process, a becoming that never ceases.

> E tal entrega é o único ultrapassamento que não me excluí. Eu estaba agora tão maior que já não me via mais. Tão grande como uma paisagem ao longe. Eu era ao longe. Mas perceptível nas linhas mais últimas montanhas e nos mewu mais remotos ríos: a atualidade simultânea não me assustava mais, e na mais

> última extremidade de mime u podía enfim sorrir sem nema o menos sorrir (179).

G.H. delivers herself to the other side by this act of absolute abjection, and this is the last action in the text. In a religious tone the protagonist narrates the transgression of a boundary that finally makes her the subject of the text. She has surpassed the threshold of the taboo, broken into the suitcase, violated the margins of the photo and expanded them. By tasting the bug, an act the readers were conditioned into understanding throughout the entire reading process, she now resides on the other side of her former self, a terrain of new possibilities. As she says, she is now larger than she's ever been; in fact, she includes inside her own subjectivity this Other so that she is now a subject that is not divided into an I and an It. Rather, this is an I that is as large as a landscape, perhaps the same one she imagined seeing over the roofs of Rio de Janeiro. The new subject is this faraway horizon; what lies on the other side is, in fact, another land, another spatial formation of the subject to be explored. This subjective formation has its own mountains and its own rivers, with extremities that can smile, a bodily presence that is not detached from subjectivity.

This marvelous tale of a nomadic exploration of the subject's limits cannot end with a clear-cut or definite action since that would contradict the author's entire project. In *Passion* Lispector manages to examine the relation of subject and other and its connection with spatial experience to such an extent that the new subject is almost beyond boundaries. G.H., still encased by these initials and no doubt still a woman of a certain class and social standing, can nevertheless experience her subjectivity as an open landscape of possibilities, a terrain she can explore without being limited by the physical walls of her own apartment. The last phrase of the text opens yet another door: "E então adoro - - - - - - "(179). She simply adores, a feeling without boundaries, so different from the hate or fear she felt before towards the maid and the

bug. There is no object of adoration, as there is no object at the end of the text, someone or something to contrast the self with, only a continuing emotion of adoration, emphasized even more by the recurring hyphens we encountered at the beginning of the text. In fact, the text can be read now circularly, linked by these horizontal marks on the page. If we returned to the beginning of the text we would now have a full circle of looking for something and then achieving a feeling of adoration without any end. Or maybe it is an adoration of the search Lispector begins with. Nonetheless it is a full circle, as if the text were a self-containing being, with a line that traces a limit with the rest of the world or with the readers, with an inside and an outside, another boundary to cross.

Chapter 2

El cuarto mundo, Searching for Boundaries: Can the Subject be Double?

(De/Forming the Subject)

Diamela Eltit's third novel, *El cuarto mundo* (*The Fourth World*) (1988) unfolds in what seems to be the most confined and restrictive space possible, as it narrates the becoming and formation--in the basic corporal as well as the symbolic sense--of twins in the womb. Eltit chooses to focus an economic narrative onto the subjective experience of each side of this dyad, disregarding whether or not an intrauterine narration is possible. By exploring the boundaries between two beings that share this reduced space the text achieves a complex representation of boundaries and their impact on the subject in formation. In this fluid surrounding of intimate closeness, where one stops the other begins. There is no neutral space but rather the conjoined struggle to grow and become, sometimes at the expense of the other. Eltit makes it clear that boundaries can be a matter of life and death, especially since the twins' relationship is defined as conflicted right from the moment they gain consciousness, and even before that. This focus on the spatial construction of the subject and on inter-subjective gendered relationships continues throughout the novel and will therefore be the focus of this analysis.

Following Eltit's fascinating depiction of boundaries, in this chapter I concentrate on processes of subjectivity and their reciprocity with the spatial aspect of being through three main spaces--the womb, the city, and the family home. Following the engendering of the twins and their conflicted relationship in the womb, the text depicts growing circles expanding out of the crib, to the house, and then the urban space, a movement that eventually collapses back to the confined space of the family home and consequently the dystopian destruction of the city. By constantly

positioning these spaces as marginal and other, the text engages notions of centrality and marginality, questioning the existence of clear boundaries between these two concepts. At the same time, marginality, defined as abject in the text, implicates an existence that lingers on the horizon of incoherence, such that descriptions of the twins are, for the most part, disturbing and sometimes plain incongruous with what one might expect from a normative subject. Is subjectivity a desired condition that one needs to achieve in order to gain agency, and are the twins read as coherent and well-rounded subjects by the end of the text? How is subjectivity constituted in a space that is inherently other, marginal? And finally, what is gained by narrating the becoming of subjects that are positioned as other even prior to their own existence, and what is Eltit trying to achieve by constantly "othering" them?

Usually defined as "challenging" if not "difficult," Eltit's texts employ a language that is filled with contradictions, broken syntax, and a plurality of meanings in a way that can both attract and distance its readers (Lértora 11-13).[22] It is difficult to remain indifferent when encountering a use of language that has earned such academic attention and criticism. In *Diamela Eltit: Reading the Mother* Mary Green refers to challenging effects of her texts, saying that: "Eltit's linguistic act of sabotage does, indeed, require active collaboration from the reader, who must grapple with a ramifying polyphony of meanings; the rupture of language; and the inclusion of alliteration, neologisms and non-grammatical constructions" (14). Green points to what she understands to be the author's political act of destabilizing canonical discourse in a time of dictatorship in Chile, emphasizing the transgressive characteristics of the author's texts. This disturbing effect of Eltit's writing calls for a

[22] The title of the collection of essays *Una poetica de literature menor: la narrativa de Diamela Eltit* echoes Deleuze's concept of minor literature, one that undermines canonical narratives.

more profound analysis of these acts of sabotage and the way they undermine central and canonical structures. In fact, this transgressive writing requires a reading that is attuned to the kind of disruption the writer employs through her texts. What is it that Eltit's text disrupts other than grammatical structures? How are these acts of sabotage related to the constitution of her subjects in space and what does she achieve through such acts?

Much has been said about the meaning of *El cuarto mundo* as a text that was written during the dictatorship in Chile; it is usually read as a representation of the oppressive military regime and its impact on concepts of gender roles and family formation, as well as a sharp criticism of the status of Latin America in a neo-liberal globalized economy (Llanos 43). Nonetheless, I believe that Eltit's text goes beyond this kind of reading by depicting a complex intergender and intersubjective relationship, one that offers new conclusions about her powerful writing. In an essay in the collection titled *Una poetica de literatura menor: la narrativa de Diamela Eltit*, Juan Carlos Lértora defines Eltit's writing as: "Escritura de los margenes" (12). Eltit's writing in relation to structures of power is that of voluntary marginality, a phrase that puts an emphasis on distancing from a certain imaginary center.[23] The usage of spatial metaphors deepens in Nelly Richard's essay in the same volume, when she defines Eltit's writing as one that depicts an identity filled with a plurality of subjects that breaks and disperses constructs of authority. This marginal writing releases a "nomadic subjectivity," a way to violate sedentary forms of discursive power (49). In this sense, Eltit's writing opens multiple spaces of possible readings, enabling diverse

[23] Eltit knowlingly employs and manipulates concepts of marginality and centrality, as reflected in an interview: "Soy la única que se mantiene fuera pudiendo estar dentro, porque hay gente que no puede estar dentro, esta fuera, porque no puede acceder" (in Green, 20). Similar to the engendering of the twins in the novel, Eltit positions writing through spatial imagery in terms of being on the outside or the inside of the literary canon, as if it was a literary womb,.

(and sometimes contradictory) interpretations of her texts and at the same time destabilizing hegemonic manifestations of power such as the heterosexual normative family and the state. Destabilizing and distancing, an open space of multiple diversities, Eltit's writing poses a challenge to the reader, one that is constantly described through spatial concepts and imagery.

El cuarto mundo's concern with corporality, space, and the subject resonates with insights of critical theorists like Elizabeth Grosz. In *Space, Time and Perversion,* Grosz focuses on the time and space of bodies, seen in a theoretical and historical context and focused on its connections with subjectivity. Her exploration of the spatiality of the subject and the body ranges from psychology, to feminist theory, sociology, entomology and geometry (Freud, Lacan, Irigaray, and Caillois are some of the thinkers she discusses). Grosz emphasizes the embodiment of the subject as sexually specific and correlating with the space and time of bodies, so that corporality is necessarily and inherently linked with space and position. The positionality of the body and its relations with subjectivity begin for Grosz at Lacan's mirror stage, although she is not limited to his concept:

> […] this too is a psychical map of the body, a mirror of the subject's lived experience, not as an anatomical and physiological object, but as a social and psychical entity. This imaginary anatomy is an effect of the internalization of the specular image, and reflects social and familial beliefs about the body more than it does the body's organic nature (86).

The subject is formed through the projection of an external image, seen on the flat surface of a mirror and understood to be an internalization of social beliefs about the body.[24] In other words, the two dimensional image in the mirror is an essential part of

[24] When thinking of mirrors and space, one cannot help but recall Merleau-Ponty's reference: "If we so contrive it that a subject sees the room in which he is, only though a mirror which reflects it at an angle of 45° to the vertical, the subject at first sees the room

the construction of the subject, at the same time that it is evidence of the centrality of space for subjectivity. In a way, the mirror functions as cartography for the subject, showing the way to a coherent and whole body image. Meaning, exteriority and interiority are reciprocal, a fact that points to the workings of space even in this early stage of subjectivity. The boundaries between what is external and what is internal are porous, so that the flat image in the mirror is taken to be part of the self. The limits of corporality are blurred, if not transgressed, in this example that is so crucial to the formation of the subject.[25]

Grosz's focus on the boundaries of corporality seen through the work of the French Sociologist Roger Caillois offers a key element to our understanding of subjects and space. Caillois studies the phenomenon of mimicry in the insect world in conjunction with a psychosis called "legendary psychasthenia," a state in which one is unable to locate oneself in relation to space (89). In the words of Grosz: "It is our positioning within space, both as the point of perspectival access to space, and also as an object for others in space, that gives the subject a coherent identity and an ability to manipulate things, including its own body parts, in space" (92). This quote ties together the idea of the boundaries of the subject and its position, so that the location as a subject in space functions as an imperative part of subjectivity. Being able to locate oneself in space and experience a correlation between the subjective experience of that location and the self is the condition for a coherent identity and perspective on the world. Put differently, it is our positioning in space as the focal point of

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"slantwise". A man walking about it seems to lean to one side as he goes. A piece of cardboard falling down the door-frame looks to be falling obliquely. The general effect is "queer" (in Ahmed 65). Phenomenological moments of queerness are captured in a slanted mirror as if the changed object affects the way one perceives things to be "straight" or "queer."

[25] For more on Grosz's analysis of the inside and outside of bodies and its relation to western thought, see *Volatile Bodies, Toward a Corporeal Feminism.*

perspective and as an object for others in space that gives the subject the ability to manipulate things, including her own body parts. When we conceive the formation of the subject, it is inherently positioned within space, not just for the obvious reason that a body is situated in a specific location, but as a reciprocal and imperative part of the subject's constitution: we may all be flesh and blood, but our self is made out of spaces.

For Grosz, the relationship between subjectivity and space is a mutual one. The mirror is an essential part of the constitution of the subject; the ability to position oneself in a place is imperative even for basic bodily functions: "The subject's relation to space and time is not passive: space is not simply an empty receptacle, independent of its contents; rather, the ways in which space is perceived and represented depend on the kinds of objects positioned 'within it,' and more particularly, the kinds of relation the subject has to those objects" (92). Setting aside the concept of time, Grosz emphasizes the reciprocity between subject and space. The kinds of relations the subject has with the space perceived by it, and by extension with the particularities of that space, influence both sides. In a way, space and subject are constructed by being in contact with one another, so that one can say that neither is absolute nor complete. They both transform constantly, becoming different through their interactions. The child has to go through the space of the mirror in order to become a subject; space is composed of the subject and objects that reside in it.

In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed develops a similar understanding of the connections between space and subjects, which she approaches from the phenomenological field. Ahmed's attention, however, is directed towards bodies rather than subjects, furthering the effects of space for them:

> What makes bodies different is how they inhabit space: space is not a container for the body. … Rather bodies are submerged, such that they

> become the space they inhabit; in taking up space, bodies move through space and are affected by the "where" of that movement. It is through this movement that the surface of spaces as well as bodies takes shape (53).

Bodies take the form of the space they inhabit so that the place in which they are transforms them, echoing Grosz's relations between subjectivity and space. However, Ahmed adds to the discussion the idea that bodies as well as spaces have surfaces that interact and are changed by this interaction. Space does not remain untouched by the passing of bodies through it; rather, its surface and possibly its perception is transformed. What does this reciprocity between body and space mean for the subject? How can we analyze the relationship between these two complex concepts--i.e., body and subject--and is the text inhabited by the former or the latter?

El cuarto mundo is saturated with spatial expressions, starting with the impossible intrauterine narrative and ending with an exploration of its nightmarish urban surroundings, pointing to the centrality of location and space to reading. The presence of spatial imagery is evident even before beginning to read the novel proper--"El cuarto mundo." Read within a sociopolitical context, the title is commonly understood as a comment on the position of Chile as a "fourth"[26] world country, situated in the periphery of an imagined global order as far as possible from its center. In fact, "the fourth world" suggests the position of a third world within the first, so that marginal and central worlds become intertwined. Another translation/reading of the title might be more spatially attuned: "the room world" (or the worldly room), which calls our attention to the connection of subjects to the boundaries of a confining

[26] Eltit, writing on the topic of the title of the novel explains that it was inspired by a trip to France, in which she first heard the term "el cuarto mundo" applied to marginal swathes of industrialized countries. She then developed the term to refer to a world that consists of "las energias mas oprimidas por la cultura," a world made up of fragments and scraps (in Green, 75). Two things stand out: first, the nomadic influence on the writer as this idea that relates to Latin America is conceived while traveling in another country, and second, the way in which this world is understood as composed of multiple marginalized energies.

home. In other words, the small space of the room is conceived in this novel as a representation of the larger space, i.e. the world, so that the tensions between inside and outside are part of the construction of the subject. By focusing my literary gaze on the spatial aspect of the text I hope to see how spatial imagery and the drawing and blurring of boundaries can be helpful to solve the challenge that the text posits. My reading, therefore, will be twofold--analyzing the centrality of boundaries in the forming of these two protagonists while keeping in mind the implications of this constitution in space in the large scale. Meaning, I will be reading the implications of the occurrences in the room and in the world as reciprocal and entwined.

Womb, growing pains (inside)

Both the separation of the twins and their intricate relationship manifest in the structure of the novel that is divided into two sections, the first narrated by the brother and the second by the sister. In the first part, the tension between the location of the narration--the womb--and the strong narrating voice points our attention to the narrator's process of becoming. The subject is immersed in this space that both forms and contains him. The formation of the subject within the intrauterine space allows the narrative to explore the interiority of that experience, meaning, being inside and how it affects the subject. In other words, this part of the text explores the constitution of the narrator as a subject that is firmly positioned, presenting a baffling and impossible subjectivity. Can one who is lacking a full-grown body be perceived as a subject, as a narrator, or do we read it as a non-subject, or a not-yet-subject? The processes the fetus undergoes are inseparable from its location, manifesting how crucial is the reciprocal connection between the location of the narration and the forming subject. In this sense, the figure of the fetus, and this one particularly,

provides a perfect example for Ahmed's and Grosz's different analyses of the subject and space/bodies and space.

The first child to be engendered is the male fetus, nameless at this point, conceived in the midst of his mother's fever in semi-coerced sexual intercourse: "Ese 7 de abril fui engendrado en medio de la fiebre de mi madre y debi compartir su sueño. Sufrí la terrible acometida de los terrores femeninos" (147). Using the past tense, the narrator has access to events occurring prior to his actual becoming, linking him in an inexplicable way to the mother's psyche. The narrator goes as far as to suggest that he probably shared his mother's dream state, which, as we recall, is actually a hallucination induced by her illness. Furthermore, at this point the mother and child are inseparable to the extent that the fetus suffers the same aggression experienced by the mother. One has to question the expression relating to the terrible attack of feminine fears that can be understood as his experience of sexual aggression upon conception. Is Eltit referring to rape, and if so, is being vulnerable to sexual aggression a characteristic of femininity, detached from masculine experiences? The mother's incapacitated situation qualifies as marital rape and thus ushers in the intentionally problematic gender relations in which woman is one of many underprivileged positions from which the narration emerges. Being the result of these problematic power relations, the narrator is both the beneficiary of the violent act, since it engenders him, and inseparable from the mother's painful experiences.

Being attached to his mother's experiences while trying to assert his own independence brings foreword the male fetus' need to draw lines and borders between his mother and self, a process of individuation that begun in the most intimate conditions. Individuation becomes even more prominent when, the following day, the sister twin is engendered within the same feverish setting. In spite of what seems at

first to be a gendered hierarchy, man precedes woman etc., gender relations in this novel are anything but simple as they continuously morph and change, blurring what appear to be clear boundaries. In fact, the unique formation of these two subjects allows for a complex picture of the creation and assertion of boundaries, only to blur them later on. From the moment of creation of the female twin, the relationship between the two fetuses will be that of drawing lines, trying to affirm some kind of separation and agency: "Fui invadido esa mañana por un perturbado y caótico estado emocional. La intromisión a mi espacio se me hizo insoportable, pero debí ceñirme a la irreversibilidad del hecho" (148). The engendering of the sister is perceived by the brother as a threat, not only in a literal but also in an affective sense, since he is invaded by a disturbing emotional state, suggesting that the existence of the sister has an unbalancing effect on him or that she herself is characterized by imbalance and confusion. As we can see, the male twin characterizes the female twin, even at this early age, as unstable and confused, carrying an emotional weight that threatens him, attributes that can be read as an essentialist understanding of femininity. Such a reading is reinforced later in the text and is part of his attempt to distance himself from her, to define his own subjectivity as more coherent. The matrix is experienced, then, as a limited space by this protagonist, one that is at the center of an existential battle for the most basic of conditions.[27] Who will gain more space in this conflict? Why is having to share the intrauterine space experienced as a competition and not as a constructive sibling relationship?

[27] Bracha Ettinger's concept of the "Matrixial Borderspace" as a prenatal symbolic space is relevant to the effort to articulate processes of individuation: "In the Matrix a meeting occurs between the co-emerging *I* and the un-known *non-I*. Neither assimilates or rejects the other, and their energy consists neither in fusion, nor repulsion, but in continual readjustment of distances, a continual negotiation of separateness and distance within togetherness and proximity" (14). Although Ettinger's interest lies in the symbolic relationship between the mother to be and the forming child, reading her description I can't help but think of the triple connection between mother and twins, one that emphasizes separateness and proximity.

Still inside the womb, the twins establish their competitive relationship that takes the form of pursuit--the sister seeks closeness and the brother experiences her existence as a threat: "Pronto empezó a usar trucos para atraparme. Cada vez que me movía, ella aprovechaba el impulso de las aguas dejándose llevar por la corriente. En dos oportunidades consiguió estrellarme. Recuerdo el hecho como algo vulgar, incluso amenazante" (150). Inside this restrictive space the narrator struggles to maintain his distance from his sister, so that physical separation articulates the individuation of the subject. That is, since they are both connected literally and symbolically with their surroundings, her efforts to create closeness pose a threat to his individuation. The formation of these two subjects reads as an intricate relation between surfaces and spaces as they interact with each other on a corporal level while being held or restrained by the walls of the womb. This game of distancing and boundary setting unfolds through the representation of subject and other, brother and sister. The other, the sister in this case, is the direction from which the subject constitutes himself. It is of course impossible for him to be separated from her, especially when every move he makes in efforts to stay away only pulls her eventually closer, due to the movement of the liquids that sustain them (and they are both physically attached to the womb). In other words, while his whole being is formed based on the effort to create distance, hers is focused on minimizing it. Their positioning in the intrauterine space is another example of an essentialist representation of femininity and masculinity, being that the male narrator strives for separateness and independence, and the female desires proximity and closeness. Representing femininity as other is not an unfamiliar construct for western thought and helps to establish hierarchical patriarchal relations between these two emblematic twins. When she unavoidably succeeds in her efforts, he experiences it as something

vulgar and threatening, words that emphasize difference and othering as part of the process of individuation.

The twin's dialectictical relationship (in the Hegelian sense) is constituted in space in that what constructs these subjects is the way they approach the grounds between them; one desires closeness and the other separation. In this way, each movement breaks the fragile balance of their positioning in the intrauterine space and shows how co-dependent they are, such that agency can never be individual. In fact, these subjects--especially in the first part of the text and in spite of the one-sidedness of the narration--are a dyad, formed in relation to one another and not separately. Their duality is gendered right from the moment of inception as they are defined as a "boy" and a "girl," which begs the question of the possibility of such definition in the first place. Moreover, this section is generally more coherent and organized, as Bernardita Llanos asserts in *Passionate subjects/Split subjects*:

> His attempts at assurance and directedness are articulated in a language that wants to be rational and certain even before birth. The confining space of the uterus, its chaotic fluids, and its irruptions, represent a source of terror for the male fetus. The way to control his own fear of death is reflected in his persistent intent to order and judge his mother and twin sister (169).

Llanos, echoing Eltit, chooses adjectives that are clearly gendered to depict the way the male twins experiences the space that surrounds him. The womb is threatening in its chaos, fluidity, irruptions, while the male twin tries to impose order and control through employing judgment of the two females. These efforts at rationality are reflected both thematically and aesthetically in this first half of the text, since the second is notably more fragmented and even difficult to understand. The tensions between masculine and feminine are charged with the burden of control over the feminine space of the uterus, at the same time that they are expressed through descriptions of painful growing in space.

It is of no surprise, then, that the male fetus expresses his experience through rational and logical articulations: "Ejercí la estricta dimension del pensar. Antes solo me debatía entre impresiones que luego transformaba en certezas, sin que nada llegara verdaderamente a sorprenderme" (150). What is interesting in this example is that thinking is an active precaution he takes in order to not be surprised, to stay balanced. He is in need of certainty, truth, and strictness, adjectives understandable when thinking of how threatening the fluids and the closeness are for him. Especially revealing for my reading is the expression "the dimension of thinking," a spatial term that points to the possibility of a different experience of space, another dimension, opposed to the unbalance of the sister or the emotional character of the mother. If thought is one dimension, then feeling can be another, a difference that produces the distance that he wants from both the sister and the mother. He is practically constructing his own dimension, obsessively trying to preserve his own space and maintain independence.

This independence is especially painful and unattainable when we analyze his attachment to the womb and by extension to the mother. The relationship with the mother, narrated from the point of view of the male fetus, is that of caution and meticulous examination. His descriptions of her vary from efforts to control and articulate the process of existence and growth inside her, to references to the womb as prison. "Su cambio me molestó. Asimilé su actitud a la desidia y al abandono. Había sustituido con demasiada rapidez la ira por el conformismo. El desequilibrio vertiginoso de su existencia prohibía cualquier rango de estabilidad" (154). He is extremely aware of every minute change in his mother, which echoes his fear of death and change. At the same time, we can read the influence that being inside her in the intrauterine space has on his narration. He internalizes characteristics that he attributes

to her, a fact that can be indicative of his behaviors as an adult later, when he shows affinities to what can be read as more feminine traits. Nonetheless, the mother is described as imbalanced and unstable, both spatial expressions that when conceptualized in space, and especially when thinking that the narrator is situated within her, are indeed threatening. Instability is not just a subjective characteristic; it entails the risk of falling down when understood spatially. From this point of view, trying to employ the strict dimension of thinking is a way to maintain balance.[28]

The intrauterine place as a constructive space has the dual function of confining and nurturing the twins. This is how the twin brother experiences the space of the womb: "El reducido espacio para mi hermana y yo empezó a estrecharse cada vez más. No había otra alternativa que el frote permanente de nuestros cuerpos. Rota la ilusión de independencia, presentí que la estrechez iría en aumento, hasta la inmovilidad total en medio de las aguas" (155). What this image of the intrauterine space brings to our understanding of separation and subject formation is that the process of growth cannot expand a limited space; rather, it takes over the same grounds that were before seemingly empty and neutral. Becoming larger in this surrounding means not only that there is less room (world) for each fetus, but also that space itself is reduced so that their closeness is an imperative. When sharing the matrixial surrounding and trying to establish distance the narrating subject takes over

[28] Although it is not the focus of this study, the image of the mother as a host brings to mind Grosz's analysis of *Chora*, Plato's abstract notion of space without any characteristics of its own, other than an intermediary receptacle, a kind of womb of material existence. *Chora* has spatial and existential implications; however, for Grosz it sheds light on the location of woman in Western thought, as can be seen in her quote from Irigaray: "I was your house. And, when you leave, abandoning this dwelling place, I do not know what to do with these walls of mine. Have I ever had a body other than the one which you constructed according to your idea of it? Have I ever had a skin other than the one which you wanted me to dwell within?" (in Grosz 122). Giving words to the silenced mother coincides with Eltit's novel, especially with its emphasis on womb as home with walls that are being constructed according to the point of view of man only to be abandoned later.

space in a way that ironically eliminates the open grounds he had earlier. Otherness is vital for the forming of this subject that constructs himself as being opposite to his other, who is in fact his sister. However, that distance is an illusion as he himself points out, since independence does not really exist and the moments of distancing he was able to achieve before now have become an incessant friction of bodies.

Furthermore, the intrauterine space is experienced more and more as limiting and confining towards the end of the pregnancy, an understandable change if we conceive of its spatial aspects.

> No era justo compartir dualmente el efecto del encierro, sometidos a un triangulo anómalo y desesperante. No solo estaba impelido a soportar un cuerpo interior humedecido por sustancias espesamente rojizas, sino que debía, además, recibir paralelamente un cuerpo exterior que se formaba junto a mí. Todos mis impulses se extendían más allá de los límites supuestos (155).

This description shows the situation to be an intricate representation of boundaries and surfaces of bodies that have to share the same space. The male fetus views the womb as prison, a highly charged word especially when taking into account that this text was written during the Chilean military regime in. It is a conflicted location of power relations in which the male twin must bear undesired closeness, and not a nourishing place of growth. This closeness is described in images of humidity and the red substances of an interior body, i.e., the sister is characterized this time in corporal terms and no longer as pure emotional imbalance. However, she is still experienced as abject. The second substance to be endured is the parallel and exterior body that is forming with him, clearly referring to the mother as a body that is in the process of becoming. Positioned inside the intrauterine space, he is able to characterize both mother and sister as presences parallel to him, usually threatening but mostly seen as surfaces and tactile presences near him. In this context, the reference to impulses extending beyond supposed limits supports my reading of the ways in which

boundaries are represented in this novel, as something to be transgressed and painfully crossed.

The way the text describes the process of birth is infused with descriptions of animosity and physical pain, seen, again, from one point of view, that of the male fetus.

> Se despertó en nosotros un enconado sentimiento de sobrevivencia. Instintivamente mi hermana inició la huida ubicando su cabeza en la entrada del túnel […] Yo no hice el menor esfuerzo, quería saltarme el protocolo de la sangre, pero me arrastraron en el viaje. Casi asfixiado crucé la salida. Las manos que me tomaron y me tiraron hacia afuera fueron las mismas que me acuchillaron rompiendo la carne que me unía a mi madre (156-157).

The birth is perceived and induced by the two fetuses as a way to survive a mortal threat, whether it is the contractions that create this fear or the impossibility of sharing the reduced space while becoming larger and growing into each other. Birth is also fleeing the confined space, previously described as a prison, while the sister seems to be very active in the process as she almost leaps out by her own account. Until now she has been the abject, the other for the male fetus, the direction from which he had to flee. Surprisingly, he is now passive and almost reluctant to leave this threatening and confining intrauterine space and has to be extracted by force, no longer the mastering voice in charge of the narration. The birth itself is described as painful, while the procedure of cutting the umbilical cord is a reluctant separation from a perceived unity with the mother. The corporal experience is that of painful breakage, tearing the flesh that unites him with the mother, a description that contradicts his prior efforts to draw boundaries and separate from her. Leaving the familiar restricting space is neither pleasant nor happy, but rather, saturated with negative affect. The conflicted becoming inside the womb ends abruptly with the corporal breakage from both the mother and the sister, terminating physical dependence and

opening a space for independence. How will the change in the surrounding space impact the subject? Will the outside be experienced in similarly conflicted relations, or will it be a joyous growing up and becoming independent from the other twin?

City, concentric circles (outside)

In the introduction to *Bodies that Matter,* Judith Butler conceptualizes the connection between bodies and subjects, affirming that the materiality of bodies is constituted in speech. When rethinking the process by which bodily norms are assumed, mainly the category of "sex" in this example, she writes of an inside and an outside of the subject:

> This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain to the subject. The abject designates here precisely those "unlivable" and "uninhabitable" zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject […]. In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, "inside" the subject as its own founding repudiation (3).

The subject here is conceived as a domain, as a spatial unit that either includes or excludes the other. Part of the process of constituting the subject is the exclusion of the other, understood as abject, that is imperative for the formation of the subject. Note the usage of spatial imagery so that the abject is not only excluded, it forms a part of the constitutive outside of the subject, so that the existence and the perception of the abjected outside is an important part of becoming. This separation of the subject's outside and inside is repudiated in the same sentence, since, as Butler clearly notes, the same reliance on the exclusion of the abject outside makes it part of the inside of the subject. The "abject beings" that form this constitutive outside are found

in the uninhabitable zones of social discourse. Although Butler does not dedicate this section to the ways in which spatiality informs the constitution of the subject, it is difficult to ignore the use of spatial imagery.[29] Seen in the context of the novel, leaving the intrauterine space marks the transition to the constitutive outside to the subject, one that is detrimental to its formation. Inhabiting this outside, this space that is understood as an imperative to the forces of exclusion and inclusion through which subjectivity comes into being, is the next stage for the twins, positioning them eventually in contact with other Others.

After birth the dialectical relationship continues being expressed through rivalry and the drawing of boundaries, and at the same time changes, a nomadic journey towards adolescence. Growing up in this novel is characterized by going out, expanding the spatial circles inhabited from the womb outwards, to the house, to the street, and into the subjective space of the city. The first space to be shared by the twins following their joined intrauterine experience is that of the crib: "Obligados a yacer en la misma cuna, percibimos fragmentariamente las sombras y las voces que nos aludian. […] Por primera vez precisé de ella. Mis extremidades la buscaban y, si no la encontraban, yo caía en un llanto más agónico que el hambre y más urgente que la vida" (157). As we can see, the relationship is still constituted in space, in the sense that closeness and corporal touch take place in the crib, but also in the emphasis on the importance of that closeness to the narrator. Although he is not completely pleased with having to share the small space with her, he starts looking for her, as if the crib were an endless sea of distance that separated them. On the one hand, there is a

[29] In "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution, an essay in phenomenology and feminist theory," Butler analyzes bodily existence as the way in which embodiment is assumed through lived experience, while pointing to the importance of such an understanding to feminist thought. However, she fails to focus on the centrality of space to embodiment and the constitution of the subject that can both be instrumental and even indicative of the ways in which gender is reiterated.

definite separation, physical and otherwise, as can be understood in his need of her and desire to reach her with his extremities; on the other, he still speaks for her, she has no voice. Extremities are the extension of this perceived corporal unity of the subject, surfaces of self that seek the other in order to locate himself in the space of the crib.

Being outside the intrauterine space also means entering the social and public space in which the twins are subjected to new changes. The naming of the twins by the two parents is one example of the complexity of family relations, as it is decided that the narrator will be called after his father (in the name of the father) and "A mi hermana se le designó también un nombre" (158). Her name is almost a side effect of naming him and it is not revealed until the very end of the novel, as if it had no importance at all. However, he will not bear the unspoken and unknown name of the father, since his mother decides that "[…] que yo era igual a María Chipia, que yo era ella" (158). Although the relationship between the parents is not the focus of this study, gender tensions and power constructions are relevant for the understanding of subject formation. Opposing the father and patriarchal social order, the mother designates a name for the male twin that is not only feminine, but also relates to an historical feminine persona. As Green informs us, María Chipia is the name of a woman sentenced to death for witchcraft, borrowed from Caro Baroja's *Inquisicion, brujeria y criptojudaismo* (78). During their time in the womb it seemed that gendered constructions of difference between the twins were solely based on patriarchal heteronormative representations and by the male twin's effort to dominate the narration. Going outside and leaving that confined space for another triggers confusion and blurs boundaries that were being asserted and drawn earlier, etched in spatial flesh. Furthermore, if we thought that María Chipia desired only separation

and individuation while in the intrauterine space, now his conflicted relationship with the twin sister is that of hybridity and duality: "Rozándonos a oscuras y también prendado del miedo desarrollé el pensamiento de que, para mí, no había verdaderamente un lugar, que ni siquiera era uno, único, solo la mitad de otra innaturalmente complementaria y que me empujaba a la hibridez" (159). In other words, being outside the womb is not a step towards an assertion of independence, but rather, a further step into such a close relationship with the sister that he dreads they are but one being. Hybridity is linked with the lack of place, so that in spite of the exceedingly larger space in which they are positioned (in comparison to the womb), he is again looking for closeness that literally pushes him towards being a part of a pair.

Such extremes of closeness continue to characterize the relationship between the twins and are tested by the next significant experience that they share--that of illness. As in their birth, leaving the space of the crib is marked by crisis and corporal difficulty, pointing to an attachment to place and its importance for the subject. The first symptom of María Chipia's illness is desiring closeness with the sister: "Enlacé mis dedos a mi hermana y me acurruqué contra ella, gimiendo… Era la fiebre" (162). As before, the spatial aspect of the formation of the subject is related not only to its surrounding, but also to his significant Other, taking into account the dialectical relationship with the sister. The result of this unexplained fever is that the twins are separated from each other and the crib, a distance that is practically etched in space by the sister's first attempts to crawl across the floor in order to compete for attention. For María Chipia, leaving the small space of the crib is linked with being outside: "El síntoma más preciso del afuera era mi hermana" (163). This is a telling expression given the distancing and rivalry articulated earlier, especially when the sister's

reaction to the brother's illness is trying to move more freely in space. The outside in itself is perceived almost as a disease that has symptoms and manifests itself in the existence of the sister. However, if she is the symptom of the outside world, it can be said that they were both outside since the moment of her conception still in the intrauterine space. Being seen as part of the outside world, in light of the dichotomy María Chipia constantly structures, posits him on the inside, reluctant to leave the womb as well as the house.

Once outside the crib, their growing up is accompanied by an increased distance, especially when they gain mobility and can physically stay apart. "Llegué a creer que la cercanía que nos había condicionado fue producida por la nebulosa de mi primigenio existir, que había confundido el espesor de las aguas con el cuerpo de mi hermana, y el agitar interno de las carnes que me contenían con los sueños de mi madre" (165). Reflecting on the shared intrauterine experience, the narrator questions what he earlier described as the twins' hybrid existence. No longer close physically, they grow visibly distant. The closeness of the flesh, in this almost tactile description, is now believed to be the fault of the mother's dream, a figment of the imagination. Specifically, these dreams along with the flesh of the womb are defined as containing, in the sense of holding and restricting. This results in moving towards the father: "Tomé alegremente el nombre de mi padre y llegué a la tan ansiada armonía con el exterior" (165). In other words, the tension between closeness with the sister and blaming the mother for his suffering brings María Chipia closer to the father, assuming his name instead of the one given to him by the mother. Furthermore, being aligned with the father means being in harmony with the outside world, given the dichotomy he perceives between inside/mother and outside/father. This dichotomy puts the sister, again, in a conflicted and ambiguous position since she shares his

existence in the most literal way, but also signifies the outside world.

In spite of the growing distance with the sister, María Chipia continues to obsessively analyze their relationship: "El ancestral pacto se estrechó definitivamente, ampliándonos a todos los roles posibles: esposo y esposa, amigo y amiga, padre e hija, madre e hijo, hermano y hermana. Ensayamos en el terreno mismo todos los papeles que debíamos cumplir, perfectos y culpables, hostiles y amorosos" (167). The relationship continues to be dialectic in the sense that it is through acting out different roles that they both understand their positioning together. In other words, the twins construct themselves as different or similar along the lines of other culturally acceptable relationships, only they are able to portray all of them. Nonetheless, the complexity of gender relations is evident in this novel as well as in their transgressive spatialization. These roles are devoid of temporal dependence; the twins can be either sister and brother or mother and son, regardless of their age. Interestingly enough the only example where woman and man change places is parenting, referring us back to the importance of the unique engendering of the twins and foreshadowing the future. The location of transgressive reversal in the context of kinship lies in the possibility to be a father or a son, a mother or a daughter. On the other hand, it can also be said that when speaking of social roles, the only way that "woman" can precede "man" is through parenting, and specifically motherhood. Mothering is the only acceptable recourse of woman to gaining priority. Nevertheless, what we see here is that the repetition of cultural gender roles expands the way the subject perceives himself and takes place in a real terrain.[30]

[30] Echoing Butler's performativity theory (as presented mainly in *Bodies that Matter*), the text refers to a repetition of socially accepted gender roles that are analyzed as a way to construct the subject. Unlike Butler's theory, this paragraph offers another understanding of the possibility of accessing more agency through repetition, as seen by the expression to "expand" themselves, gaining the ability to portray more than one role according to will.

The spatiality of the subject, seen through the twins' growing distance from one another within the family home and accompanied by their imminent venturing into the urban space, merits a closer analysis. In "Bodies-Cities," Grosz describes historical ways to understand connections between body and space (the city as a reflection of the body). Unlike other models that connect bodies and cities, she argues the relationship should be understood reciprocally:

> The body, however, is not distinct from the city for they are mutually defining. Like the representational model, there may be an isomorphism between the body and the city. But it is not a mirroring of nature in artifice; rather, there is a two way linkage that could be defined as an *interface*. What I am suggesting is a model of the relations between bodies and cities that sees them, not as megalithic total entities, but as assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the threshold between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or micro-groupings (108).

Grosz's focus is, indeed, the body and its relation to the city that surrounds it; however this is more than just a claim to the impact of urban spaces on the subject. The phrase "mutually defining" points to the ways in which the city, or the space of the city, constitutes and construct a subject, so that the urban subject is understood to be almost a hybrid creation, a subjective space. This effort to conceptualize the ways in which cities and bodies interact and influence each other resonates with Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" in the sense that both authors posit what is a hybrid new creature, a fusion of two beings.[31] At the same time, this reciprocal relationship is between bodies and cities, space and corporal subjectivity, so that one can easily see how the city is instrumental in the constitution of the subject. What has been perceived in the past as the boundary between an organic unity of the flesh and artificially produced space is constantly crossed. The two-way linkage that Grosz

[31] Further exploration of the notion of the cyborg with more sexual and gendered implications can be found in Beatriz Preciado's *Manifiesto Contra-Sexual*.

suggests points to the ways in which bodies inhabit the space of the city through an interface, a meeting point, a limitless location of crossings. Not only does the subject influence the city (as de Certeau might suggest), the subject is constituted in the city and by it. How does the novel treat this urban subject and the space in which it resides as being mutually constitutive? How are these two subjects impacted by their surroundings, and what impact do they have on it?

As the twins grow up, it becomes even clearer that the relationship between the two as well as the space they share is filled with crossings and contradictions. Echoing Butler's notion of the constitutive outside, the first time they leave the house to go into the city is well marked by the text as an influential experience for María Chipia:

> Nuestra salida al exterior fue verdaderamente estremecedora. La ciudad, tibiamente sórdida, nos motivó a todo tipo de apariencias y activó nuestras fantasías heredadas de mi madre. Se podía palpar en el espesor ciudadano el tráfico libidinal que unía el crimen y la venta. Los bellos torsos desnudos de los jóvenes sudacas semejaban esculturas móviles recorriendo las aceras (173).

This first description of the world outside the house is characterized by images of the sensations it inspires, as well as its effect on the subject. The urban space is dark and sordid, triggering fantasies that are related to the mother, which are assumed to be sexual or in some way related to the body. The urban space activates something that is innate in the subject, so that the interaction between subject and space brings out buried elements. In addition, as María Chipia describes the libidinal flow that runs through the streets, it evokes the almost tactile images of the intrauterine space. In a sense, his first experience of the outside world is parallel to being in the womb. Only this space is filled with other presences--the young sudacas--an expression that clearly marks the location of the narration. Even if this city is unnamed (like the twin sister), it is situated in South America, a marginal and remote place when seen from an

imagined center. The reference to the bodies of the young sudacas reinforces my reading of a sexual awakening of the twins, so that the city ushers in a change in them. At the same time, it is the first mention of the words "sudacas" and the union of crime and sale, terms that will be played out more substantially as the novel progresses and will become significantly related to its final scene. These sudacas align with my understanding of Butler's not-yet-subjects, inhabiting the uninhabited zones of social existence. In this sense, going outside to the uninhabited and abject is connected with sexual awakening in a way that links corporality with the urban space, as well as with the outside in general. Reading Eltit through Butler and Grosz implies that the outside functions for the subject as that which enacts it into being through a complex set of exclusion, inclusion, and hybridity for which the abject sudacas are an imperative.

Moreover, the young bodies that run through the streets are described as moving sculptures, reminiscent of another text by Diamela Eltit. *El Padre Mío*, published in 1989, is based on a series of interviews she conducted over several years with a homeless and possibly mentally ill person. In the introduction she refers to the ways in which the homeless carry their belongings with them and in so doing turn into living sculptures that:

> Usando y abusando de la ciudad, ellos, los vagabundos urbanos, sólo podían cumplir su programada nómada al internarse en el paradójico modo de la apariencia, es decir, como exterior, cuya provocación radicaba en la inversión del sujeto que, despojado, podía llegar a ser abismalmente anónimo, pero no por ello menos deseante (14).

This description of the homeless maximizes and emphasizes the exteriority of the subject, as the appearance communicates its construction. Meaning, not having a home, a space of their own, forces them to be exposed to the outside, carry themselves and their lives on their bodies. In this way the body becomes the surface that Grosz

describes in which the urban space is reflected and inscribed. However, in this specific example there is an inversion of the subject, one that destabilizes the balance between the two sides of the interface since the exterior is more prominent than the interior. Eltit's homeless carry their interiority, their subjectivity, on the outside, and by that become almost a mirror of the space that surrounds them. For Eltit the provocation that these subjects pose resides in their misfortune that forces them to inverse normative subjectivity. In other words, urban marginal subjects and their lack of private space challenge the same exteriority and interiority that is discussed in the novel. The sudacas, being living sculptures, are nothing but surfaces, scenery, exterior symbols of subjects that are almost devoid of any other existence. Nonetheless, as in *El Padre Mío,* Eltit makes it clear that this inversion of the subject is not only an example of pathology or social marginality, but rather, closely linked with culture: "Es-Cultura, pensé" (13). This word play stresses the relation between culture and sculpture, but in a way that emphasizes the exteriority of the subject. Corporality and culture, therefore, are related to the figure of the homeless, and by extension, to the sudacas and their function for the twins.

This excursion into urban space accompanied by the first encounter with the sudacas viscerally affects María Chipia. As on other occasions when he ventured into larger spaces, he falls ill. For instance, this is how he describes going to school: "Toda esa energía fue demasiado para mí. Exhausto por los cuerpos sudacas y sobrecogido por el bullicio mediocre de los niños, caí en un cansancio sospechoso que me hacía dormir en cualquier sitio" (174). There is a temporal gap between the qualities of the narrative, between the narrated experience and the narrator's self-reflective and mature voice that creates a disturbing effect for the reader. Eltit's writing of the subject constantly suspends the credibility of his narration while positioning the

reader in the gap between the mundane and the subjective. In this way the reader is directed to question the narrator and his subjective experience, such that falling asleep in every place possible cannot be an ordinary occurrence and must be read symbolically. The energy that affects María Chipia so much and that is closely related to the bodies of the other sudaca children is understood as sexual. The encounter with abundant erotic corporality in the urban space overcomes the narrator, forcing him to literally shut down, fall asleep in odd places, an activity usually reserved for home. The illness means not being able to distinguish the inside from the outside. The mother's treatment of this strange illness helps the narrator recover and "[…] me devolvieron lentamente la salud y la fuerza para afrontar el espacio publico" (175). Public space is thus intimately linked with illness, and has to be confronted with strength; sexual energy--found in the urban space at this point--challenges the subject's stability. Urban space becomes for this subject a subjective space in which his own desires take form, materialize.

The interaction between María Chipia and urban space culminates when, at the age of 12, he has a sexual encounter in the streets of the unnamed city. This encounter is defined by its transgressive and fluid representation of desire. "Yo caminaba atento por las estrechas callejas cuando intuí que alguien me seguía […] Muy pronto me di cuenta de que yo era quien seguía a alguien" (177). Note the ambiguous pronouns used by the text, so that it is a non-gendered someone that follows him or is being followed. It is not clear who precedes who, who is the pursued and who is the pursuer, what is the spatial order in this scene. Nonetheless, this chase takes the narrator away from familiar zones: "Me pareció un tiempo extraordinariamente fijo y crucial, que me hizo salir de los terrenos conocidos e internarme por el jeroglífico ciudadano en donde la similitud y la diferencia se

desdibujaban" (177-178). Leaving familiar parts of the city distances him from his own self, given that he has never before had a sexual experience. The erotic and disturbing nature of this scene is inherently connected with the urban space and how he inhabits it; after leaving familiar grounds the narrator has to enter and submit himself to the city, where he will be a hieroglyphic city dweller. Following his desire in the urban alleys is like etching and carving symbols into the streets, marking the pavement with his presence. In this sense, training himself to be a person of the city reflects the way in which sexuality is seen to be part of the urban space, as well as the blurring of boundaries. We don't understand who follows who, but we understand that this confusion is part of the interaction, and that urban space is defined by such encounters.

The same blurring of boundaries is emphasized in searching the city's alleys, as the search for this ambiguous other takes him further from home. "Comprendí que no sólo había perdido a alguien: yo mismo me había perdido en la búsqueda" (178). Getting lost seems very relevant in this part of the novel, especially when taking into account not only the confusing nature of the encounter, but also the distancing from familiar grounds and known relationships. What can be more understandable than the feeling of disorientation when confronted with such a situation, especially when María Chipia loses track of the other person (if we take it that he follows the other person and not the other way around) Losing himself in the search is an imperative part of the immanent encounter, as if to point to the close connection between being lost and finding, disorientation and orientation. This is an example of erotic and nomadic processes of urban sexuality.

When he finally finds the other person, they push him into the wall of the alley, a physical boundary defining the limits of the experience. Throughout the event

the narration maintains an ambiguity of pronouns, pointing to the insignificance of the other's gender for María Chipia. The emphasis, however, is on the spatiality of the encounter between the two: "Fui recorrido una y otra vez por esas manos que encontraban en mí lo más bello del intercambio público" (179). The sexual act is closely related to images of inside and outside--as the other finds inside the narrator the beauty of a public exchange. In other words, public space and the personal and intimate space of the body are mutually defining, at the same time that they are linked to an exchange. This exchange can be read as a continuation of the libidinal flow that was mentioned earlier in the novel, a fact that marks the streets of the city, and subjective space in general. The ways in which the subject experiences desire and sexuality are triggered by and constituted in this urban exterior space.

Although desire and sexuality are abundant in this scene, the interaction is not necessarily pleasant for the narrator, but rather, painful and conflicted. When María Chipia seeks consummation of the act, the other person flees, leaving him desiring and agonizing: "La satisfacción alcanzó la curva del deseo y la dimensión del abandono. Cuando sentí la violencia de las piedras a mi espalda supe que todo había terminado" (179). It is worth noting that the narrator describes his emotional experience with spatial imagery, namely the dimension of abandonment. At the same time, what marks for him the end of the experience is feeling the stone wall pushing into his back, a physical limit to the defined space of the alley as well as to the encounter, similar to the walls of the womb. In a sense, being abandoned is not only a feeling of disappointment, but a whole other dimension, as if it were a portal to another existence. The plurality of dimensions that the narrator keeps mentioning brings to mind an almost science-fiction setting and draws an image of the urban space as being filled not only with boundary crossings and subjective sexualities, but

also with fleeting encounters and instantaneous dimensions.

Due to the twins' closeness, the brother's significant sexual experience triggers a strong reaction in the sister who falls ill for the first time. In this relationship every change in one of the twins requires some sort of a reaction, usually corporal, in the other. María Chipia soon feels the impact of her illness:

> Volví a pensar que una parte mía correspondía a una zona común con mi hermana y, ocupando su lugar, me interrogué sobre aquello que podría constituir en mí una fractura… y empecé a hablarle con el amor de un enfermo a una enferma, diciéndole que para mí ese otro o esa otra que me asaltó o asalté en la angosta calleja fue siempre ella, que en ningún momento estuvo fuera de mis sentidos, que estaba allí, que era ella, que éramos (182-182).

In this paragraph we read how the narrating subject refers to himself almost as a spatial unit, given that a part of him corresponds to a part of her. His way of expressing the empathy he feels for her is articulated through a compartmentalized understanding of the self. As Raquel Olea has stated in "El cuerpo-mujer, Un recorte de lectura en la narrative de Diamela Eltit," bodies are frequently constituted as physical spaces marked by their submission to social powers (in Lertora, 90). Through the feeling of shared parts, or zones, he can experience her illness as his, and it is from that place of shared experience that the distance between them is again erased. That is to say, the ability to share a part of the self brings the subject to understand that the other in the sexual act was, in fact, the sister, since, as we already saw, his understanding of Other as well as of himself is based on his primal relationship with her. Furthermore, the encounter with the Other in the limited space of the ally, much like the intrauterine space shared in the beginning of the text, eliminates the grounds between the twins and makes him experience a shared existence. This same shared experience is expressed in other parts of the text as well as part of the twins' disturbing adolescence. In spite of efforts to establish autonomous being from the

very moment of conception through a series of acts of distancing, the subject is deeply attached to the female twin, sometimes experiencing her as an extension of himself.

As the family drama progresses and the tensions between the parents and the twins become more and more conflicted, they both seek the outside world. The sister's experiences are not quite as detailed since the narration focuses on the male twin; this is not the result of a dichotomous distribution of space, but rather, of the narrator's self-centered nature. His interactions with the outside world reflect the tensions in the family home and take a turn towards violence as he is attacked by a group of anonymous sudacas. This is the last time we have an exact age reference since, as María Chipia informs us, the attack happens when he is 13. Like the sexual encounter above, this unexplained act of violence by the group of assailants is described through spatial images, emphasizing their centrality:

> Todos ellos tenían algo en común por el modo en que manejaban las líneas de sus caras. Pensé fugazmente que el parecido era como la arquitectura de la ciudad, que desorientaba al paseante: éste veía cómo las diferencias muy pronto se mimetizaban entre sí. Algo similar pasaba en la cara de esos jóvenes. Su raíz popular formaba un cuerpo único, diseminado en distintos movimientos individuales (197).

Similar to the previous encounter with the non-gendered person, this incident occurs while María Chipia is in the streets of the city. However, in this situation, it seems that the attackers are not only linked with the urban space; their own corporality merges with the city. Thus, the faces of this group of people are described as being similar to one another in the way they construct their lines, a particularly geometric expression that brings to mind buildings more than facial features. Furthermore, the narrator points to the connection between this corporal similarity and the city's architecture, mainly the way the latter confuses the inhabitants of the urban space. In this sense, the bodies of the attackers are described as artificially constructed urban

spaces that share similar characteristics in a way that stresses the external parts of the subject, the surfaces. These subjects are presented almost as pure surfaces that reflect the space in which they reside, much like the homeless man in *El Padre Mio*. This creates a disorienting effect for María Chipia, especially since the similarities are not only between the faces and the city; they are also shared among the group's different participants. In fact, they are so similar that they seem to him as one body with individual limbs, a strong image of an indistinct, disturbing being acting upon one un-explained desire to attack the narrator. Urban space is threatening for the subject, offering sexual encounters but also violent assaults by a being that is living matter but also a representation of the architecture of the city. The attack ends when María Chipia, while trying to fight back, loses consciousness: "Los golpes implacables me arrastraron a una semiinconciencia en la que perdí la distinction de mi cuerpo" (198). Given the description of the group of assailants, losing the body's distinction is quite threatening, since it suggests that his body could be absorbed into the same indistinct corporal being.

The threatening experiences of the outside world and the way the sudacas are described contrasts with the representation of the intimacy shared inside the family home. This is not to suggest that the inside is a blissful space of a loving relationship with the sister, but that the tensions and threats that it offers are experienced on a different, more intimate level. The sister's reaction to the attack is to offer an open dialogue: "Debíamos hablar, me dijo, por primera vez debíamos hablar en forma clara y solamente emocional" (199). This is, indeed, the first time he allows her words to be articulated almost in direct speech. Their interactions are precipitated by occurrences in the outside world, the urban space, but they take place inside the home. This is his reaction to the invitation: "Quise mirarla como a una muchacha, pero no había

ninguna muchacha, salvo su existencia aferrada a la mía desde antes de ser, o desde el ser mismo" (200). Individuation may indeed be over, but the twins are connected at the very core of being; the two share the same self even prior to its formation, alluding to the circumstances in the uterus as well as a destabilized understanding of the subject. It is as if they were conjoined twins, attached to one another in ways that cannot be seen from the outside. The disturbing and inexplicable qualities of narration in this specific example are the prelude to the second half of the novel told by the sister, characterized by short sentences and affirmations of unity. In this way, the brother's efforts to assert boundaries seem to fade towards the end of the first part of the text. Tensions between the outside world and the inside of the home (and the intrauterine space) are part of the balance between the twins, so that exiting the space of the womb, the shared crib, and the family home triggers experiences of disorientation and participation in sexual and violent experiences. The outside, then, is the exploration of individuation for the male twin, and is what triggers the return inwards, where the boundary he was trying to assert with his twin sister is crossed. As we will soon discover, boundaries between the two are porous--one can be other, the other can be one.

Home (inside)

The return to the focus on the unity or hybridization of the subject mobilizes the transition to the closed, even confined, space of the home. As the twin brother is no longer obsessed with leaving or exploring the perilous and exciting urban space, the narration re-aligns with the conflicted inter-subjective relationship. Prompted by the mother's infidelity, the family decides to retreat to the home and shut themselves up to avoid embarrassment, and in doing so there is a return to the representation of a

small and confining space: “Decidimos el encierro para cubrir las verguenzas y la carga de las humillaciones” (207). Thus, the adolescent space conflates inwards, into the house and away from the city, pointing our attention back to the formation of the subject. In fact, this reduction of space mirrors the prior expansion (going into the city), contrasting outside and inside. The family home is similar to the womb in that that it is both a prison and a protection from what awaits outside its boundaries. On the other hand, this second part of the novel is not focused on the pushing of boundaries between the twins or of the intrauterine space, but rather on a more inward, subjective experience.

To conclude the first part of the novel and the move into the enclosed space, María Chipia informs us that: “Sintiéndome incrustado en un tiempo critico, acepté depositar la confesión en mi hermana melliza” (208). That is to say, the sister is the recipient of the confession, but also almost a vessel in which one places things. The narration, however, is understood not as an object, but a transition, a dynamic force that propels the reading. Following this sentence the novel unfolds through the sister’s narration, expressing her side of these confusing occurrences. The change of narrators to the feminine side of this dyad is surprising in that that it skips the space of differentiation that the twins tried to open to establish interpersonal boundaries. Rather, this second part reads almost as inner and subjective representation, contrasted with the growing circles that characterized the first half. Processes of creating and erasing distance that were at the center of the first part of the text now become fragmented, incoherent descriptions of an internal experience. In this sense, we go inward, following the narrative that has been deposited into the internal world of the sister.

The title of the second part, “Tengo la mano terriblemente agarrotada,” points

our attention to the twin sister's discourse as a first person narration that is filled with painful corporality. It is also characterized by a more lyrical language, repetitive sentences that are often short and filled with corporeal imagery, making this part of the novel even more challenging then the first. In fact, perhaps as a result of this difficulty, most of the published work on this novel focuses on the section told by the male twin. The challenge to the reader is both aesthetic and thematic, given the events that are told by the (still) unnamed sister and their unsettling bluntness. In other words, once the narrative bridges the space between two subjects that are not bound together as they were in the womb, the boundaries of what is perceived to be individuated subjectivity become questionable, murky. The second part opens with an explicit sexual act between the twins and the almost instantaneous engendering of new life. "Mi hermano mellizo adoptó el nombre de María Chipia y se travistió en virgen. Como una virgen me anunció la escena del parto. Me la anunció. Me la anunció. La proclamó" (211). This is the first of many other instances in which the reader is thrown into an unfamiliar set of rules, a destabilizing experience that constantly raises questions of what is accepted and normative. As can be seen, her discourse is one of repetition that reads almost as a ritualistic act, declaring the coming of a child that can also be understood as a prophetic act of María Chipia. Thus, the scene of birth suggests another one, the nativity of Jesus, as if this child to come is the bearer of a gospel or a change. However, unlike in the Christian tradition, it is the father who announces the coming birth, a father that dresses himself as a virgin named María. At the same time, the sister's subjectivity is framed unequivocally with a corporeal representation of her femininity, as if her own being emerges through gestation and maternity. She is nameless and till this moment has limited access to the narration, but she is already a mother, pointing to the reduction

of woman in Western thought to mother, maternal biology that either precedes or depends on feminine subjectivity. Eltit's writing of the sister twin employs a strategic essentialism, using well recognized patriarchic representations of femininity in order to undermine them.

This emphasis on female corporality is pursued throughout the second part of the text, taking it to extremes of either pleasure or pain. The corporal focus and the disturbing nature of the text culminate in incest committed by the twins, a continuous and unexplained occurrence. The sexual act serves as the mediating plane in which the twins interact, one that is not void of previous depictions of power relations between male and female. In the words of the narrator: "Me posee toda la noche. María Chipia me posee toda la noche mientras mis padres, trepados por las ventanas, nos observan entre los resquicios. Díficil, difícil hacerlo bajo sus miradas, pero una y otra vez nos encontramos en un plano aterradoramente personal" (213). There is no way to escape the bluntness of this description that turns the body into the center of the transgressive crossing of social limits, an incestuous act that will repeat and intensify itself until the end of the novel. In a way, this is a repetition of the troubling sexual act with which the text opened in that it fully portrays the power embedded in gender differences. However, the transgression of boundaries, as well as the strong corporal emphasis, makes the body a site of encounter, an interpersonal plane of meeting. This corporal transgression of boundaries is centered in the feminine body, transforming it into a contested terrain of desire and pain. As Lertora observes, in Eltit's writing the body often becomes a site of crossings: "El cuerpo mujer, identidad plural e inabarcable, se convierte en el espacio donde se inscriben signos de erotización y dolor, de pasión y ultraje, potenciados al máximo, hasta el paroxismo de la experiencia" (Lertora 13). Woman's body in Eltit's works, and especially in this

text, becomes an entity in and of itself, a contested site in which pain and pleasure are experienced. This site is frequently narrated as a spatial unity where extreme experiences are inscribed, as if devoid of subjectivity. The twin sister's body reflects, in fact, the surfaces of bodies of the sudacas encountered by the twin brother, although the intensity and the focus of the narration bring greater attention to its specificities. Thus, the incestuous act ties together the confined space of the home with the spatial representation of the woman's body, while emphasizing painful crossings of boundaries, social and otherwise.

The challenge that this disturbing relationship poses for the reader vacillates between the corporal descriptions of the sexual acts and the highly symbolic nature of the narration that make us question its meaning. The extremes to which Eltit takes the twin sister, mainly by focusing on corporeal experiences and incest, seem to be undoing the processes of subject formation. In contrast with the first half of the text, the emphasis on such disturbing corporal experiences alters our reading of the text by suggesting a more symbolic reading. Meaning, when the limits of what we perceive as normative corporality are challenged we come to question whether Eltit is trying, through these protagonists, to form a narration that emanates from the Other, that is not necessarily a subject. Some explanations can be found in the dialogues between the twins: "Quiero hacer una obra sudaca terrible y molesta" (213). Although this phrase appears as direct speech, it can also be read as the closest we get to the narrating voice, and even to the author herself, since she as well is linked with the desire to create a sudaca work of art. At the same time, this is an allusion to the sudacas seen in the first part of the novel--abject representations of otherness aligned with the location of Latin America as the fourth world.

Making a terrible "suadaca" work can refer to the staging of a disturbing

sibling relationship and at the same time to a work of fiction. In this sense, the work of art and the workings of the body converge in the text in a way that can explain the crossing of boundaries between the two protagonists. In other words, *El Cuarto mundo* becomes a site of encounter and a locus of transgression, both between the two subjects--as represented in the sexual act--and between the aesthetic and social context--symbolized by the work of art and the sudaca reference. The space of the page, like the space of the room world and the confined surrounding of the uterus, becomes almost multi- dimensional, laden with many limits to be crossed. At the same time, this phrase reminds us that the twins themselves are sudacas, and by doing so it points our attention back to the fact that, although read as subjects till this point, they are also part of what Butler defines as the uninhabitable zones of not-yet-subjects. In this sense, Eltit challenges and destabilizes notions of subjectivity that are specifically positioned as Latin American, an Other. Is subjectivity therefore a high stakes game of all or nothing in which the winner is the one to gain agency? Should the twins be read as representations of subjects in formation or as literary fiction that questions coherent subjectivity?

From this point on the narration provides details that lend themselves to the understanding of the text on two levels. One is as a meta-literary discourse dealing with the creation of a literary text within a special set of conditions, inhabited by symbolic figures. However, the text also maintains just enough focus on the characters' strong corporal presence to make this a more complex reading: "María Chipia, traspasado por palpitaciones, no deja de poseerme; su alma errante tapa los agujeros a la mirada de mis padres quienes estrellan sus cabezas contra los dinteles de las ventanas" (213). Note the recurring passivity of the female twin and the focus on the palpitations that María Chipia experiences, a movement that is related to both

illness and ecstasy, maintaining the extremes that converge in the body. The sister's attention is directed to the gaze of the parents who are notably looking outside to the city, positioned on the border between the inside/home and the outside/city. At the same time, her corporality is also defined by pain: "Mi cuerpo organico me dolía, mi alma organico también se quejaba ante ella, poseída por el maleficio de la fecundación. Me dolían, me dolían los dos organismos" (216). Interestingly enough, the narrator points our attention to the bifurcation of body and soul while stressing their organic nature, as if the soul, understood here as the self, can hurt just as much as the body does. Does she have another existence other than the organic one? Although it might be tempting to codify the twins as symbolic beings that are not-yet-subjects and belong solely to abject zones of sociability, Eltit makes it difficult to forget the matter of their bodies to the extent that processes of subjectivity are inherently linked with corporality. That is to say, the subject--unstable, incoherent and disturbing as it may be--posses a body that hurts and procreates. Following Butler's notion of the subject, Eltit depicts the process of subjection while grounding it in the body's materiality.

The sexual encounters between the twins are characterized by similarly symbolic and disturbing descriptions that entail corporal experiences and spatial imagery: "Por fin se encuentran las zonas más tormentosas de nuestros cuerpos, en medio de un escindido temblor genital" (221). Similar to the way María Chipia described depositing his narrative in his sister as if she was merely a spatial unit, she talks about bodies meeting as an encounter of zones, surfaces that are not separated from but driven by genital urges. That is to say, sexual acts are seen as a meeting of two separated spaces, tormented by their own desires. In this description the twins' relationship is more balanced than in the brother's narration, so that it is not always

María Chipia who initiates and controls encounters. In the following description the sister in fact demands and orchestrates sexual interaction:

> A horcajadas, terriblemente gorda, estoy encima de María Chipia tratando de conseguir el placer. Va y viene. El placer va y viene. Cuando viene, viene un olvido total y el umbral del placer lo ocupa todo. Me ocupa toda y María Chipia redobla sus movimientos porque sabe que estoy en el umbral del placer (232).

Aiming to achieve pleasure, she focuses on her own experience, notably directing the situation to her needs. Pleasure directs the encounter, described as an allusive moment, one that brings total forgetfulness, perhaps of the outlandish circumstances of the encounter itself. Echoing the title of the novel's second part, the sister emphasizes an excessiveness of the flesh as well as movement, and by doing so the body becomes vividly present, which stands in contrast to the oblivion mentioned above. On the one hand we have a body that is described in detail, an almost tangible while disturbing presence; on the other we have oblivion. Being at the threshold of pleasure evokes images of transition, a lingering in liminal space. In this sense, the sexual act in which corporality is so vividly described and experienced is the liminal space and the vehicle to reach an unattainable other side where oblivion resides.

The focus on the female body in its different stages of sexuality and pregnancy does not steer our attention away from the inter-subjective relationship with the twin brother. In fact, this part adds to our understanding of their relationship's peculiarities while supplying us with more dimensions. While having dinner together, one of the only activities mentioned in this section that is not sexual or reflective in any way, the twin sister says: "Muy cerca el uno al otro, accedimos a la verdadera pareja que éramos, sin más tapujo que la antropofagia" (231). Being a couple in the broadest possible sense as alluded to in the novel's first section here entails being able to portray all the different kinds of relationships between human beings, even

anthropophagi. After the social taboo of incest is broken and so many other boundaries are violated in this disturbing situation, the only transgressive act left is simply to consume each other. In the context of sharing a meal, it seems ironic to imagine the twins consuming each other, however logical it may seem in the novel's setting. Their corporal needs are not limited to insatiable sexual desire, going well into consumption and hunger's satiation. Corporal desires become a key element of the twin's relationship, pointing them constantly in each other's direction as if they were a circular movement capable of sustaining itself. In this sense, the twins are a hermetic couple, able to provide all their needs by themselves. Soon enough, the rest of the family will leave them alone.[32]

As the text nears its end, there are fewer mentions of the parents who seem to almost fade into the house's walls, usually observing the outside world. The night before the new birth they announce their departure: "Ellos abandonarán la casa y nos legarán el rigor de las paredes y las grietas de las culpas familiares. Abandonando la casa, se harán más amplio el espacio y más grotesco mi cuerpo" (238). What will be left behind are the walls of the house with their cracks of culpability, alluding to the mother's unfaithfulness. The walls here are reminiscent of the wall of the womb in the beginning of the novel, thus tying back the intrauterine space with the family home; only this time it is clearly marked by signs of disintegration, cracks in the structure. Their departure will not only leave more space but stress the grotesque, deformed maternal body. There is no need for more space in the house due to the physical

[32] Eltit explains that by using the metaphor of the twins her aim was to explore "la problemática de la pareja, que se concidera como algo tan nuclear dentro de la sociedad […] qué mejor metáfora […] que estos fetos que se rozan, se molestan y se invaden mutuamente los espacios" (in Green, 74). The author clearly sees the twins as an emblematic representation of the couple as one of the most prevalent nuclei of society. Disarticulating and problematizing the couple can be read as a way to destabilize social constructions and kinship.

growth of the subject--fetus or pregnant mother; rather, there is emptiness that is spatialized through corporality. This final abandonment sets the ground for the end of the pregnancy as well as the novel, two beings that become increasingly connected: "Sólo permanecen el niño y María Chipia, quienes representan el límite de la ficción de mi cuerpo […]" (238). The fictionality of the maternal body points our attention to the act of creation as embedded in the boundaries between reality and fiction. The limit of fictionality is therefore tested in the engendering of this fetus that marks the end of extreme corporal experiences, as well as tangible, physical existence. Eltit constructs a subject that vacillates between fictionality and grotesque corporality, symbolic and literal.

Wavering between fiction and body, the text becomes more focused on liminality and transition, and by doing so prepares us for the final act of transgression and birth. "El amanecer que hube de vislumbrar era la partida, no el parto, o el parto límite entre la oscuridad y la luz, entre la noche y el día" (239). This phrase again brings to mind religious notions of creation: as parting is equated with childbirth in a play of words, a birth that didn't happen yet is paralleled with the parting of night and day. That is to say, the parent's departure is related to the creation of the unborn child but also to Creation in the religious/mythological sense. Preceding the coming of the child that was announced by a father presented as the Virgin Mary is the separation of night and day. Dawn, with its diminished light, is also a threshold, much like prior examples of the sexual act that connected desire and oblivion, a location that allows the sister to make out the parting of night and day. In other words, the text positions the sister in these locations of liminality, whether it is at the threshold of pleasure or the separation of night and day. In contrast with the brother, her relation to the transgression of boundaries is that of lingering, almost dwelling in liminality.

The act of creation and its close relation to corporal subjectivity as well as to space is even clearer when, in a last incestuous act, the twins celebrate their possession of the family home: "En el límite, llegué, siempre a horcajadas, a perder la noción del tiempo, pues se disolvió la frontera entre exterior y interior y María Chipia se integró a mis estructuras neuronales. Perfectos, únicos, estuvimos, desde el amanecer hasta la noche avanzada encontrándonos hasta fundirnos" (240). The limit of their beings as well as their encounters is reached through the sexual act, while crossing it results in the blurring of the boundaries between inside and outside, notions so central to the text. This is one of the final acts of crossing that, in fact, unify the two subjects together by actively erasing the limits between inside and outside, so indicative and imperative to the formation of the subject as Butler stated. Towards the novel's end there are almost no more borders to cross; the independence of the subject is questioned, as well as the subjects themselves. Since there is no separation between outside and inside, there are no more boundaries, no distinction between subject and other, and all becomes nothing and nothing becomes all; nihilism is at play.

The final act of transgression occurs in the last line of the novel, the most puzzling part of the text. The narration is distanced from the symbolic and subjective voice of the female twin and gives a description of the final scene in a wide angle spatial depiction. The blurred boundaries of night and day/inside and outside result in the massive sale of the city itself--a dystopian description in which space itself caves into an abyss: "La ciudad colapsada es ya una ficcion nominal. Solo el nombre de la ciudad permanece, porque todo lo demás ya se ha vendido en el amplio mercado. En la anarquía de la costumbre por la venta se ejecuten los últimos movimientos a viva voz, voceando la venta del vacío" (245). This scene can be read as an inversion of the

creation myth since the child that was announced and linked so strongly with Creation itself brings destruction and an end to the world. Creation and dystopia are connected with economic terms that echo neo-liberal concepts of the open market in which everything has its price and even nothing can be marketed. Participating in the first world global economy has a devastating effect for this fourth world representation of sudaca subjectivity. The city collapses into fiction, having sold all that manifests in space: "En venta los campos de la ciudad sudaca" (245). Selling all the tangible parts of the city, including its inhabitants as we read further on in the text, leaves nothing but its name since the rest has turned into emptiness. When the fourth world tries to integrate into the first, it loses everything, including its inhabitants, becoming only a name. This dystopian moment ties together fiction of creation, the sudaca city space, and incestuous procreation.

However, by becoming exceedingly abstract the end of the novel leaves behind the focus on the constitution of the subject as well as the subjective experience of space and body. In fact, the collapsing of the city marks the inability to distinguish between the outside and the inside of subjects, marking the destruction of subjective space itself. When the outer and subjective space of the city becomes less tangible, fictional, the subjects themselves are doomed to collapse as well. At the same time, the nominal residue of the physical existence of this city is connected to the pregnancy of the female twin, which closes the novel in a circular way. Towards the end of the novel a third-person narrator informs us of the events: "Lejos, en una casa abandonada a la fraternidad, entre un 7 y un 8 de abril, diamela eltit, asistida por su hermano mellizo, da a luz una niña. La niña sudaca irá a la venta" (245). The way to resolve the transgressive and subjective descriptions that have been taken to an extreme is to push the narration to become distanced and symbolic, so that a meta-

literary reading is reinforced by the text's closing. Finally, naming the female twin enacts an ultimate transgression, inverting the reader's attention back to the act of literary creation and away from the narrative's disturbing corporal descriptions. Yet again, literary acts converge and encounter the corporal and subjective existence of a protagonist.

Consequently, the inclusion of the author in the text makes us question the circumstances and the value of all that we read up to now. Literature and "real" existence encounter each other in the space of the page, where transgression of social taboos as well as of space are abundant. In *el cuarto mundo* the corporal understanding of the subject is fragmented at the same time that it is almost limitless, bringing forward questions of engendering and creation, literary and otherwise. Following the city's almost nihilistic fate, the name remains as the only thing that cannot be sold, pointing directly to the usage of the author's name near the text's end in lower case letters. In other words, the name may very well be the only tangible part of the subject that is left after the process of creating and engendering the text. The subject's physical existence can be transgressed and articulated through fragmented corporal experiences that are, for the most part, highly symbolic since the only thing left are words themselves, the name of the author. At the same time, the product of the twin's creative process, the child, is up for sale in the same collapsing of values, pointing to the status of the work of art as a product of a creative process being sold to us, the readers. At the text's end we are faced with only two tangible things, the space of the page and by extension literary production, and the name of the writer. It is a *mise en abyme*, a circular construction that makes us reflect back on the reading process. Eltit produces a radical text that can be read as theoretical reflections of literature and its production, in which she problematizes the act of engendering. In

other words, the (literary?) text is the result of a forbidden, disturbing, incestuous, painful, and enjoyable relationship that is situated in space. Thus the act of transgression of the two subjects in the text, one of them sharing the name of the author herself, results in the seemingly positive creation of the text that we are currently reading. Art and physical existence, corporality and aesthetics crisscross each other in numerous ways, both productive and disturbing.

Taking subjectivity into account, the newborn's insertion into monetary circulation, stressing its sudaca existence, opens up an inclusion of this other subjectivity into mainstream discourse. Eltit's reflections on the formation of a subject that is constantly positioned as other in relation to an imagined world order as well as its most intimate partner, result in a mediation of differences. That is to say, throughout the text we read disturbing articulations of this subjectivity--one that is linked with rape, incest, non-normative kinship, consumption, and grotesque corporality. Nonetheless, these challenges to our understanding of subjectivity are woven into a reading of progression, to the extent that becoming is an ongoing, sometimes transgressive process, and not an unequivocal result. In this sense, Eltit's articulation of subjectivity aligns with Butler's subject as one that is constructed, albeit through constant and painful subordination to external power (in Foucault's sense). Literary production and procreation are questionable acts of agency, fleeting moments of change in which the reader is made aware of processes of formation and deformation. Although marginal and sometimes even deformed, the subject is always inserted and absorbed back into discourse. For the reader, this is not an organic effect that erases hierarchies and marginalities, to use Eltit's words, but rather a fragmented and disturbing realization.

Chapter 3

Why would you ever want to leave home? *Antes* and the safety of enclosure

Why would you ever want to leave your home? What does the big outside offer that can compete with the safety of the childhood home, and is it really worth it to leave this primordial space for the sake of the adventures of growing up? Carmen Boullosa's second novel *Antes* (1989) explores the specificities of Home in conjunction with non-normative subjectivity by focusing on a girl's maturation. What seems to be a plain *bildüngsroman* about an overly sensitive little girl quickly turns into an existential exploration of the importance of home, with all its promises and nightmares, for the subject. In *Antes* growing up carries an unexplained threat that manifests itself in space and haunts the protagonist and the reader, linking the experience of space with another kind of subjectivity. Thus, Boullosa marks childhood as the vehicle for her reflections on subjectivity and space, mainly centered on the idyllic family home and the illusive representation of a pre-pubescent girl.

Although space remains one of the chief axes of my analysis, this novel offers a unique temporal aspect to my study; the text begins with the impossible stance of a narrating voice positioned in the "other side of life," the ghostly stasis of a girl who does not proceed to become an adult. In this way the narration is both a retrospective view of the life (and death?) of this unnamed girl, and a point in time we aspire to reach--a frustrating whodunit that builds the reader's tension towards a puzzling end. In this novel childhood permits a movement of backwards and forwards, both in time and in the process of reading itself. In fact, after reading the novel for the first time one is tempted to turn back time, to flip through the pages again in search for clues that lead to the end of this girl's story. This simultaneous dual temporal movement drafts childhood as a spatial unit, a location where one can take a forward and a

backward direction, getting lost in this period of the protagonist's life during the duration of the reading. What is the meaning of this spatial and temporal conundrum and how do we understand the protagonist's constant emphasis on the end of her seemingly tranquil life? Is there a normative rout to be taken in one's way towards adulthood that might be the answer to the mystery? How is growing up conceived to be threatening by this little girl, and how does space both reassure and haunt her? How is gender implicated in the supposed death of the protagonist, especially taking into account her peculiar pre-pubescent condition? Is this a ghost story that offers clues on the perpetrator, the immediate suspect that may have killed the narrator?

As one of the most successful Mexican women writers, Boullosa's texts explore a variety of topics through an array of genres: from theater to experimental fiction, from cross dressing pirates to post-apocalyptic science fiction. She is a well known author, both in the Spanish speaking world and the English speaking one, who enjoys the rare embrace of both literary critics and the general public, a prolific writer who currently documents the presence of Hispanics in the US. She is mostly known for her usage of the historic novel genre to write about strong female characters, both fictional and biographic, in novels such as *Son vacas, somos puercos* and *La otra mano de Lepanto* (*They're cows, we're pigs* and *Lepanto's Other Hand,* respectively). In spite of her choice of these panoramic topics ranging over centuries and oceans, I find that Boullosa's most powerful texts are the earlier ones, especially *Antes* with its unique approach to a young subject and her place in the world. Traditionally, *Antes* has been read with a keen eye for biographic details from the writer's past, trying to fill in the gaps from Boullosa's personal childhood while overlooking the rich spatial field it explores. In this chapter I propose a possible answer to the mystery of the protagonist's (symbolic?) death, drafting the space that surrounds her as a possible

solution to the text's main question, that is, what happened to this little girl?

In order to avoid overusing speculative phrasing, I will refer to the narrator/protagonist as haunting the beginning of the text--for our purposes she will be read as a ghost narrating her past life. Hopefully, in the pages to follow I will be able to offer a more finely tuned reading regarding this unique narrating position. The novel begins with an epigraph containing a poem by Rubén Darío, one of Latin America's most prominent poets for whom Boullosa expresses admiration in her fictional story, "The Poet's Ghost."[33] In this fictional tale Darío encounters a Spanish speaking ghost during his visit to New York, and becomes shortly possessed by it, showing Boullosa's interest in ghost stories. The usage of Darío's poem in the epigraph adds a somber atmosphere to the novel--speaking of "el corazón de la noche" and "los instantes del silencio misterioso," coloring a dark background charged with a retrospective view. This is a mature poetic voice, looking back onto a seemingly long history full of memories and regrets: "Y el pesar de no ser lo que yo hubiera sido/ la pérdida del reino que estaba para mi/ el pensar que un instante pude no haber nacido/ y el sueño que es mi vida desde que yo nací…" (9). Note the reference to a lost realm, as if proceeding towards one future, choosing one possible path over another, can cause the loss of an unknown space. The feeling of loss brings out the validity of the present, questioning the ability to distinguish dream from reality, an ability central to the novel's focus on the fears of a child. Different futures and pasts are linked in this poem by way of a strong sense of spatial loss, which sets the tone for the novel's later emphasis on growing up and the alternative paths the narrator takes on that road. This evocation of roads and paths is influenced by the

[33] Boullosa may very well be echoing Lispector's recurrent use of epigraphs. More on the connections between the two authors can be found in Cristina Santos' *Bending the Rules in the Quest for Authentic Female Identity: Clarice Lispector and Carmen Boullosa*.

poem's navigation between tenses and possibilities. Thus, even prior to the beginning of Boullosa's narration, we are in the realm of "what if," where the speaker maintains the impossible position of one who knows he's never been what he should have been, and yet could have just as easily not been born at all, thus linking life and dream together in a way that invites more questions than answers. By using an impressive variety of tenses and times, the poetic voice draws a map of futures and pasts, possible and impossible paths that are drafted as lines stretching from the speaker. There is a loss of self, a being that is un-reachable as a ghost, at the same time that there is a sense of an un-attained future experienced as a metaphoric space.

The result of this retrospective gaze is a certain connectivity between the inner self and the outside world, a relationship described as a spatial unit: "y siento como un eco del corazón del mundo/que penetra y conmueve mi propio corazon" (9). The image given here is one of a self nestled by the world, feeling touched by its innermost part, its heart. The poem ends with an omniscient representation of the self almost as a matryoshka doll--a heart inside a person that dwells in a world, touched by its heart. It is not clear whether the heart is closer to the speaker or to the world; however, the spatiality of the model is obvious. Inside and outside are to be read as a game of relativity, where the speaker portrays images of lost realms and the inner parts of the self being touched by an external, metaphoric representation of the world. Paths and directions, ghostly memories and unfulfilled selves are the chief actors this poem evokes, and they will follow us into the novel itself. After reading this epigraph we cannot claim an innocent reader's view into the protagonist's story as we are primed for a search for clues and lost paths; it is an invitation into a past that is misleading to say the least, bound up with doubts and regrets.

The novel opens with a direct continuation of the reflective tone set by the

poem, as we are introduced to an un-named first person who raises an existential question: "¿En qué estábamos antes de llegar? ¿No te lo dijeron?" (11). Trying to translate this question into English brings out an ambiguity not so easily perceived in the Spanish original: where were we before arriving? This is not a question, however, about the whereabouts of the speaker, but rather the interrogation of a thematic center: Where were we in our last conversation, what were we talking about? There is the sense of a momentum that was interrupted, possibly a line of thought. The text points to a point in time we cannot access, looking back into a moment prior to the text's beginning, perhaps referring to Dario's poem that is in itself reminiscent of other times. Narration is characterized in this novel by a retrospective gaze, a circular motion that does not necessarily point to a specific moment in time, but seems to offer circularity itself as a trope. Space here is linked with time in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish between the two.

With its abstract and quasi-philosophical character, the novel's first page sets the ground for the reading to follow. It serves as a legend to the cartography of the protagonist's life by bringing out the questions and odd temporalities that emerge from the narrating stance. One of the first details about this protagonist/narrator that becomes apparent is the use of an imaginary second person, a nonexistent interlocutor: "¿Cómo querría yo que fueras? ¡Querría que fueras lo que fueras! …Pero no hay nadie aquí conmigo. Nadie, aparte del miedo, del temor, del terror… ¿Miedo a quién?" (11). Out of solitude the narrator invents a second person interlocutor with whom she can share her fears in this place where she is currently located. However, beyond this narrative trope, what is more interesting is this "aqui" that the narrator mentions here for the first time, a location that is not specified, and that will become one of the chief questions to haunt us throughout our reading. This "here" is clearly a

place of fear for the narrator, an affect directed towards an undefined someone, a reaction to something. Boullosa points our attention to three main vectors: the time of narration and its circularity, the place of narration, and the fear experienced by the narrator.

As tentative clues to the mystery, the text provides more details about the narrator: "Cierto, yo era como esos niños, yo era esos niños y aquí estoy, divorciada de su mundo para siempre. ¡Niños! ¡Yo era lo que ustedes son!" (11). The narrator is focused on a certain time in her life that is no longer reachable: childhood. With her use of emotive speech, the narrator conveys her desire to take part again in the realm of childhood, a place and a time from which she is now estranged. Speaking from the narrative "here" of her current location, she tries to access her childhood self. Following these phrases we have two possible paths regarding the location of the narrator; she can be an adult reflecting on her long lost childhood, or she can be a ghost, speaking from the afterlife and explaining how she got there. Whatever path we choose to follow, it is clear that this "here and now" of the narrator is a threatening and solitary one, which may account for her desire to reminisce about happier times. But is the space of childhood experienced by the protagonist as a safe and happy one? What can be so frightening to a little girl whose experiences of the world are aligned with normative lines of going to school and leading a seemingly peaceful family life? Is she trying to point our attention to a threat that is homebound? Fear interrupts our reading, serving as the main trope for the affect that evokes our suspicion and that will soon manifest itself in space.

Considering childhood and the difficulty of accessing this other self and alternative ways of being (the "lost realm" of past times), queerness comes to mind, especially if we take into consideration the text's odd narrating stance. In *The Queer*

Child, or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century, Kathryn Bond Stockton plays with a range of possible meanings of the term "queer" in order to bring out the queerness of all children: "If you scratch a child, you will find a queer, in the sense of someone 'gay' or just plain strange" (1). In this first statement the writer points our attention to the strangeness of children, of all children, by using a charged term that carries sexual connotations, and by doing so she summons our feelings of unease. Using the word "gay" in conjunction with childhood brings out questions regarding all children, and by extension, the ways we conceive of queer adulthood and gender in general. What are the ways in which using the term "queer" changes our perception of childhood? How does it change our understanding of what it means to be a queer adult? For Bond Stockton, theorizing childhood is inherently linked with the many ways in which Western culture silences, or "ghosts," the strangeness of children (and their possible desires). By safeguarding children and referring to all of them as straight, claims the writer, Western society ignores this strangeness, this queerness: "A gay child illuminates the darkness of the child" (3). The metaphoric ghost is therefore a way to access these dark sides of all children as well as to approach the temporality of queerness.[34]

Bond Stockton argues that the "gay child," by whom she means the child who will grow to be a self-identifying gay adult, is ghostly in the sense that it marks lost possibilities of a straight future that will never happen: "Is there a notion of the child lingering on the vicinity of the word *gay*, having a ghostly, terrifying, complicated,

[34] In spite of the plurality of ways in which the writer uses the term "queer," she often does not sufficiently expand on the possible misunderstandings that can emerge from such usage. On the one hand she clearly refers to children's same-sex desire (17), and on the other, she speaks of queerness as another word for strangeness. If "queer" can be linked with a pre-pubescent child, does it mean that it is not a sexually related term? And if so, why are we using queer and not simply "odd" or "strange"? How do we understand it then, and what, if any, are the implications for the bulk majority of queer theory?

energizing, chosen, forced, or future connections to this word?" (2). The gay child represents a lost straight future, a path that will not be taken despite of the fact that society assumes that children are straight. According to the writer, referring to oneself in the past tense, as in the phrase "I was a gay child," marks a symbolic death of the straight adult the speaker did not grow up to be, and by doing that it suggests a retrospective, backward birthing. A gay child is born with the symbolic death of the straight adult (7). In this way, the writer uses a temporal approach to childhood in which future and past are seen with reciprocity; it is the retrospective point of view that births the gay child, just as it is this possible future that allows for conceiving of a child as gay. The ghost, then, is created in this transition between a possible future and rearticulated queer past.

The child as a concept has a ghostly essence, as childhood is the thing, the stage in the development of our own selves that we can never reach since we are no longer children: "The child is precisely who we are not and, in fact, never were" (5). This is a question not only of (queer) temporalities, but also of subjectivities, of the effort to grasp other selves, or other parts of our selves. As I understand this claim, my own childhood self in inaccessible even for myself, transforming the subjectivity of the child into another kind of being deserving of a new theoretical focus. According to Bond Stockton, this inability and the darkness it entails are connected to lingering effects of childhood; a child, after all, is the not-yet-adult, with all that this concept implies about potentiality. A child is the "not-yet-straight" as well as the "not-yet-gay" adult (7); a placeholder for a point in time, growing toward a question mark, a potentiality that might go either way. Sarah Ahmed would refer to the child as an intersection, a multi-directional spatial option, an encounter of several horizons where one can go either way and align oneself along different roads.

The ghostly emerges in the mere attempt to look back beyond the adult's past self to an unreachable past, and in this sense, there is a double ghost: that of the child who will not grow up straight--the child we cannot reach--and the straight adult who will not come to be. As such, childhood is perceived, if we follow Bond Stockton's logic, as a sexualized intersection, a spatial and temporal potentiality from which one embarks on alternative paths; the queer child might be "this" or "that" (or both). This potentiality is seen in contemporary Western society as innocence, which is the proclaimed reason for protecting children, but also, according to the writer, the reason for darkening their desires. I would add that the child's potentialities and multiple directionalities are precisely the attributes that make childhood so queer and inaccessible, in the sense that s/he is an almost transgendered, pliable being. In other words, childhood is not only queer because of its inaccessibility to adult thinkers; it is queer because it offers a perception of self that is prior to a sexual object choice or identity, and therefore can be understood as plural, open.[35]

My reading of the queer child theory, the plurality of paths that are open to children, and of childhood as a potentiality of directions is reinforced by Bond Stockton's development of the concept of growing up. Opposing a normative understanding of children's suspended and delayed growth as vertical ("growing up"), the writer explores different directionalities of growth, including horizontal growth and the many possibilities it opens: "[…] the 'gay' child's fascinating asynchronicities, its required self-ghosting measures, its appearance only after its death, and its frequent fallback onto metaphor (as a way to grasp itself) indicate we

[35] This is not to suggest that all children are to be understood as transgendered, or to ignore the countless life experiences of queer adults who feel compelled and even coerced into choosing a straight life style, but rather to point to the ways in which the child's potentiality and ability to grow into an alternative adult can be viewed as a more flexible gender identity.

need new words for growth" (11).[36] This is an interesting conceptualization of a temporal project, since its uses a spatial understanding of progression in time. According to this view, growing up is a limited representation of the processes that children and adults experience, since it limits growth to stature, suggesting that one reaches a certain height and then ceases to grow. Meanwhile, sideways growth points to the breadth of a person's experience or maturation that can last a lifetime without reaching a supposed vertical end (11). The metaphoric possibilities that sideways growth offers are rich because of its spatial representations, as it clearly depicts the child's progression in time not only as a potentiality of paths--futures that may or may not occur--but also as a rhizomatic spread. This term points, therefore, to a way of growing that is filled with horizontal interconnections, experiences and temporalities that constantly collapse into themselves, so that a child can be queer at the same time that she can be non-sexual and have her own desires. "Sideways growth" lets us explore childhood as a process that not only lingers on the horizon of potentiality, but as a subjectivity that aims to prolong and expand itself in many directions. In other words, if we grow sideways instead of growing up, there are many more directions that are open for us, far more than being short or tall, straight or queer. If space is the way to depict a progression in time, then what we need to do next is to follow temporal bends and spatial flows, trying to dismantle the uniqueness of both time and space. An analysis of the subjective space of childhood offers us, then, a way into the queerness of childhood, as well as into the spatiality of subjectivity.

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[36] Here Bond Stockton consciously dialogues with Judith Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place*: "By articulating and elaborating a concept of queer time, I suggest new ways of understanding nonnormative behaviors that have clear but not essential relations to gay and lesbian subjects. […] 'Queer time' is a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance" (6). For Halberstam, and I will argue that for Bond Stockton as well, queer time cannot be discussed without queer space, as the two are intertwined.

A friendly ghost

If we consider the narrator in *Antes* as a queer child, or as a protagonist trying to illuminate her own childhood experiences, we can better understand the contradictions and puzzles that arise during the reading. In fact, the protagonist's efforts to access and narrate her past life as a child, whether in the metaphoric or the literal sense, come across as eerie and odd from the very first page. I am not suggesting a reading of this novel as a ghost story in the line of James' *The Turn of the Screw*, but rather trying to decipher the questions and gaps in narration with which the narrator challenges the reader using a ghostly reading. Illuminating the darkness of her childhood self and trying to explain it to supposedly adult readers, is forever fraught by the temporal challenge. This challenge is reflected in the name of the novel: Antes, before. Before what? What is this clearly marked moment that the protagonist is growing towards, preceding the time of narration and terrifying her so much? The narrator tries to start with a coherent and linear (straight) story telling: "Nací en la ciudad de México en 1954" (12). The narrator provides a specific time and place, a formal and traditional biographical opening. And then the narration continues: "Recuerdo con precisión el día de mi nacimiento. Claro, el miedo" (12). This is where the story becomes odd: how can one vividly remember their own birth? In spite of the narrator's efforts to seemingly ignore the ghostly first page of the text and have a new beginning, this proclaimed "clear memory" of her birth makes us question the narrator's words. In fact, the text as a whole plays with logic and with illogical explanations: on the one hand it uses straight forward and linear details such as place and time; on the other it eludes normative understanding by supplying information that cannot be attained, for example, at the moment of birth. The narration's confusing effects on the reader can be explained by the tensions between

"growing up" and sideways growing: having a linear progression towards adulthood, and reflecting back on the moment of birth with the knowledge of a grown self. Birthing in this case is both the moment in which the child is actually born, and the metaphoric first-person narration of the protagonist trying to grasp her old, prior, childhood self.

This childhood self experiences birthing with an intense fear, one that might exceed what we might expect from this moment of separation from the mother. The complexities of the relationship with the mother are marked as one of the unexplained characteristics of the narrative: "La comprendo y no se lo reprocho, tal vez si yo llegara a estar en su situación (ni lo imagino, sería demasiado fortuna) yo también sentiría miedo" (12). Thus, the fear that the child is experiencing is influenced by the mother's feelings, as they are still connected during the act of giving birth. Nevertheless, the evocation of the word "guilt" triggers suspicion from the reader, a sentiment that grows when we learn more about how the narrator refers to her mother. "Se llamaba con un nombre totalmente distinto al mío. Un nombre más sonoro, un nombre que yo le pondría a un hijo si lo tuviera. Se llamaba Esther. Aunque la vi desde siempre con tanta precisión, la quise mucho, como si fuera mi madre" (12). Differentiating herself from her mother right after birth seems to be a logical step for a child, yet the way this is told suggests that the narrator sees herself not only as completely separate from her mother, but as someone who is not necessarily a biological daughter. This may be a way for an adult narrator to point to her difficulties in relating to her mother, the feelings of an adult who seeks knowledge of the reason why individuation began. Boullosa employs a surrealist tone to achieve this dual, sideways movement, and by doing so she emphasizes the narration's queer aspects. The subjunctive is used here, as in other places in the text, as a trope that opens a

double door, enabling the possibility of biologically birthing this child while symbolically not mothering her. The mother did, just now, give birth to the narrator--the queer child is born--but she is not the "real" mother according to the narrative's protagonist. As a queer child, the narrator is birthed by her own backwards gaze, the temporal bend that allows her to reflect on her life story, her lifeline and its inconsistencies. Therefore, being a direct descendent of this mother contributes only partly to this birth, being that the narrator herself is birthing herself as a child by telling the story and trying to grasp her childhood self. This may account for the complex and disturbing relation to the mother, to whom she will never refer to as "mother" but rather always by her first name.

Birthing marks the memorable moment of the beginning of the narrator's life, pointing our attention to the relationship with her mother and the possibility or impossibility of knowing exactly what happened that night. Through the retrospective act of narrating, we become aware of the protagonist's suspicious approach towards her mother: is she, or is she not guilty of setting a tone of fear to her life story right from birth? This double approach to knowledge marked by the voice of the queer child uses temporal tropes that keep us glued to our seats from now on: "¿Cuánto tiempo tardé en darme cuenta de que ella no era mi mama? Siempre lo supe, pero hasta el día en el que ellos llegaron por mí, todo funcionó como si ella lo fuera" (12). Using the subjunctive again, the protagonist emphasizes the complexity of her relationship with her "as if" mother, linked here with the end point of narration, the terrifying moment in which she was taken, perhaps the culmination of her unfulfilled need for protection. At a later point in the protagonist's life, we learn that she was taken by an unspecified "they" in an unknown moment in the future. This moment serves from now on as the end point to the narration, the act that is linked to the

protagonist's current location from which she tells this story. The text, therefore, has a beginning and an end: the moment of birth by this "as if" mother, and the moment when the protagonist was taken. The usage of symbolic language intrigues us at the same time that it prevents our understanding and keeps us guessing: was she kidnapped? Is she dead? What did the mother do, or not do, to prevent this frightening occurrence? This movement backwards and forwards in the protagonist's lifespan (timeline) allows for the unique narrating stance, one of an omniscient narrator that can throw in new details however surreal they might be. This child may be on the "other side" but she is not willing or able to tell us directly to what she is referring. If knowledge and understanding are qualities of adulthood, the way this story is told suggests an "in betweenness": patches of selves and half-lit parts of subjectivity. The space of childhood, the narrative that is focused on the experiences of this girl, is directed towards these patches of light and darkness, trying to bridge fears and desires.

These fears, however misleading and unspecified, are rooted in a corporal being, as well as in the subjective space of childhood and the birth of sexuality. More specifically, fear seems to be personified by something that manifests in space, that inhabits space in a metaphorical or maybe real sense as this "they" becomes more prevalent in the narrative. Trying to analyze the nature of these sentiments focuses our attention on the spatial aspects of the narrating stance. "Fuera a veces escucho a las que vienen persiguiendo y aún no les dan caza […] Tengo tanto miedo. Tengo tanto miedo y no hallo cómo gritar *mamá*. Es un grito que no puedo emitir, porque esa palabra no la tengo" (13). Gesturing to the unmentioned location from which this story is told, the protagonist clearly states that she is inside and that whatever scares her is on the outside. Though she has been "caught" by the threat that has come for

her, she can still hear the ones that are being chased, all of them described with a feminine pronoun. This threat, therefore, is aimed at girls, or women, something that chases and eventually captures its victims. If this is gendered violence, it is certainly not personified. The repeated mention of the "as if" mother is important: the protagonist is aware that the person she should be calling for help is the mother, but, as she explains, the word is not part of her vocabulary, does not belong to her. In other words, the normative category of "mother" as someone who protects and comes when she is called is not part of the relationship the narrator has with her biological mother. There is a duality here, characterizing what should be and what is not part of the maternal relationship, a protection the protagonist feels she never had from her mother, a sense of security that was not part of her life. This duality accounts for the tenuous relationship and the emphasis the protagonist puts on differentiating between the biological mother and the broader roles of the Mother. This mother occupies, so to speak, the place of a mother; however, she does not fulfill the needs of the child, and therefore is always the "as if" mother.

On the other side of this normative family is the father, another allusive presence that cannot be fixed to one meaning. One of the first memories the narrator tells us after the puzzling birth scene is of her playing in the park with her sisters and father on their way to school. Again, we have the setting of a peaceful surrounding that one can easily imagine as a televised commercial for heteronormativity: a middle class family plays in the park, three young girls and a father in a game of hide and seek. However, this particular scene is tainted by accounts in the protagonist's same surreal, suspicious tone: "Luego, tomaba el camino a la escuela, como siempre, hablando de lo de siempre, de un juego que él creía inofensivo pero que para mí era un juego de asalto y dolor" (14). The road to school is the location of this recurring

game, as the connection between the space of home and the public space of school is the in-betweenness that allows for scary things to happen. On the road, en route between one space and another, the protagonist's fears begin to take form. The game scene is important, then, not only for the insight it provides into family dynamics, but as a connecting location, as one of the roads that this girl takes from childhood to adulthood. The space of the road is what lies between being a young child raised in the family home and taking a step towards the space where one is supposed to learn and practice adulthood.

The game consists of the father claiming to be a thief coming to steal the girls and sell them, to which the two sisters react by laughter and running while the protagonist becomes afraid. Once again, it seems that the pain and attacks she speaks of alludes to other scenes of which we have no specific knowledge, details from her life that we are not told. Then again, why wouldn't one be afraid of such a terrifying game? Why are the other two girls not as afraid as the narrator? Though we cannot specifically know the reasons for this reaction, the fear that she experiences, we do get a sense that this girl is either highly sensitive, or that she is exposed to different life circumstances. Furthermore, the father's threatening game is explicitly corporal, as the possible result of the girls' kidnapping, as he says, is to be turned into pork rind, which does not sound like a particularly funny fantasy. A father's threat to literally consume the flesh of his daughters might pass as an inside joke, if it weren't for the frightened narrating voice. Taken together, an un-protective mother and a father who plays at being an assailant set the ground for a terrifying family dynamics in which abuse, if it exists, can flourish without interruption.

Spatially thinking, the focus of narration goes straight from the traumatic birth to the father's threatening games in a public park. If there is a family home, it is not

present in the beginning of the text. Rather, the narrator is located, at least in the first years of her life, in the public spaces of Mexico City: Chapultepec Park, the streets, and the school. This omission of the family home, a childhood space that is not represented in the first third of the novel, supports my reading of the family dynamic as the possible source for the feelings of fear and threat. In other words, we would expect that a young girl's process of growing up would be primarily focused on familiar spaces such as the nursery, the family kitchen, the living room. Their absence is another link in a long line of clues that mark this protagonist's path as different, queer. Instead, the space that is narrated to us is the school:

> Nunca podré recordar cómo era precisamente la llegada a la escuela. De pronto estaba ahí. Conjeturo que me dejaba del automóvil torpemente, un poco mareada, sintiendo un enorme alivio porque había podido poder llegar a pesar de las amenazas del señor ese que decía no ser mi papá… (15).

As we can clearly see, the road to school is not only confusing, but also has a miraculous effect. The narrator feels as if she simply appears at school every time her father takes her there, as if the actual way that was taken to school is a blurry adventure she has to transgress anew. Therefore, reaching school is a relief for her since she has survived the tricky road in her father's car and his habitual, threatening game in the park. The space of childhood, in this case, is the fraternal mess of a schoolyard, where the child's safety is experienced through the separation and distance from the unsettling father figure. Leaving the enclosed space of the car and being able to free herself from the father's confusing game in the open space of an all-girl school is, for this protagonist, freedom and safety combined.

However, like other spaces in the novel, the space of the school is not an innocent one, nor is it free of threats. Here the protagonist starts to experience the fears that will become more prominent as the text progresses; she feels like she's

being followed, or chased, feelings she tries to conceal. The space of school, where she encounters older girls and where she is supposed to learn the proper road towards adulthood, is the place where she first experiences fear of being chased. In other words, growing up and being placed in a vertical structure (first grade, second grade, etc.) prompts a feeling of being persued, as if she is being hurried. Spatially thinking, when one is followed they hurry their steps and may take a more direct route to their destination. Only this girl does not necessarily want to reach the next destination--the normative progression of a school girl, good grades, completing the academic year with merit. Rather, she wants to stay safe. Her response to the feeling of being followed or hurried is to try to conceal and deny her distress. If the threat chases her forward, she desires to linger in childish denial and enjoy her time at school by playing, a response we know will fail, since we already know that she was indeed taken. The road, then, delineates the failure to remain safe, an unsuccessful escape route that has already led to an end.

Part of the failure of her reaction to the threat is connected with her delayed understanding that she is not the only one being chased, and with her incapacity of creating alliances. During recess, Maria Enela, one of the other girls in her classroom, invites the protagonist to follow her into an abandoned henhouse on school grounds where she says: "Entonces los pasos se hicieron más presentes y ella me preguntó: ¿qué son esos pasos? ¿qué van a ser? Le contesté- nada… Sí sabes de qué hablo- me dijo- sabes muy bien, me han venido siguiendo… Me dijeron que te preguntara a ti" (15). This is the first time a manifestation of her fear of the unspecified "they" takes some kind of representation, tied here to a relatively open space. She is on school grounds, with another girl who functions as a mirror to the narrator's fears. This other girl hears the steps that follow her, meaning that whatever threat the protagonist is

facing is not limited to her. The sound of steps that follow her is non-personified, yet we learn these steps have a voice, and that they communicate their connection to the protagonist with the other girl. This, of course, is more than the narrator can handle, and she runs away, since: "No podría soportar mi propio miedo reflejado en ella" (17). The reflection of fear in the other girl marks, for the reader, the feeling of terror the protagonist experiences, but also proves that the threat is indeed external. If another girl hears the steps and can furthermore hear "them" communicate with her, then something must be there; it cannot all be in the narrator's imagination. The threat has a substance in space, a physical presence that seems to chase and follow the protagonist. Also, it is a cry for help from Enela, trying to create an alliance of girls to understand the threat that chases them both, a call for help the protagonist refuses. Her inability to form a bond with this other girl, driven by fear, is a choice she makes to remain alone in her struggle, a refusal of sideways growth and horizontal alliances.

The manifestation in space of the threat that follows the narrator is an elusive one, since the reader is never given an exact description of what it is that she sees, if she sees anything at all. It does seem, however, to be connected with knowledge and writing. Haunted by the unspecified sounds the day after the talk with Enela, the protagonist exclaims aloud: "llévense mejor a Enela" (20). Here she even betrays the other girl, willing to point the menace in her direction if it will divert the danger. In other words, she not only refuses an alliance with this other girl, but actually puts her in the path of the threat. The following morning she finds a note in her desk accusing her of selling her friend, of betraying her to the unknown enemy, an accusation only the same threatening presence could have made. In a sense, the threat to Maria Enela is only echoed by the protagonist, as we do not get a direct representation of what the voices are saying in the narration. The note she finds in her desk, though, is a direct

link between writing and the threat, so that the lines and spaces on the page create a message parallel to that of the sounds. If until now they were indescribable, only heard by the protagonist and Enela, now they take form in the space of the page. What happens to Maria Enela is proof that the threat of the voices is genuine; her request to be excused is denied, resulting in the following scene:

> ¡Mire, maestra! Gritó Rosi atrás de mí. Señalaba un charco en el piso del salón, abajo del pupitre de Enela. Mire… Enela desvanecida tenía la cabeza apoyada en el pupitre, la falda empapada y los ojos abiertos, como los de un muerto (21).

Enela is then carried away to the nursery and the protagonist does not see her again at school. Having her skirt soaked and a pool under her chair may be the result of urination, but then again it might be related to other liquids and events, that is, blood and menstruation. We learn that the threat that follows these little girls manifests in the inability to command one's body, to choose whether or not to urinate/bleed. The scene with Enela reflects what could happen to the protagonist, a mirroring effect of her fears, showing her and the readers how she too can be taken. "Being taken" for her, then, is linked with the knowledge that comes from being old enough to read, as well as with the incapability of choosing when to go to the bathroom and how to control the liquids in one's own body. Being chased and rushed into sexual maturity is the road that is laid in front of the protagonist, the road she feels she is pushed onto and the one she tries to prevent herself from taking. In fact, corporality is at the center of the threat persuing the protagonist, literally chasing here at school, marking backwards and forwards as spatial directions that carry a subjective and a corporal meaning.

After Enela's disappearance the protagonist becomes distracted, as if she were not really present at school:

> Estaba absolutamente fuera de mí, quién sabe dónde, ganaba los dieces en las materias a fuerza de no estar en ningún sitio, esquivando, guareciéndome en islotes que- como no los obtuve de mi imaginación sino de planes de estudio maquinados por burócratas- se esfumaron, no dejando ni un rasgo al cual pudiera asirme como entonces lo hice (23).

The frightening occurrence results in the narrator trying to earn good grades in school, perform what is expected of her, take the correct route towards normative adulthood, progress on the straight road, and grow up. At the same time, the fear of being taken affects the protagonist's sense of location, the ability to inhabit the space of school, to be one with her own actions. She may manage to receive high grades in all her classes, but she does not feel present, as if the connection between subject and space is interrupted, broken. To the unsuspecting adult this young girl seems to be on the right path to normative adulthood, but she does not feel attached to these procedures, since for her there is nothing to cling to. Growing up is like being on autopilot, going through the motions of going to school every day, repeating normative lines of behavior. Feeling so frightened, she tries to cling to imaginary places she learns about at school, to find refuge in islands of fiction that are never detailed enough to shelter her from the sounds she continues to hear. For this girl, reality seems to be a nightmare from which she longs to wake but does not quite manage to do so. The constant result of this dislocation is feeling beside herself, an expression that works in our imagination to create a separation, almost a chasm between two selves: the normative one who sits in the classroom everyday and the one who endures a surrealist experience of threatening sounds.

The word "surrealist" sums up the protagonist's experiences and hovers constantly around the occurrences in the novel. It is tempting to see the protagonist's fears as nightmarish images that inspire an impressionable girl and, in fact, Boullosa contributes in some part to such a reading. For instance, when the girl stays with her

beloved grandmother one night, she explains that it is only with her that she actually sleeps since she feels free from "el desorden que habitó salvajemente cuando le fue possible el mundo de mis sueños" (27). We are promptly informed that the sounds that follow her disturb her sleep when she is alone, which is why she can only sleep when she is with her grandmother Esther. Curiously, the grandmother and the "as if" mother have the same name, which may account for the shelter the protagonist finds with the older Esther. It is as if the two women held two different positions for the child--one being the biological mother who does not really protect her, and the other being the comforting and caring one who is only available on rare occasions. At the same time, the grandmother is associated here with dreams and sleep, which takes us back to the threat's surrealist aspect. Is she really awake during the day, or is she affected by the sounds she hears in her sleep? Can we really know which realm she inhabits, that is, dream or reality? Boullosa further contributes to our doubts when the protagonist directs our attention to the sounds' origin, finally taking us to the home front:

> Tendría que repasar mi casa para encontrar de qué punto salieron, dónde, dónde, dónde, de qué punto de la casa brincaban para alertarme, para hacerme comprender que era *para mí*, que sonaban para mí, avanzando en la oscuridad y en la oscuridad retrocediendo, tentaleando aquí y allá, tropezándose entre sí sin encontrarme (28).

The threatening sounds emerge from her house, the same place that was basically absent for the first six or seven years of the protagonist's young life. In other words, there is something in the house itself that causes the burgeoning of an unnamed threat; hiding somewhere in the house is something unspeakable. The scenes at school were only a distraction from the real center of the fears that haunt this girl: the domestic space. We take the road from school where the protagonist first describes the sounds back into the family home, tracing backwards from the normative route into the space

of childhood again. This little girl does not want to follow the straight path of growing up, but prefers to go in circles, moving forwards in times but mostly going backwards and enjoying the privileges of a young girl. If attending school marks a progression in upwards temporal directionality, then enjoying the enclosure of home and indulging in childish nightmares is a horizontal (sideways) step at best.

Home again

With our attention turned inwards, we can now establish the importance of being inside the familial space, that is, the home. The narrative trajectory up to now has taken us from the womb to the closest things a young girl has to public space--the park and her school. Along the way the text plants seeds of doubt and questions regarding the space that was not yet represented. As the narration progresses there is more focus on the home as the location of the frightening occurrences, but also as the only recourse for safety. As such, the construction of this space, and the protagonist's relation with it, echoes processes of change and transformation, at the same time that it betrays to the reader what happens inside. The things that dwell in this space are the elements of the drama the protagonist conveys, which is why she is so obsessively focused on it. In other words, the form of her fears and the shape of things to come take place in the space of home, helping us understand the experiences this girl undergoes. If the home is the source of the threat, then the geography of this place is the floor plan of her fears, the site where an emerging subjectivity encounters its end.

The home, with its promise of safety and protection, is established as a frightening space even in what should be the most intimate of locations: the bedroom. Sounds begin haunting the protagonist in her dreams, preventing her from sleeping properly: "[…] es fácil definir: niña con mucho miedo, padece pánico nocturno

porque escucha que se acercan a ella en la noche… ¿Qué se acerca a ella? Nunca se lo preguntó, tampoco se explicó en pocas palabras lo que era ella'" (29). Indeed, it is easy for an adult and pragmatist reading to explain the nightly sounds of a dark bedroom as the overactive imagination of a scared little girl; yet, as the narrator tells us, we should really be wondering, what is the source of these sounds, what makes the noises, what lies in the darkness? We also should be asking, who, or what is this little girl, a question that brings us back to Bond Stockton's association of the queer child with the notion of the ghost. According to the text itself the protagonist is of another nature, even if not quite defined, and we know that there is something strange about her and the way she experiences her world. We may even see her unique relationship with the surreal world of fears and nightmares as a paranormal phenomenon, part of the world that only a few sensitive individuals can experience, those few being young girls. As a ghostly child, she is therefore aware of sounds and threats that are not reveled to the adults in her world. We might also say that as a child, she faces other threats than the adults in her family, and in this sense the child is a subject who is more susceptible to the sounds of the night, as well as to unexplained occurrences. Perhaps the difficulty in explaining what she experiences is part of the gap between her childhood self and the narrator's seemingly adult point of view.

Although she specifically says she has never been able to properly name the sounds, nor to see what makes them, she explains them to the reader with an amalgam of familiar images:

> La geografía del ruido (alas de grillos frotándose, el caminar nocturno de la perra sobre el pasto, alguna paloma moviéndose, los coches pasando como ventisca en las calles, las hojas de la yuca, las cortinas tocadas por mosquitos, los objetos buscando acomodo tal vez, o tal vez alguno de ellos) no fue lo que vi: esa historia me hubiera gustado vivir, la de la descubridora que explorando pudiera matar mis pavores nocturnos (29).

Fear is not about what we see--as if we needed more explanation--but about sounds that, however explainable and logical, produce the most inexplicable sentiment. A cartography of noise inspired by the habitual sounds of a household in a Mexican middle class home--mosquitoes, cars, the family pet--all unite to create a terrain of fear. It is easy to relate to the young voice explaining the experience of fully knowing what produces nocturnal sounds while refusing to believe they are benign. There is a critical gap between what one sees and how one experiences the sounds that objects produce in space, as any child would certainly agree; it does not alleviate fears to be told that what makes this sound or that is the curtain moving in the wind. As a child, you always have a lingering suspicion that a threatening monster is coming to get you, that the shade of the curtain is most definitely a ghost. The gap between what one sees and how one experiences the sounds that objects produce provides forever rich resources for suspense movies and children's stories. In fact, the geography of sounds that the protagonist creates for us here is the only way to access the slippery terrain of childhood fears.

The protagonist is the exception in what seems to be an idyllic family home. She is the only one to be constantly on guard, the only one exposed to the sounds that prevent her from sleeping. When it suddenly snows (the year is 1964 as we are told; time progresses in a linear way again), the sisters Jose and Male go out to play in the backyard:

> Qué maravilloso silencio! Esther, Jose y Male, con sus abrigos oscuros sobre las pijamas, salieron a tocar la nieve del jardín. Respetuosas pisaban en la orilla, bordeando, avergonzadas de manchar lo blanco… ¿Qué sentían afuera en la oscuridad? Yo adentro sentía una paz indescriptible, el silencio por fin, el silencio que yo había esperado todos esos años y que creí imposible… (35).

Note that the older sisters have masculine names--one is called Jose, which in Spanish usually stands for Josefina, and the other is called Male--which in English is, of

course, quite masculine. The bilingual slippage of the latter sister's name supports the intentionally confusing approach to gender; when crossing from one language to the other she can be read as of another gender.[37] These sisters leave the enclosed space of home for the sake of experiencing the odd essence of snow in a place that is usually of a warm climate. The color scheme of their transgression to the outside world is characterizes by whiteness and stains of footprints in the snow. The image of stained whiteness carries the weight of sexual maturity, as purity is often seen as white in Western culture, and the red that marks sexual maturity is what stains it. Likewise, the spatial emphasis the protagonist marks here ties the act of leaving home for the sake of being outdoors to her hesitance to stain the white snow. Her older sisters are on the verge of sexual maturity, and are accompanied by their mother outside, in the relative safety of the backyard, where they can test the water, so to speak, tread the banks of this white substance and consider their first steps into it. The protagonist, on the other hand, stays inside looking out, still enjoying the enclosure of home without feeling the urge to step into the cold. Furthermore, the arrival of this whiteness from the sky provides her with an unexpected peacefulness. While her sisters experience their first steps in the adult life that awaits them, she enjoys a rare moment of silence, as if her sisters are buying her some quiet time away from the menacing sounds. Corporality is linked here with the spatial definition of inside and outside, as well as with images of sexual maturity and childhood purity. If the older sisters are playing at soiling purity, the liminal phase of not quite being an adult, the protagonist enjoys the quiet of not having to join them. For her, quiet means not staining the whiteness and staying inside a little longer. Her choice to remain inside, as well as the text's focus on the space of

[37] The narrator attends a bilingual school where the teacher-nuns are sometimes Anglophone. To a girl who is supposed to understand both Spanish and English a name such as Male cannot be empty of gendered meaning.

home, reflects a desire to remain young, to grow in directions other than upwards.

Inside and outside are both part of the complex grid of boundaries the protagonist sets around herself in order to feel safe. From the standpoint of being at home, protected by walls and inside the routines of family life, a child should feel safe, or at least this is how one imagines a normative process of growing up. In this case, however, our expectations of a normative route towards adulthood are constantly disrupted. The enclosure of home does not promise safety for this young girl. One night she hears steps outside her bedroom that are different than the usual ones, and she decides to go and see for herself what's out there. The threatening sounds are external to her bedroom in this case, although they are inside the house, part of the geography of fears. She discovers a turtle that was brought to make soup for her mother's birthday the following day that was supposed to stay in the little patio: "Corría hacia mí y con su cara me tocó al llegar a mis pantorrillas. Me agaché a ella: sus ojos brillaban de pánico y no me llamó por mi nombre ni me pidió auxilio a gritos porque las tortugas no pueden hablar, sólo por eso" (31). Again we encounter a scene in which the protagonist points to the inability to speak; only this time it is not herself that lacks the words to call for help, but rather the turtle. In addition, much like the protagonist's proximity to Maria Enela, she is in a situation where another small feminine being is asking for her help from the unexplained threat. The turtle, in this case, is an interesting example, since it is literally the figure of nomadism in its most simplistic sense. The turtle evokes a life of traveling, the need (or the ability, or the obligation) to carry home on one's back, the heavy load that is carrying one's home, and the slowness that is the price of being able to go inside oneself whenever in danger. In this context, the turtle signifies the ability to protect herself in any situation by way of the rigidness of the shell that can contain the self. In addition, the turtle is a

curious example of being inside and outside of one's home simultaneously, enjoying the safety of home without having to be apart from the outer world. This is why, when she finds the turtle equally terrified of the sounds that chase her inside her own home, she is even more frightened. The turtle is another reflection of what might happen to her, only it should be safe in its own shell, as she should be safe in her own home.

After returning the turtle to its place in the inner patio, a space that is inside the domain of the house but outside the building itself, she goes back to her room and finds the kitchen scissors under her pillow. She puts the scissors back in their right place in the kitchen and then goes back to her room again, only to realize something very wrong just happened:

> Lo comprendí demasiado tarde. Corrí hasta la cocina pero ya no hubo remedio: la puerta de la azotehuela abierta, la tortuga sangrando con las tijeras culpables, divididas en dos, tiradas en sendos charcos de sangre en el piso. La tortuga ya no tenía cabeza y le faltaba un pie (32).

Of course this is a puzzle we cannot solve, which is precisely the predicament the narration keeps creating for the reader. Did she kill the turtle in her sleep and then forgot all about it? Did someone else leave the scissors under her pillow to implicate her in the act or did she simply dream the entire scene? Frustrated reading is a key element in this text. All we know for sure is that the turtle is dead in spite of coming to the protagonist for help, suggesting that the protagonist not only did not save it,[38] but played a part in its violent killing. When visualizing sideways growth, one would hope that a rhizomatic spread creates, as Bond-Stockton mentions, unlikely horizontal connections. Growing sideways, for her, is a way to be enriched by unexpected lateral friendships (11). Contrary to Bond Stockton's development of the term, sideways

[38] There is a significant difference between Spanish and English in this case--in Spanish *la Tortuga* is a "she," in proper English it is an "it." Why is it that English relates to animals with an inanimate and non-gendered pronoun?

growth in this case is not grounds for alliances and unexpected connection as the protagonist clearly does not save the turtle from its end.[39] The description of the kitchen resembles a horror movie more than a classic girl's coming of age story and bears a striking resemblance to Enela's disappearance. Again there are puddles on the ground, and this time they are specifically blood, not just any liquid. Whatever killed the turtle did not simply "take it" as in other cases; it had actually penetrated its body with a sharp object, which, curiously enough, is an interesting combination of a feminine pronoun (in Spanish) with masculine attributes. The scissors themselves are separated into two bloody parts, as if they were torn at the seam in two sharp legs after penetrating the turtle's body. The turtle's end is an ominous sign for the little girl, bridging corporality, blood, and space. In other words, the animal that carries its home on its back is as defenseless as Enela and the protagonist. There is no escape, even inside one's own home, from the corporal attack of the threatening beings.

It is no wonder, then, that the next step the protagonist takes in protecting herself has to do with trying to re-create the boundaries of her own space. Since home is no longer a safe space, and her dreams constantly question her ability to stay focused, she now makes an effort to create a safer space inside her room, a smaller limit inside of which she feels more protected. At first, the story of the white stones begins as a playful pastime with her sisters: taking decorative stones from the neighbor's yard and using them for their games. "Mis hermanas y yo inventamos

[39] Bond-Stockton also gives a case of the kind of sideways growth and the connections they allow between young girls and their pets, in her example, a dog: "[…] the dog is a living, growing metaphor for the child itself, as we are going to see, and for the child's own propensities to stray by making the most of its sideways growth. The dog is a vehicle for the child's strangeness. It is the child's companion in queerness" (90). For Bond-Stockton, the dog allows for a stray affect and not necessarily a straight one, at the same time that it enables sideways affiliations. Although in Boullosa's novel the example is a turtle and not a dog, it reflects the protagonist's inability to relate to another being, to create an alliance with this small animal.

trazar territorios con las piedritas blancas: hacíamos en el piso o en el jardín mapas de tierras inexistentes, en el centro de los cuales nos coronábamos, en fastuosas ceremonias, reinas del país que delimitaban" (47). By creating their own land, an alternative territory, the girls practice the agency that childhood authorizes them, the ability and the right to fashion new worlds. In fact, these new worlds are created by setting boundaries and declaring a distinction in space between inside and outside: this is ours, this is not.[40] Of course, for a young girl, announcing herself as queen is a way to gain control of her life, immediately providing her with the right to determine her whereabouts. For such a child, naming herself the creator and ruler of an imaginary territory is a way to gain agency, if only during her playtime.

For this little girl, however, the game is discovered to have far reaching implications since it effects the threatening sounds that haunt her at night. The kingdom that the sisters draft turns out to be a deformed *O* around her bed, a circular boundary that encloses her sleep (47). The bed that is at the center of the nightmarish sounds the protagonist hears at night becomes a new territory, a kingdom, a room of her own. Drawing a smaller space around her bed gives her the agency of determining the boundary, setting another line of defense before her most private space of sleep: "En el centro del territorio inventado por casualidad en un juego, lograba escapar (¡por fin!) a la oscuridad dolorosa que terminaría por rodearme" (48). The tangible line of little stones, with their imaginary potency given by the protagonist and her sisters, is the only line of defense that can hold back the sounds. By association, white is the color of purity, reminding us again of the tension between childhood and sexual maturity, or the line the protagonist treads between the two. With a body that keeps

[40] Bond-Stockton brings the example of the movie *Heavenly Creatures*, in which two young girls in a complex quasi-lesbian relationship invent their own kingdom with its own rules and people, where they are also queens (174-175).

progressing in time (growing up), this girl needs every bit of whiteness to fend off the effects of maturity and to remain in her own little kingdom of imagination and games. The subjective space of childhood is not a safe one in this case. It is constantly threatened by a looming end, reaching that dreaded adulthood marked by bodily fluids and sexual maturity: "Entonces me distraje con dicha en el paraíso del silencio, me dejé ir como cualquier niña en el puro gusto de la infancia [.,.]" (48). The imaginary realm of white stones allows her to remain a child a little longer, permits her to grow sideways and immerse herself in peaceful dreams that are not threatened by the threat of growing up. However, the magical stones cannot stop the progression of linear time forever and this temporal safety comes to an end, as one day the neighbors decide to change their garden and get rid of the potent white stones. For the protagonist this decision brings the end of quiet times.

Penetrating fears

As the protagonist proceeds along the inevitable road towards sexual maturity (she is now in fifth grade, approximately 11 years old), her "as if" mother becomes more present in the text. We learn that Esther initiates a drawing contest to depict the school's banner, *serviam*. The girls are invited to her studio, as she is a well-known painter: "Nunca habíamos entrado al estudio. Lo observé con el sentimiento con que observé el corazón de la rana en el cuerpo abierto en vida del animal drogado, tiempo después, en el laboratorio de la escuela: yo sabía que el corazón existía, pero verlo, verlo era otra cosa" (61). The image of the heart recalls the novel's epigraph: the heart of the world is located inside the family home. Esther's studio is the heart of the house, the center to which the protagonist was never invited, the beating mechanism that stimulates all the occurrences in the family space. In fact, it is here where the

protagonist's fears become more prominent, to such a degree that they take a concrete shape in space for the first time. The relation between drawing (or, by extension, all art) and the protagonist's fears of having to enter feminine adulthood is centered on the figure of the mother, a figure that is located at the core of the house. As an artist, the mother represents the ability to create worlds in her paintings; much like the girl's game with the white stones, though essentially different due to the fact that she is an adult, and an established painter. This room, this studio at the center of the house, resembles not only a heart as the protagonist clearly states, but also an artistic womb in which one toys with creation. This way, the mother, or the "as if" mother, is the figure that marks most prominently both creation and the proximity of the threat inside this space.

> […] dibujé con detenimiento y en colores ocres un niño pequeño, acostado como un bebé pero de mayor edad, cuyo cuerpo cubrí de clavitos, de clavos que serían pequeños afuera de las proporciones del dibujo, o sea enormes alcayatas con cabeza de clavos enterradas en su cuerpo inmóvil y en su rostro que, si no dejaba de sonreír, casi podría decirse que lo hacía (62).

Imitating the mother by becoming an artist herself, the narrator's drawing is the first time we see a manifestation of her fears, the nails that will take on more and more importance as the text nears its end. The figure on the page does not fit the school's banner and seems to be remote from the Latin "I will serve." It is a gruesome depiction of an ageless boy in ochre colors covered in nails, a reddish spectrum detailing hurt and countless penetrations. The boy is in a fetal position in spite the fact that he is older, much like the protagonist's temporal duality as an older person narrating her life as a girl. The details of the nails are particularly alarming, especially if we consider it as a work of an 11-year-old girl. This drawing unifies the protagonist's fear of the corporal and gendered effects of "growing up." In addition, the change of gender is interesting in this case, especially when we consider the

emphasis given to girlhood in the novel. The protagonist depicts herself as a bloody boy, a victim of countless penetrations, as if her fear of being seen as a sexually mature woman transcends the boundaries of gender and transforms her biological sex. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the protagonist says this drawing is not for the "*serviam*" contest, it might be connected with the idea of teaching girls to serve after all. When we consider the Catholic school's tradition of serving one's community as an obedient daughter, the protagonist seems to take serving to another level, one in which the body itself is the way to serve, a martyred sacrifice of herself. Only her martyrdom transcends the boundary of Catholic Christianity and becomes a terrifying testimony to what haunts her at night. Her fears of "growing up"--that is, taking the route of normative and heterosexual girlhood through sexual maturity, being seen as a woman--positions her body as a locus of hurt and bleeding. In her eyes, even becoming an ageless "boy" will not help her escape this fate.

The "as if" mother is the intended recipient of this gruesome depiction of corporal fears: "Te lo regalo. Lo clavó, con un clavo idéntico a los del dibujo, en la pared del estudio y lo siguió viendo" (63). The nails, or hooks, that are in the drawing are the same as the ones Esther uses in her studio. Fixing the girl's drawing onto her studio wall is perhaps an honor for the emerging young artist, but it is also an alarming repetition of the centerpiece of the painting, a circularity of penetration. That is, the "as if" mother repeats and enacts what is represented in the drawing by using the same kind of nails to hang the picture (another gruesome metaphor). It is as if one of the nails escaped the drawing only to fix the child himself to the wall of the studio, or perhaps the protagonist painted the nails that the mother uses on purpose in order to call her attention to her fears. In the heart of the house, Esther nails her daughter's fears to the wall. By drawing her fears, the protagonist fixes them in time and in

space, depicts them on the surface of the page forever. By fixing this painting to the wall, Esther physically connects these fears of being penetrated to the actual structure of the house, literally to its boundaries. They both engage in a fixation of fears and a desire to gaze at the realm of threats that haunt the protagonist.

The next time the protagonist refers to *clavitos* is when she narrates in detail one of her dreams. Constantly toying with the veracity of her story, the protagonist supports the surrealist aspect of the text by telling about her dreams or her nightmares. In her dream she is walking in the park, and she takes a sticky candy from a strange man with a tray of candies, when suddenly it starts pouring. The man passes by again: "El hombre de la bandeja pasó corriendo: ya no llevaba en ella golosinas, llevaba a *él* (o *la*) *clavitos*: aquella niña que yo había pintado herida, y que había yo regalado a Esther" (71). The sexual connotation of the scene is obvious: the presence of a strange man accompanied by an offering of satisfying treats answers the desires of a young girl. Though she was not hungry she takes the candy and consumes it, referencing oral pleasures and maybe desiring other pleasures. The rain, and soon after the presence of running water that seems to bubble up from the ground itself, relates to her fears of bodily fluids from earlier in the text.

But the figure of *clavitos* is a mystifying one. First of all what was clearly described as a boy is now a he or she, a double gendered presence. Second, soon after this gender confusion, *clavitos* is defined as a painted wounded girl, completing the figure's transition to femininity. Thus, the protagonist marks the young gendered body as an ambiguous and undefined corporality, where the only constant is hurting penetration. *Clavitos* starts as a boy and turns into a girl following the association with the strange man at the park and the satisfaction of bodily needs. The girl is indeed scared of the road that leads her body towards unexplained corporal fluids, but

she is also apprehensive of her desires and the danger they might entail. In addition, the name of this painting is not a singular object or a gendered first name, but rather a plural object, associated with hurt and penetration, as well as with fixation (spatial, sexual). The stranger in the dream with the tempting tray of candies becomes a threatening man showing her the dangers in being penetrated and hurt. To top off all this alarming symbolism, the protagonist reminds us that this is the painting she gave to her mother, a poster of fears and threats that Esther, in turn, does not seem to act upon.

The dream ends after a small flood has covered the park completely, and the protagonist feels that everything is fading and invaded by silence: "Yo también--lo sentí con claridad-- desaparecí poco a poco, me dejé vencer por la sombra. Lo último que permaneció de mí fueron los ojos: vi cómo el parque se apagó y- no sé, tal vez así fue- se retiró conmigo del sueño" (72). After the inexplicable flooding that followed the satisfaction of her needs, the protagonist feels she is being taken, or, in fact, that she allows herself to be carried away with the darkness, and then she disappears into sleep. Being taken away, an expression that mentioned before mostly in the space of school, is closely related to sexual arousal, or at least to corporal desires. Disappearing, in this case, is not as frightening as it was earlier, though we cannot claim to be left with a reassuring and peaceful feeling at the end of this dream. The space of the park disappears with her, though her eyes are the last thing to remain, as if she were a witness to something she cannot tell. In other words, although space itself dissolves, knowing is still there and her conscious self is the last thing to disappear. Being taken away, which is the way she used to explain her fears before the image of *clavitos*, happens when the body reaches certain knowledge and a level of sexual maturity. The subjective space of childhood is drawing to its end.

Disappearing, or being taken away, is one of the ways the protagonist explains a normative progression in time towards sexual maturity and "growing up." This becomes evident when her sisters, whom she cares for and are her companions in her childhood games, start to exclude her from their private lives. One day, they lock themselves inside their room, creating a spatial boundary between themselves and the protagonist, leaving her on the outside trying to look in. When she finally enters, she finds them worshiping a white object doubled in four, commencing their lives as young women by donning bras (77). For the protagonist, this act is a betrayal in their alliance as girls, a sad departure of her dear sisters: "Lloraba la falta de atención del par de hadas madrinas que habían velado el umbral de lo que yo era, impidiendo la entrada a monstruos del exterior, sin saber que lo que yo debía estar lamentando era la *desaparición* de la niñas que fueron mis hermanas" (78). Suddenly, the space of puberty/young adulthood is the closed room, and not the outdoor snowy yard where the sisters toyed with soiling whiteness. The protagonist, a girl on the verge of pubescence, is now on the outside looking in, where being a young woman is seen almost as a secret society open only for a few. The intrusion of this foreign object into the intimacy of their house is the marker for the end of an era in which the sisters were like guardian angels for this girl. We do not know who the monsters are, but in the context of threatening family dynamics where sounds at night manifest in images of penetrated children, such a defense is valuable. It is clear that the space of home is compartmentalized and divided into a dichotomized understanding of who is a good and guarding person, usually young, and who is on the other side: monsters and threatening night sounds.

The end of this relatively safe space is the beginning of young womanhood for the sisters. As the protagonist explains, the intrusion of the bra into their space means

the disappearance of the girls that were her sisters. The childhood self is gone once a person becomes an adult, a reading that supports the theory of the queerness of children and the inability to access one's subjectivity as a child. When the sisters become young women they are lost as the protagonist's girl-sisters, as if they become whole new selves, unreachable and foreign to her. Disappearing, then, is the painful transition into adulthood, the frightening stage in which a girl is no longer a girl. The protagonist perceives this transition as a traumatic end, after which there is no telling what happens, a mystifying and terrifying existence in a new land. No wonder she dreads the moment of "becoming a woman" (or disappearing, being taken away) and desires to remain behind, to linger with her childhood self: "Entonces fui yo la que me di la media vuelta y pensé: no me pasará nunca lo que a ellas, yo no me voy a dejar, y pensando esto me quedé dormida, sin saber que mi fantástico deseo sería ingrediente para mi condenación" (80). In a premonitory voice the protagonist vows to not let herself be taken like her sisters, and this desire is a key ingredient in her end. The wish to not grow up is a desire to stay, or perhaps to grow sideways.

After the sisters' crossing to the other side of childhood, the persecuting sounds become more prevalent, as if emphasizing the passing of time and its menacing influence on the protagonist's body. Luckily, as she tells us, this is when her parents decide to send her to stay a summer with a family in Quebec with the financial assistance of a Catholic organization. Her uncle Gustavo accompanies her to the airport:

> Si omití muchos años y muchos hechos, también borré de mis palabras muchas personas con las que hice mundo, mencionando sólo las que ayudaron (todas, sí, sin quererlo) a traerme aquí, con la excepción de mi querido tío Gustavo. Si no les hablé de él fue porque hubieran comprendido que mi historia era otra, o incluso yo misma otra persona, pero si no lo omito por completo, si mencioné al vuelo su nombre, fue porque no podría borrarlo

nunca de algún recuento en mi memoria (87).

Speaking of omissions and erasures, the protagonist admits to the manipulation of narration, one that she does, according to her words, only to explain her history. One of the blurry figures in her story is her uncle Gustavo, a person we do not hear much about, but is nonetheless a key element in bringing her "here," wherever it may be. Without her uncle Gustavo, she would have been another person, as if the potentiality of the child is a self that can evolve in many directions, and the uncle is responsible for the subject she is now. If the narration is conceived as a road that leads the protagonist through time towards growing (upwards or sideways), the uncle is one of the chief agents that put her on this road. Opening a narrow window into the omissions of the narration, the protagonist marks a possible actor in the family drama in which the father acts as an assailant and the mother fails to respond when she is called for help. Taking into account the nightmarish world in which the protagonist dwells, claiming that her uncle is responsible for the way things turned out, and that she would've erased him completely if she could, is enough said.

Her stay in Quebec is described briefly, but it receives a particularly important representation in the text. In fact, it is the only place where the protagonist supplies us with a photo of a "real place" she has been.

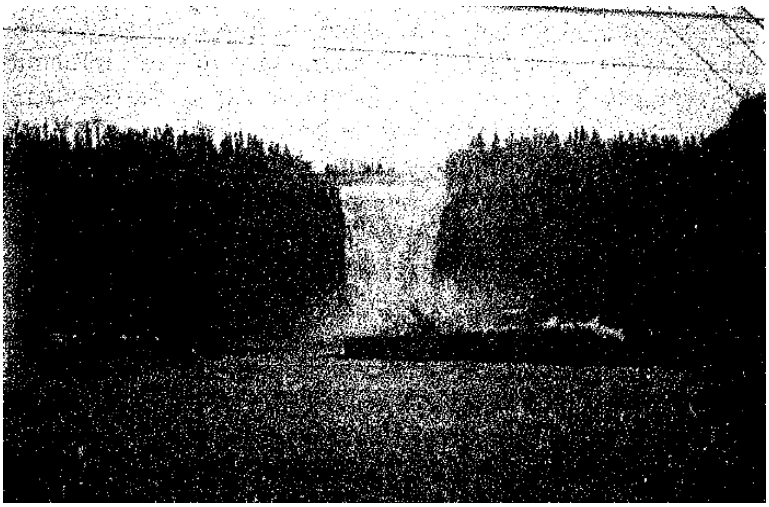

Figure 1

The importance of this place is not entirely clear, given the few details she narrates about her stay. Nonetheless, the photo is the only thing that remains from her past life and is given a central space in the narrating of the protagonist's current whereabouts:

> La arranqué del álbum de mi viaje, para ganar más espacios para fotos de mis anfitriones y la dejé suelta, quedándose sin lugar, por lo que a veces aparecía adentro de una libreta, otra encima del escritorio, otras dentro de un fólder. No sé por qué la llevaba yo sujetada en la mano la noche que pasaron por mí y no la solté. Aquí está. Es lo único que sé que tuve: nada, un chorro de agua en la oscuridad que a fuerza de tanto recordar he borrado por completo (88).

Of course this photo appears only as the faded and grainy, black and white memorabilia of a young tourist in a foreign country. It is a non-distinctive impression of a place that really could have been taken in countless locations, missing even the most simple of details: the smiling face of a girl, a sign with the place's name, something to make it more personal. It is reproduced here as proof that the trip actually occurred, as an image that fixes in time and space a stage in the protagonist's literal and symbolic journeys. In fact, if the photo lacks a representation of the protagonist, or any other person really, it does include her gaze. We can only assume that the photo was taken by the protagonist, or at least by someone that stood there with her, and so we get a sense both of her positionality and of the way she saw the places she visited. She is, therefore, both included and excluded in this photo, a present absentee that invites our participation in her world.[41] This is why, when she talks about the importance of this photo in her life after the trip to Canada, she doesn't know where to put it. The photo is placeless in her room, a place fixed on paper that

[41] Present absentee is a political term borrowed from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, referring to the condition of Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes in Israeli territory but remained in the larger space of the new state. Thus, their political status is complex--they are regarded as citizens by the state of Israel but as absentees from their homes, lacking the ability to reclaim their old territories. I find that the term depicts clearly the condition of the protagonist in relation to the photo at hand.

does not have a location in her room, but rather a precarious and nomadic existence. The photo's placelessness is the reason we are able to see it in the text, since it is the only thing the protagonist took with her to the un-clarified "here" she keeps mentioning. When she was taken, at the moment of passing from her childhood self to some other substance, maybe a ghostly one, this was the only object in her hands. The "here" she tells of is understood as the other side of life, the past life where she is located and from which she tells the story. Thus, this seemingly unimportant trip is the only space that is represented in the text. In a sense, this placeless photo and the space it represents is the lost territory of her childhood, the last space in which she was a girl, the edge on which she stands looking down, where a fall into an abyss of fluids awaits her.

The downwards fall begins with her return home, when she realizes that "Si antes de irme creía que casi no me quedaba territorio que defender, al regreso no hice ya más que cruzar los brazos y esperar un desenlace cercano" (89). The lack of territory is the missing grounds that is her childhood home, a place that does not provide comfort or safety, especially now after the disappearance of her beloved sisters. The house then becomes a vast land to explore, the strange and exotic land where one finds treasure, and not the familiar playground:

> Nunca fue mi casa más grande que entonces. La recorría algunas noches, cuando todos dormían, dando diminutos pasos cortos, pasando debajo de las mesas, buscando el equivalente a una fuente de la eterna juventud, el dorado, a la piedra filosofal, y no en amplios territorios deshabitados y en ancas de un caballo, sino sobre la alfombra, bajo los muebles, al lado de los cuadros pintados por Esther […] (89).

The space of home seems enlarged, as if it were the center of mythological explorations and the protagonist had become a knight errant exploring its treasures. The transformation of the familiar space into a foreign one is triggered by the return

from a trip, but also by the knowledge that childhood, or the subjective space of childhood, is coming to an end. Turning the furniture into cartography of fictional proportions functions here as doubled space, holding meanings of both home and the inhabited territories of children's stories. The object of these quests is the inexistent, legendary object or space, where one receives unimaginable wisdom or wealth or finds the fountain of eternal youth. In the context of a girl who is approaching the end of childhood, alluding to the fountain of youth marks for the reader her desires to remain young, within the realm of childhood, and to not cross into the endlessly confusing territory of sexual maturity. In the midst of this quasi-mythic search, Esther's paintings are casually mentioned, as if they had no meaning of their own, as if they were not the work of the mother figure in the text, tying together creativity, femininity and home. The return home, then, with its confusing spatial effects on the protagonist, is the return to face the works of the mother, or, in fact, the mother herself.

Following the paintings of Esther and her painter friends (the text mentions several names of actual Mexican painters from the 1950s, most of them belonging to what is called "la generación de la ruptura"), the protagonist reaches the studio that she hasn't visited since the "*clavitos*" drawing. Her quest leads her to the center of the house, the place where she first drew the image of a suffering boy/girl. "¿Por qué lo hice esa noche? Porque al pegar el oído a la puerta me di cuenta de que adentro no se oía nada, lo que significaba que adentro estaría yo segura" (90). As in the case of the white stones, quiet means safety for this girl, entering a guarded space that belongs to the "as if" mother, the heart of the house and the origin of creation. As the space of the mother, the studio is also the center of creation--both artistic and biological, as if the child was entering the symbolic womb. Going back to the womb is her way to try

to go backwards in time, to reverse time's effects on her body, to curl up like the image in her drawing and stop "growing up." Only when she enters she finds Esther there, who, in turn, asks her about the sounds:

> ¿Qué son esos ruidos? Dijo. Entraron al estudio en tropel. Se pegaron a las paredes y los vi, como había venido viéndolos en fragmentos, los vi unidos los unos a los otros, armando el rompecabezas que hasta ese día comprendí, aglutinados los fragmentos en torno *al clavitos* que Esther conservaba, colgado y enmarcado en la pared del estudio (90).

The protagonist's inability to escape the effects of "growing up" endangers both her and Esther. By entering the studio, and perhaps trying to find protection in the maternal space of creation, she triggers an encounter with her own fears of femininity, and the results are alarming. Suddenly, Esther begins to hear the threatening sounds, and immediately after there is a manifestation of the threat. Thus the encounter with the mother transforms the threat into real objects, indescribable though with actual substance in space. The text makes an effort to not specify what enters the studio with the girl, supplying no description other than "they," although it is a masculine "they" in Spanish. For the girl, the sounds that chase her are masculine in nature, a big puzzle made out of little pieces and grouping itself around the drawing that is nailed to the wall.

This threat is so real that it transforms the impersonal "as if" mother into a caring and protective mother. The protagonist takes her hand and tells her to run, knowing the threatening beings can take them away, and by doing that she is transformed into the responsible one and no longer the girl who feels unprotected at home. Ironically the dual encounter with the threatening *clavitos* transforms the girl into the more prepared and knowledgeable person, while the mother simply succumbs to terror. In this moment the two become closer than they were all through the novel: "¡Dime mamá, siquiera!, me gritó con una voz cambiada por el pánico. '¡Pero qué es

esto'!, iba repitiendo mientras yo trataba de salvarla, yo que le había aventado la jauría a su estudio" (91). This is the only time Esther seems upset at her daughter, demanding to be called "mother" and not by her first name as if she were a stranger. Perhaps because of her artistic abilities the mother is able to see the threatening beings, propelling her to try to protect her girl, which in turn angers the beings that appear to be leaping out of the drawing. The sketch emanates little pieces of threatening attacks, leaving to our imagination a hoard of nails flying in the direction of the mother and daughter, united under the threat:

> Todos los del muro voltearon furiosos a verla, sintiéndose interrumpidos, vejados en su intimidad, y empezaron a despegarse los unos de los otros y las partes de los unos de las partes de los unos y las partes de los otros de las partes de los otros, hasta formar de nuevo la masa de fragmentos que yo conocía tan bien. Los persecutores se abalanzaron sobre ella (91).

In this interesting description of the attack we find out that the protagonist is familiar with her persecutors' fragmentary nature, although until now she only mentioned voices. The attack's target is not the girl, but the mother, since she is the one trying to interrupt their effect on her daughter. In fact, the threatening power of these *clavitos* is usually aimed at other feminine beings that are with the protagonist and not directly at her--Enela, the turtle, her sisters, her mother--as if the attacks worked along vicarious lines. In other words, the threat is always elusive, fragmentary, non-straight. It is never aimed directly at her, never simply takes her away, but rather always reflects off other girls, taking the closest people to her. In a way, the threat of time and the fear of heteronormative puberty are constantly delayed in the text, drawing near and far simultaneously, becoming stronger and taking away one person, then quieting down for some time. In this scene, though, the attack is the most graphic; especially since this is the first time someone tries to protect the protagonist. The fragmentary description of the attackers resonates with the fear of puberty, when parts of the body

begin to change and become strange, inconsistent with the rest of the body. Corporal transformation can be a threatening occurrence for a girl who wants to remain a child and delay the effects of time.

The mother's attempts fail and she disappears from her daughter's side, later to be taken to the hospital when she suffers a strange disease. Unlike the other targets of the attackers, the mother stays partially present for a little longer before she too disappearse: "Los doctores no comprendieron sus síntomas: veía las imágenes al revés (no todo el tiempo, pero de pronto se le volteaban), oía un zumbido continuo, tenía vómitos incontrolables y duró tres días antes de morirse de lo que diagnosticaron post-mortem como un tumor cerebral" (91). The mother is the first adult taken by the *clavitos*, which explains the backwards effects of the threat. Instead of being taken away towards growing up, into the space of adulthood where one marvels at the wonders of bras like the sisters, the mother is in a three day haze, incapable of controlling her own body. Seeing images backwards is like the mirroring effect that the protagonist mentioned earlier with Enela, only the mother seems to be on the other side of the looking glass, as if she has gone through into the mirror world and is now in the confusing world of childhood. Only, as an adult with a fully grown body, she cannot really be in the other side of adulthood, and must die. Being diagnosed with a cerebral tumor is appropriate in this case, if we take into account that a tumor is an-uncontrolled accelerated cell growth; it is as if her mind starts to grow in spite of the fact that she is already a "grown up." In other words, the threat's effect on the mother is to take her backwards, in reverse and through the looking glass of adolescence where one's body experiences growth. The effects of this growth on her are fatal.

With the mother's disappearance and the passing of time, the protagonist nears the edge of childhood, the space of sideways growth, where she confronts a

transformed body. Exiting the pool at a friend's house she sees her reflection: "Salí con la ropa hecha bola en los brazos: avergonzada encontré una linda muchachita en el espejo" (93). The reflection reveals a body that is more mature, that seems to belong to a young adolescent girl, and not to a child. Promptly after this reflected maturity, the protagonist tells us the end of her story is near, pointing to effects of corporal transformation on the existence of the subject. In the last scene the protagonist is left alone at home for the first time:

> Tenía miedo, esta vez miedo de todo y de todos. No solamente lo que me perseguía era una amenaza: lo era también lo que me rodeaba: las blancas cortinas del cuarto, las cortinas vivas como bichos, como animales enjaulados en un zoológico que no querría visitar, bestias adormiladas a quienes mi presencia despertaba y enfurecía. ¡Y las cortinas no eran nada ante el mar embravecido, el mar del piso de la casa! ¿Quién podría pisar, sin arriesgar el cuero, la cruel madera, la comelona alfombra, los plateados resplandores de una luz que no me indicaba qué era lo que me rodeaba, sino que me señalaba artera como la enemiga a atacar? (102-103).

In this long description of the space of home, every object becomes almost animate, as if fear affects everything that surrounds her and makes it a potential hazard. While earlier the carpet and the tables created semi-mythological niches that might offer eternal youth, now they are encased beasts that might attack at any moment. These beasts rouse at her presence since something in her has apparently changed and now causes them to awaken. She has started her transition into puberty and cannot enjoy the imaginative space of exploring the home any longer. Thus we learn that the cartography of fear that the protagonist drew for us earlier is repeated outside her room, and that not only the *clavitos* come alive, but also the house itself. As if she had some magical transformative power, the girl who will soon cease to be a child experiences space around her as a thing that morphs constantly, according to her own corporal transformation.

In this part of the text the narration becomes dense with occurrences, depicting a hyper-charged set of events tying together previous motifs of space, childhood and sexuality. The mother returns, but only as a ghostly presence, not even mentioned by name: "Así me quedé dormida, sola tirada en el sillón, en la casa que todos habían terminado por abandonar porque la sabían poblada de la que los había dejado para siempre y por mi culpa" (103). While we read the protagonist's condition as a ghostly presence in the text, now, after the mother was taken away through the looking glass she is transformed into the unmentionable presence haunting the house and causing all the other members of the family to leave. But the protagonist is still there, going through her own kind of persecution that is related to the mother since her persecutors took the mother in her place and are now back for the girl. "Me senté en el borde de la cama […] y ahí, sobre mis pies calzados los vi a todos mirándome, a los perseguidores mirándome desde mis propios pies como desde la ventana de un alto edificio que habitaran" (103). The attackers are so close now that they are actually on her feet, located on the extremities of her body. Her feet become alien to her, as if they were part of a building exterior to her body, a building the *clavitos* now inhabit. The attack on her is executed in a fragmentary way, like the effects of puberty on a child's body, where body parts seem to change almost overnight and without any apparent reason: "Creí percibir un olor a humo, un aire denso, lleno de pequeñas particulares carbonizadas, inflamadas acaso, porque se clavaron en mi cuerpo con crueldad" (104). The threat of adolescence is the transforming body, as well as the fear of being penetrated in a sexual act. The *clavitos*, the little nails, are penetrating her body in an attack launched from her feet, claiming the space of her body as their grounds.

It is not difficult to conclude that the attack is, indeed, the effect of time on the

body of a young girl and the transformations it goes through as she matures. As we saw earlier, being attacked or taken away is closely tied to having to become a young woman, or ceasing to be a child, which accounts for the protagonist's fear. In fact, her description of her end, her death, can clearly be associated with a depiction of a girl who is menstruating:

> Mis calzones se mojaron, su blanco algodón se impregnó de un líquido tibio como el corazón. Se empaparon y, con qué claridad lo sentí, dejaron escurrir por mis muslos un cálido líquido que empezó a molestarme. ¿Qué era? ¿Qué escurría desde adentro de mí, traicionándome? (104-105).

Wetting her underwear brings back the image of the sisters soiling the white snow, and the reference to the end of purity/innocence. The tepid liquid running down her legs is perceived as a betrayal of the body, the crossing over of the body to another place. Moreover, menstrual blood coming from within, from an unexplained place inside her body, is exiting, leaving, taking precious liquids from her. Puberty, then, is not only frightening because of the implications of what it means to be a sexually active young woman; it also means a betrayal of the body and the inability to control one's liquids. Once the blood has started to flow, there is no going back, there is no way to stop this process of growing up, no possibility of lingering on the horizon of childhood any longer. "Mi cuerpo, entonces, sin mayor defensa, ya sin peso, no podía permanecer ni un momento más y subió, subió, subió, acompañada por los que siempre me habían perseguido" (105). Puberty, or adolescence, is the end not only of childhood, but of her existence and her life, reinforcing a ghostly reading of the protagonist.

The end of the text brings with it the end of the space of childhood and the protagonist's death. And in case we had any doubts regarding our interpretation of the end of narration, the protagonist adds her final words: "Yo dormía, o mejor dicho,

ella, su hija, dormía para siempre, con su pantalón de franela empapado en sangre, las sábanas manchadas y los ojos cerrados, y en la cara una expresión de calma que no merecía. El doctor no podría explicarle los motivos de mi muerte" (105). Asleep forever, there is an ascension upwards, to the supposed realm of the spirits. Transformed into a ghost, she can see what has become of her body, a separation of subject from her corporal groundings. Her refusal to grow up and her desire to remain a child could not prevent this moment from coming, and perhaps her terrifying fear of puberty is the cause of her death, her inability to enter the space of sexual maturity without being mortified by the transformation. In this way the text fulfils a promise made in the beginning, that of explaining how the protagonist reached the place where she now finds herself. It also explains the dual and sometimes simplistic way of describing the novel's occurrences; the protagonist and narrator is a ghostly not-quite-child, telling her life story in a loop, always reaching the same end. This is an obsessive narration, a circular trope that points us back to the beginning of the text as we now wish to look for more clues: was she really dead all along? Could we see this coming? Is she really deceased or only symbolically so? With the text's end we learn that the subjective space of childhood, in spite of the protagonist's death, is not terminated. By narrating and re-telling the story of her body's persecution by puberty, the protagonist manages to prolong the space of childhood, to relive it, to dwell inside this nightmarish and enjoyable lost realm, to expand it in countless directions, to grow sideways.

Chapter 4

Cuerpo Náufrago, Orienting towards the Boundaries of Home, the Body as Limit

If we take the body as the most intimate form of dwelling, what happens when it changes and crosses the gender divide? *Cuerpo náufrago* begins with the sudden and unexplained transformation that the protagonist, Antonia, goes through; as she wakes up she discovers her body changed on her and that she now dwells in a body of a man[42]. Without the painful process of becoming a man through a long physical transition, the novel manages to reflect on the subject of gender, mainly of the protagonist but also on the topic of gender in general. The subject is gendered, gender is the subject. This unexplained transformation is the source of many questions the reader faces, one of the first ones being how does one acquire a behavior of what is coded as masculine and orient herself to pass as a man? As Antonia ventures outside of her home for the first time she is confronted with her need of tropes, symbols, performative acts that will help her mark herself as a socially read gendered person. At the same time, I find that the intertextual work this novel does, as well as the usage of visual tropes such as the urinal, add to our understanding of inhabiting a body. The ways in which the body takes on different forms and meanings in the novel suggests another path in sexual orientation, one that leads us away from a dichotomist understanding of gender. Not surprisingly, this text corresponds with Sara Ahmed's theory, as well as with other queer and gender theories. Can a subject whose corporality is changed be perceived as oriented? How does this othe subject

[42] The text usually refers to the protagonist as Antonia- when speaking in third person as a "she". Later in the text when she presents herself to new friends she will become "Anton" referencing Russian writer Anton Chekov in spite of the obvious choice for a native Spanish speaker - Antonio. Clavel herself talks about her attempts in writing this novel to portray a feminine point of view of masculinity. Given this choice by the writer I will also use feminine pronouns, understanding that it is not made with the intention of over simplifying the matter.

experience that space that surrounds it? Can a subject be oriented through space if they do not have a fixed gender, or are they doomed to reside in a labyrinth constantly searching for the way out?

Published originally in Spanish in 2005 and translated into English in 2008, *Cuerpo náufrago* was written by Ana Clavel who is the author of five other novels which share an interest in different aspects of desire and body. Clavel's rapidly growing body of work includes novels such as *Violetas son las flores del deseo* (2007) Violets are the flowers of desire and *Los deseos y sus sombras* (1999) Desires and their shadows, which explore marginal and often disturbing topics such as a father's sublimated desire for his daughter and a young woman's fear of being part of the public sphere. What is in common for these novels, as well as for *Cuerpo náufrago*, is the exploration of less familiar territories of subjective gendered experience while using recurring motifs such as shadows (usually metaphors for desire), and the usage of transformation as a trope that opens a vast array of possibilities for exploring the topic from another angle; the father manufactures detailed human size dolls with a life of their own, the young woman turns invisible while walking the streets of Mexico City, Antonia wakes up as a man. While contemporary Latin American literature is familiar with cross dressing and even transgender protagonists--Cristina Peri Rossi's *La nave de los locos*, as well as Carmen Boullosa's *Duerme* and *La otra mano de Lepanto* among others--Clavel's protagonist is unique in the extent to which she transgresses normative understandings of gender. *Cuerpo náufrago* presents a protagonist that invites a thorough analysis of what it means to cross gender itself, rather than the more common theme of cross-dressing. Antonia does not simply alter her appearance in order to pass as a man like other protagonists in the Latin American literary context; she changes our understanding of gender as a concept.

In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed works through the concept of orientation in two directions that are complimentary- orientation as the way we reside in space, and the spatiality of sexual desire, that is to say sexual orientation. Her analysis of the multiple connections between corporality, gender and social agency is bound with her understanding of the spatiality of desire. The ways in which a body inhabits space is indicative of its directionality, as the turning right or left can be an expression of its orientation:

> As I have suggested, it can take a lot of work to shift one's orientation, whether sexual or otherwise. […] To move one's sexual orientation from straight to lesbian, for example, requires reinhabiting one's body, given that one's body no longer extends the space or even the skin of the social. Given this, the sex of one's object choice is not simply about the object even where desire is "directed" toward that object: it effects what we can do, where we can go, how we are perceived, and so on (101).

Orientation is a key concept in this sense due to the connections it manifests between the corporal aspect of a subject's experience and the space that surrounds it. In other words, Ahmed suggests that the means in which a body extends into space and conducts itself in it are an expression of its constitution so that the way a body acts influences the subject. Following the same line, she argues that the skin of the body can be perceived as a "border that feels", pointing to the numerous links between the surrounding space and the subjective experience (9). In that sense, if the skin is seen as a border, then it defines and unifies the subject, forming a limited and separated space. Ahmed's concept of orientation is therefore influenced by the limits of the corporal experience that have a unifying and constructive effect[43].

[43] In *The Skin Ego* The psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu's fascinating work on the skin, support my reading of its encasing aptitude: "These activities lead the child progressively to differentiate a surface which has both an inner and an outer face, in other words an interface, permitting a distinction between inside and outside, and an encompassing a volume in which

At the same time that she focuses of orientation, she also gives space to disorientation:"In order to become oriented, you might suppose that we first experience disorientation" (5). Orientation can be understood as a desirable effect that entails a process of getting lost, being disoriented. One of her remarkable examples is of a person waking up in an unfamiliar dark room, trying to orient themselves in that space. The person is first disoriented, then through touching the walls they learn the contours of that room and how to move within it. Thus, orientation is not only linked to disorientation, but also to the search of boundaries and walls as constructive limits; borders are understood to be constitutive to the subject. Following Ahmed I would like to ascertain the implications of thinking through the concept of orientation while analyzing the ways in which Antonia takes up space, becomes gendered and oriented towards her subject/s of desire. In fact, through this subject's search for spatial and sexual orientation our attention is pointed towards an othered experience of space, another kind of being in space. Having an other approach to gender seems to affect the subject's way of being in space. I return therefore to my initial question- if the body is perceived as a dwelling, a home with walls and limits, what does the transformation of those boundaries entail for the subject? What can it teach us about the process of orientation itself?

Moving in/moving out

"Ella- porque no cabía duda sobre su sexo, aunque las presiones de la época contribuyeran a que asumiera otros roles- estaba dormida en la cama y se resistía a abandonar el último sueño […]" (11). This first multiple layered phrase opens *Cuerpo náufrago*, by introducing the protagonist as well as the novel's baffling approach to

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he feels himself bathed, the surface and the volumes affording him the experience of a container" (37).

the gendered body. This sentence consciously plays with two terms that will get more and more interlaced as the novel progresses, Antonia´s sex and gender, since subsequently she will be characterized as a woman and as male. At the same time it is an intertextual reference to Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* as Clavel herself explains in *A la Sombra de los deseos en Flor*: *ensayos sobre la fuerza metamórfica del deseo*, a collection of essays published following the release of the novel. She quotes Woolf's influencial novel: "porque no cabía duda sobre su sexo, aunque la moda de la época contribuyera a disfrazarlo" (quoted in Clavel 2008, 55). Although this phrase from Woolf's text has influenced Clavel, unlike in *Orlando* the transformation is from woman to man and occurs right at the beginning of the novel and not half way through. Nonetheless, Clavel's conscious reference to Woolf´s text and her re-writing of this phrase bring to mind the commonalities between the two novels, namely, the corporal transformation that originates in a dream state. Like Antonia, Orlando keeps her given name throughout the text and explores quite liberally, considering the novel was written in 1928, different love interests of the protagonist[44]. What Woolf´s original quote contributes to the analysis of Clavel´s is the usage of the word "costume", one that is telling in the context of performing a newly acquired gender. Antonia´s transformation is referred to not as a change of sex, since the text claims that there are no doubts in that respect, but rather directs our attention to the other roles she now assumes, a word that brings to mind gender roles and relates to Woolf´s metaphor of disguise. The ironic tone used here trains the reader's critical reading while introducing these two highly charged topics since Antonia, as we learn, may be

[44] *Orlando* is based on biographic details from Vita Sackville-West's life, who is said to be Woolf's lover. Many of the spatial references regarding the protagonist's family home match details from Sackville-West family estate. It is interesting to note in this context, that Woolf herself participated in the Dreadnought Hoax, a practical joke played by her and other friends in 1910, in which they dressed as Abyssinian royals visiting the English navy. Woolf managed to pass as a presumably black oriental man and visit the Dreadnought ship.

a woman but does not have a female body. This deliberate mismatch between the subject's sex and gender puts her as part of a transgender continuum in spite of the fact that a transition has already surrealistically occurred prior to the beginning of narration. That is to say, her subsequent search for sexual orientation is affected by her vested interest in understanding the effects of her changed sex and its relation to her position in space.

The costume or the disguise that are referred to both in Clavel as in Woolf are relevant to the discussion on gender and its construction, especially when performativity is concerned. As Judith Butler affirms, performativity of gender is the stylized repetition of previous acts, such that the subject is constructed through an intricate work of cultural citations (1993, 225). Butler's theory has been frequently misunderstood as having to do with theatrical performance, although the repetition of previous acts is not a deliberate one. The work of perfomartivity is not conscious, a fact that questions the possibility of agency to an extent that the subject is seen as bounded by these repetitions, without the ability of tracking their origins. Understood in this way, the construction of the gendered subject can function as a costume, in the sense that it occurs in what is perceived as the exterior parts of the self, that is, the social realm. If the repetition of acts can form the subject, then these performative acts can be read as a costume, something one wears as an armor that cannot be taken off. The fabrication of gender through repetitive acts is like the fabrication of a costume, not in the sense of the conscious making of a garment, but rather in the sense of a set of behaviors that are socially read as coherent, a role one carries. Awakening with a male body functions for Antonia as the perfect disguise, as a role that she has to learn how to portray that was not always a part of her. In other words, the unexplained transformation obliges the subject to consciously perform the conformist gender

expression that is expected from this new body and by doing that it makes us aware of the performative construction of gender.

Similar to Clavel's other novels, the new embodiment that Antonia experiences is a result of an unexplained transformation which is planted it in the realm of the dream world, although it will soon have implications after her character's awakening. The transformation that Antonia undergoes through emerges from a state of altered consciousness, as it takes place in her sleep: "¿Somos lo que parecemos? ¿La identidad empieza por lo que vemos? ¿Y qué fue lo que vio Antonia al salir de la cama y descubrirse en el espejo? El cuerpo de su deseo. Entonces habría que admitir que tal vez nos equivocamos: la identidad empieza por lo que deseamos" (12). Confronting herself in the mirror in an act that cannot be but a conscious wink to Lacan's mirror stage, Antonia sees herself whole, and that whole is male. The text emphasizes the difference between appearance and being, as if to separate the exterior of the body from the subjective experience, which is to say, pointing to the breakage in the perceived continuity of the self (having a male body means being a man etc.). The explanation the text supplies for the change is that it was the body of her desire, an ambiguous expression since it is not clear whether she desires to be a man, or desires men sexually. This way the text suggests that the subject is constituted by the object of its own desire. Desire is experienced through spatial tropes that consequently affect not only the subject's positioning in space, but also the way she understands herself. The directionality of desire is the first to impact the subject so that knowing who the object of the desire is will influence her gender identity. But does it mean that desiring men sexually is reserved to those with a male body? Is that what transforms Antonia into one as if one can simply will this change?

This transformation and the novel´s puzzling approach to gender are therefore

linked with directionality and consequently can be articulated through spatial concepts. It is no coincidence then that the name of this first section of the novel is "Mudar de cuerpo", an expression that refers to changing one's body at the same time that it resonates with moving out of one's body- mudarse de cuerpo- as if it were an apartment or a house. The changed body can be read as a metaphor for moving out of a home, changing one familiar intimate space with another. As Antonia ventures outside of her bedroom she reflects on her new embodiment: "Finalmente también estaba la opción de comportarse como un hombre. Pero eso ¿cómo se aprendía cuando una no había nacido así? Antonia se sintió perdida en la sala de su departamento "(16). Note that it is acting like a man and not being a man that she considers, in spite of her having a male body, thus pointing to the perfomativity of gender. Masculinity, especially under these circumstances, is something one learns to do and not to be, an acquired set of behaviors. Being lost within her own space can be read as becoming disoriented due to the corporal transformation, as if by changing the boundaries of the body the subject is at lost. At the same time the text emphasizes that this disorientation is created by the confusion regarding the object of her desire and the direction of that desire. She was not lost when she was facing herself in the mirror in her bedroom, rather it is leaving that space into a larger one what triggers this feeling of disorientation. In that sense what we see here is a movement of growing circles as the first boundaries that changed were the space of the body, followed by entering a bigger room within her apartment and then into the metropolis.

Before following the protagonist into the city, I would like to bring another example of the metaphor of the body as home which surfaces in other places in the text. In another part of the novel Antonia is again in her apartment, reflecting over her transformation:

> Recostada en su cama, Antonia reflexionó que aquello era como mudarse de casa. Hallar un nuevo sitio para todos los objetos personales, acostumbrar los pasos a la textura del pasillo, descubrir en qué rincón de la estancia descansamos mejor. Y en una noche como aquélla, tras el trajín del acomodo, mirar el cielo raso a oscuras cual bóveda distante adonde aún no hemos encontrado nuestro lugar (41).

This paragraph construes orientation as a process that is characterized by movement that begins with the body, followed by the room and into the night sky, thus forming a trajectory of growing circles. Staring at the night's sky and searching for one's place is reminiscent, of course, to navigation in general and marine navigation specifically, which is relevant both to our reading of orientation, as well as to the image of the shipwreck. This cartographic instant puts the subject in touch with both the inside of her body, and her search for place in the greatest outside she can find, the night's sky. At the same time, moving to a new body, much like moving to a new house makes the protagonist reevaluate the new space. She now considers each and every part of this new experience, getting familiarized with the hallways, knowing where to stop to rest and where to place her objects. Learning how to inhabit a body involves learning its contours as well as its niches, extending with ease and filling its corners. Letting things rest, fall back into their new position, finding the right place for yourself within this new home. The idea of moving into a new house brings me back to Ahmed: "Those ways we have to settle. Moving house. I hate packing: collecting myself up, pulling myself apart. Stripping the body of the house: the walls, the floors, the shelves. Then I arrive, an empty house. It looks like a shell. How I love unpacking. Taking things out, putting things around, arranging myself all over the walls" (11). Inhabiting a new house involves extending oneself, projecting into that space and becoming one with it, in a way that is almost identical to the process Antonia goes through when learning how to reside in her own body. Orientation, therefore has to do

with reaching out to the space of the body or the house, moving inside that space comfortably and becoming familiar with its peculiarities. Although one feels disoriented at first when moving in, the walls are bare, the place feels like a shell, through reaching out and extending into that space one becomes familiar with it. Antonia's orientation inside her own body goes through the same motions of looking for those limits, the walls or the boundaries of her corporality, then trying to settle into them.

This internal search for the boundaries of her newfound embodiment goes hand to hand with the protagonist's interest in masculinity, so that it is focused both on the inner space of her body and the external space of the city. As she leaves the safety of her apartment for the sake of being in the urban space, her disorientation becomes more focused on the performative aspect of her masculinity and how she is perceived by others and less on the way she sees herself. One of the images that becomes an emblem of the performative aspect of the transformation and the active search of masculine tropes is that of the knight errant[45]. "Recordó que alguna vez en la universidad había leído novelas de caballería, de seguro aún conservaba un ejemplar de *Amadis de Gaula*. Tal vez ahí podría encontrar un modelo a seguir (claro que sin espada ni armadura… por lo menos evidentes)" (17). The *Amadis* is one of the most famous novels of chivalry, following the adventures of a wandering (nomadic) knight, the archetype of the heteronormative man who rescues damsels in distress and fights for the defense of the oppressed. By referencing this archetypal character Clavel points to the conscious construction of gender by the protagonist as a search for a desired set of behaviors that will ensure her passing as a man. Particularly of

[45] In an interview with the author (Mexico City May 2010) she referred to this text as a "novel essay", a hybrid textual unity that combines the two genres and invites a theoretically informed reading. It is no coincidence therefore, that the text is permeated with notions of established gender theories such as Butler's concept of performativity.

interest here is the mention of armor and sword that are not evident at first sight, two items that can be understood in this context as the changed body itself. That is to say, since Antonia´s body has transformed it now functions as her armor in the sense that it contains her, defines her and holds her, en enclosing set of boundaries that she has to live with[46].

It is no coincidence, therefore, that after the mentioning of this emblematic knight Antonia feels comfortable enough in her own skin, so to speak, to head out to the streets. Once she masters the seemingly cohesive performativity of this literary hero, she knows what are the behaviors that she needs to carry out in order to gain agency and pass as a man. Furthermore, the narrative points our attention to the sense of entitlement and lightness in the way she ventures into the urban space of Mexico City, only to later supply the answer:

> ¿Era por el hecho de habitar ahora el cuerpo de un hombre o por la posibilidad del cambio, de una metamorfosis que le permitía renacer y darse permiso para ser otra? (Ahora se detenía frente al puesto de periódicos de la esquina y la hija de la propietaria le sonreía con una mezcla de curiosidad y sorpresa). ¿O era tal vez el delirio de percibir que la lógica había modificado sus coordenadas y que en ese terreno jabonoso de lo posible era mejor patinar que poner resistencia? (18).

The text demonstrates the linkage between inhabiting a different body and extending into the urban space with ease, so that being masculine affects the way in which the protagonist carries herself even while she is filled with questions about her transformation (filled with emotions is another expression that refers to the self as a contained space that can be filled or emptied). At the same time, having a different

[46] Following Bulter's work on subjection as I presented in the introduction If power is understood to work its way from the outside inward then it can be seen as a sort of armor, in the sense that it both constrains and holds the subject. Following the same logic, performativity also functions as both oppressive and constructive, a kind of costume that cannot be taken off.

body is like changing the coordinates in an invisible map, having different vectors that influence every aspect of the protagonist's life, from getting dressed at home to walking in the street. These changed coordinates refer not only to the corporal transformation, but rather to the way the body extends into space itself so that the city feels like a slippery terrain to Antonia, space becomes threatening in spite of the ease she mentions earlier. In other words, becoming oriented once the boundaries and the coordinates have changed is a slow process that involves not only feeling comfortable inside the defined space of the body (or her apartment), but extends into the very way she carries herself in public space. After gaining a safer, more rigid experience of her subjectivity, the subject soon explores the subjective space of the city, searching for ways to orient herself. For this aim, Antonia is in need of more than just an archetype of stereotypical masculinity, she needs a map.

Objects of desire, in search for the perfect urinal

Antonia's transformation triggers a search for meaning of the embodied change she now has to deal with, as well as reveals her fascination with masculinity. This interest can be seen in one of the earlier quotes regarding the body of her desire, and at the same time in her new found fetish for masculine privileged spaces, especially urinals. These objects that are usually positioned in masculine spaces fascinate her and in a sense become the object of her desire while symbolizing the access she gains to this new world:

> El mundo secreto de los hombres desde la perspectiva de los desechos y lo prohibido. También, la innegable voluptuosidad de las formas del urinario: ¿reparaban los hombres en ellas y se dejaban seducir por sus líneas insinuantes o sólo se vertían en un acto mecánico que negaba su erotismo inherente? (26).

Being able to enter the men's room triggers a feeling of entitlement, a sense of

entering a secret society which is also related to a restricted space; public in the sense that it is shared by strangers and intimate by the nature of its function. This secret world opens for the protagonist a window into what she was earlier trying to decipher, that is, masculinity and her own approach to it. As an unsuspected intruder she can gather the information she was searching for in novels; however it is masculinity as seen from the perspective of the prohibited and the abject. Facing this new world the protagonist asks herself whether men see the urinal in the same way as does now, in other words, if their erotic aspect is inherent in their form, or is it only perceived by her unique point of view. This is Antonia´s first encounter with the urinal and the first time she reveals its voluptuousness, a motif that takes on different articulations throughout the text while accentuating the sensual aspect.

In fact, Antonia's presence in this masculine privileged/restricted space sets her off on a quest for the object of her desire, especially since she experiences the urinal as a sexual being: "El agua corrió sosegada por los recovecos según un mecanismo de gravitación y fluidez que Antonia percibió como erótico: un abandonarse a la fuerza de una voluntad que no es la nuestra y perderse en el agujero oscuro de la más absoluta disolución" (32). As we can clearly note, the urinal takes on life of its own, becoming an anthropomorphic being to which one can feel sexually attracted. For the protagonist, the urinal symbolizes an erotic encounter with her own desire, as well as with feminine forms marked by mentioning fluidity and the "dark hole". The urinal in this occasion and in others to follow becomes categorized and even labeled as feminine (female?), an idea that places Antonia both in a homo-social (masculine) space and in an encounter with femininity. At the same time, the erotic mechanism that Antonia experiences is linked to spatial concepts- gravitating without will or control in the direction of the unknown. Abandoning control in favor of the

force of desire is perceived as a pleasing part of attraction, so that getting lost assumes a positive value. Getting lost, or being disoriented, is enjoyable to the protagonist as long as she is drawn to an identified direction. This manifestation of erotic desire takes place in a space which is restricted for men in which Antonia functions as a man, using the urinal for her bodily needs. Is this therefore a determining encounter between two feminine beings mediated by a phallus? Is the attraction Antonia feel towards this feminine form is part of her transformation into a man and her new found orientation towards women?

Antonia's fascination becomes her quest and takes over a large part of the text, as she starts to photograph urinals of different forms and locations. The urinals she explores are spread all over Mexico City, in different buildings and neighborhoods, as if drawing a cartography of restricted sites in the urban space which is usually open to only half of the city's population[47]. This nomadic quest for the urinal corresponds with the exploration of her new body and in that sense the two operate as two parallel lines of orientation that at times intersect. That is, as Antonia progresses in her search for the meaning of her masculinity she becomes more immersed in the esoteric world of the urinals, projective her own sexual orientation onto the subjective space of the city. I am reminded of Ahmed's affirmation that queer, after all is a spatial term (67). In that sense, Antonia's venturing into masculine spaces looking for female forms is a straight line of orientation- a man that is attracted to women- at the same time that it is a full queer circle of a woman who has a male body and is oriented towards women. If

[47] In her collection of essays, under a section called "crónica de los baños públicos masculinos", Clavel develops the idea further and describes her findings when researching for the novel. The result is a review of men's rooms in Mexico City, special variations of urinals and where one can find these seemingly esoteric sites of intimacy nowadays. The author, like her protagonist, ventured into these spaces, sometimes with permission of the proprietor, others with the help of male friends, making the novel into an unauthorized guide of Mexico City's other side.

I try to conceive of orientation in images of vectors and lines, this unique protagonist enables the text to create straight lines and circles at the same time, questioning the ability to distinguish between the two.

Venturing into different spaces is not restricted to the protagonist's actions since it extends to the hybrid nature of the novel itself. I am referring to a couple of aspects that compliment the same tendency and efforts made in the novel to transgress boundaries. The first facet is the usage of visual art within the text itself, so that we find numerous photos supposedly taken by Antonia in her expeditions in the restricted space of the Men's Room. On the one hand, these photos serve as corroboration to the narrative and give validity to Antonia's existence and quest, a textual trope. On the other, they create a hybrid work of art in which word and image combine, support and contradict each other. Some of Antonia's explanations of the photos do not align with what we see while some of them mediate her particular point of view. Another facet corresponds with the protagonist's fetishist connection with the urinal; her voyeurism which is represented in photos transforms the reader into an observer as well, inviting us to enter her world. And thirdly, these photos serve as a cartographic evidence to one of the least known aspects of urban masculinity in Mexico City and by doing that they open a space of intervention in that same space. In other words, by inviting the reader/viewer to participate in these aesthetics, the novel opens unfamiliar spaces to at least half of its readers.

The visual aspect of this quest becomes part of the text itself, as we are supplied by photos supposedly taken by the protagonist, accompanying her words. This photo for example is actually placed in a footnote and is said by the text to be circulating on the web without known origins, until Antonia discovers it is a part of a promotion campaign by Virgin Airlines in JFK airport, planned by a woman designer

(136):

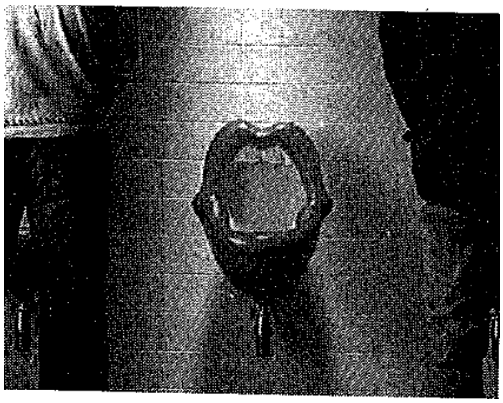

Figure 2

Naturally, the ironic tone of the text supports the playfulness of the image as it shows an explicit interpretation of the urinal. Clearly a feminine form, the image of this urinal illustrates what Antonia experiences when she reflects earlier on these objects, not only by the fleshy lips, but also by the positioning of two (male?) figures by it. The reader is thus thrown into the world of the men's room, at the same time that she is aligned with the protagonist's perspective. Being the work of a woman designer, this urinal matches Antonia's perspective of the voluptuousness and eroticism entailed in the object, so that it begs the question whether men also perceive their feminine form. In this context it is impossible to ignore due to the sexually suggestive form of the lips positioned in the men's room, which brings forward the sexuality of the urinal. In other words, the photograph supports the protagonist's way of seeing, or reading, the image of the urinal to the extent that image and words collide and permeate each other. Antonia is not the only one to observe the femininity imbedded in the form of the urinal, however playful the image is.

An artistic intervention in the urban space is also what Clavel tried to achieve with the exhibition that followed the publication of the novel. In her own words, since she collected so many photos and other materials, she decided to display them in an art exhibition. The result was two exhibitions that entailed a performance, an installation and the photographic exposition, as well as artistic interventions

throughout Mexico City with images from the novel. These interventions were seen as controversial to say the least, and in some cases stirred public debate and even censorship. One of Clavel's follow up projects was an exhibition about the productive powers of censorship, an attempt to reclaim creative rights over her artistic work. Parts of these projects can be found on the artist's website including the performance, which extends their existence to yet another open space, that is, cyberspace. These different takes on the topic of the novel- the exhibition, artistic interventions and website- take it to another level by creating a larger aperture for the reader and viewer. In this way the novel does not remain encased in the textual written level of the traditional book, but rather exceeds these known boundaries and ventures into the real space of the city. The novel and the image's existence in cyberspace enhance their accessibility and transgress the limit of the printed format. The website and exhibition seem to be completing the novel, in the sense that they take the visual exploration done in the novel even further by stretching the discussion into the wildly public and uncontrolled domain on the internet. These transformations of the embodied subject (and her sexual attraction) as well as the meaning of the image and the word, support a destabilizing nomadic reading of the text. Antonia's fetishism can be enjoyed in print, sound, web and audio. The novel's orientation, if one can use that term, is similar to the protagonist's experiences in that that it transforms, changes, becomes almost amorphous.

The subject's transgression of boundaries also transcends the spatial pursuit for the urinal; it extends to amorous experiences with an array of people of different sexes and sexual orientations. In a way, once the subject ventures outside of her apartment and into urban space, her search for orientation extends over an array of different sexual encounters. Antonia does not limit herself in this respect as well to either sex.

One of the most interesting encounters takes place in the Palace of Fine Arts, a prominent and famous performance space in M.C., where Antonia takes her girlfriend Malva to be photographed alongside a urinal she finds interesting. Malva is first disturbed by the intrusion into this masculine space and by the encounter with the feminine urinal, and then aroused by it: "Abrió los ojos y contempló el cuerpo desnudo de Malva recargada en un urinario, como un capullo dentro de otro capullo. Se sintió gravitar en dirección de ese doble gineceo que también temblaba de deseo. Apartó los pétalos y se perdió en él" (91). Beyond the erotic description, what is relevant to note here is the way sexual attraction, much like sexual orientation, is experienced through spatial terms. Malva´s body, positioned by the urinal, creates almost a geometric image of a bud within a bud, two concentric circles that are similar in their form. The desire Antonia feels is described with the verb gravitating, as if wanting to be with Malva functions as a physical attraction, a directionality towards her. Directionality represents here an aiming effect that the desire and attraction have on the protagonist and as the general vector her body takes on. This is one of the clearer examples of the way objects function in this novel as objects of desire, not only for purposes of fetishizing but also by mere visual image, objects take form and at the same time are transformed by regaining other meanings. The conjunction of the urinal and Malva's naked body together surface the question which of the two entices Antonia more.

This may be the right time to expand further on the recurring image of the urinal that dominates the text and haunts Antonia. As Clavel states in her essay called "Cuerpo como nave", the protagonist´s interest in urinals derives from the author´s attempt to understand the masculine world through her access to the public-private space (102). At the same time it is an intertextual trope that makes the connection to

Marcel Duchamp and by extension to Surrealism aesthetics that were alluded to earlier with reference to the importance of the dream state. The allusion to Marcel Duchamp is made explicitly when Antonia reminisces over the first time she saw a urinal, while still having a female body: "El primer mingitorio que Antonia recordaba haber visto no fue el objeto real, sino una fotografía del de Marcel Duchamp en una proyección de su clase de Corrientes Estéticas" (31). The trope of the urinal engages, therefore a conscious act of referencing recognized aesthetic movements, at the same time that it purposely points our attention to a specific work of art. Duchamp is known, of course for his readymade objects, and especially relevant is the one called *Fountain* (1917) which can be found in the Philadelphia Museum of Art with the rest of his collection. As a readymade object *Fountain* stirred a debate regarding, as intended, what can be qualified as art and consequently was not included in the art exhibition to which it was sent in New York. Used in the context of the novel, it serves as a reminder of the inaccessibility of women to masculine spaces, as it is the first time Antonia sees a urinal.

Figure 3

There are several layers to the function of this image within the novel. The artistic act that Duchamp most likely aimed for is that of choosing the object, meaning that the work of art is elevated- so to speak- to "art" only by the act of artistic will. Talking about his readymade Duchamp explains his artistic act: "Very few people

think there is anything wonderful about a urinal" (in Moffit, 249). Even a urinal can be exhibited as art if an artist, especially a famous one, chooses to remove it from its mundane surroundings and portray it as such. The signature on the base of the readymade is the binding act that brings together artist and object, so that it can be read as a performative act, constructing and reconstructing what is perceived as art. The work of art is also achieved by removing the object from its usual surroundings and positioning it in a different way, thus commenting on the privileged position of the artist as the person that can aestheticize a simple object. Taking the urinal out of the men's room and re-assigning it new meanings encourages viewing it in a different light, although it does not transform it completely, which accounts for the conflictive public reception of the readymade. Even neutralized from the odors and the urine that usually accompany it, the urinal keeps being reminiscent of the men's room. Duchamp indeed removes the urinal from the space where it is found, but this act carries with it its odors. Therefore, when Antonia first sees this image projected on a screen, it is thirdly removed from its origin as from its space; taken from the men's room first by Duchamp into the world of museums and galleries, then into her art class and finally into the pages of the text. The image of the readymade is laden with all these different layers of meaning and serves here as an invitation, both for the protagonist as for the reader to enter the intertextual and puzzling world of the novel.

Furthermore, Marcel Duchamp, who flirted with various avant-garde movements, subscribes to surrealism in this stage of his creative career, a movement known for its affinity for the un-real as well as transgressing the perceived limits of rationality[48]. In the same vein, the author's interest in un-explained transformations as

[48] Being the enigmatic artist that he was, some bibliographic sources claim that Duchamp was moving towards the Dadaist movement when he conceived *Fountain*, however for the purposes of this paper I will analyze it as being part of Surrealism.

well as in the world of dreams and shadows as we will soon see, are directly connected to surrealist esthetics. While being controversial in his life time, Duchamp's work is now conceived as an emblematic expansion of the concept of art itself, a cynical and playful affirmation of the limitless ability of artistic expression (*Marcel Duchamp, The Artist Stripped Bare* 7). His influence on the art world was not unnoticed in Mexican cultural context, as expressed in a book published by the renowned Octavio Paz, *Apariencia desnuda*, in 1973. Duchamp's revolutionary view of the concept of art as expressed in his famous readymades compelles Paz's intellect and he therefore praises his ability to perform art and to question it at the same time (28). When analyzing his notes for another readymade called *Amused Psyche*, which consists of a string falling down and creating a different form every time, Paz says: "Si el centro es el sismo permanente, si las antiguas nociones de material sólida y razón clara y distinta desaparecen en beneficio de la indeterminación, el resultado es la *desorientación* general. Duchamp se propone perder para siempre la posibilidad de reconocer o identificar dos cosas semejantes" (30, Italics in the text). Paz understands the importance of the artistic act by managing to lose the capacity to distinguish directions, which shows Duchamp's genius and shows his ability to blur boundaries and cause disorientation. Since Paz was such a prominent influence on Mexican culture it is unlikely that Clavel would not have known this text, and creating a direct link between the novel at hand, Paz, and Duchamp.

Duchamp's affect on Mexican art and especially his work on the urinal can also be seen in the photo *Excusado*, 1925.

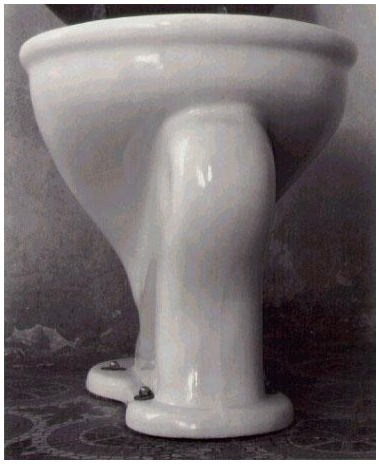

Figure 4

Taken by Edward Weston, a North American photographer who spent several years in Mexico in the 20ties and was engaged in the local art scene, this image shows yet another side of the same object. Although Weston was less associated with surrealist aesthetics and was considerably less polemic than Duchamp, this image brings out the more contained side of the urinal, in the sense that unlike Duchamp's *Fountain*, what we see here is the lower part of the object. It is not a suggestive and open orifice, but rather a monolithic and erect urinal. In fact, I would say that unlike Duchamp's work, this photo show the more phallic side of the urinal.

Another aspect of the reference to Duchamp is related to *Fountain* itself, which is visually referenced in the novel. In *Alchemist of the Avant-Garde, the case of Marcel Duchamp* John F. Moffitt suggests an explanation for the signature at the base of the ready- made "R. Mutt 1917" stating that the signature represents a feminine artist using a masculine pseudonym, which can be seen as an early manifestation of Duchamp's alter ego, Rrose Selavy (248).

Figure 5

For a long period of time Rrose signed works of art, made appearances in exhibitions and took photos that later on got published worldwide. In most of the literature on the artist she is perceived as a deliberate construction that has to do more with the Duchamp's enigmatic approach to art rather than as his gender expression. Whether or not Rrose was a creation of artistic stance or an expression of Duchamp's gender persona, she is one of the most cryptic sides of the artist's life and encourages contradictory explanations for his art. Beyond this account for the signature on *Fountain,* Moffit further points to the positioning of the object so that it seems like a uterus in spite of being associated with the masculine sphere. Clavel pursues Duchamp's line by showing the reader not only the wonderful side of the urinal as seen through Antonia's eyes, but also of the many ways in which it can be feminine and masculine.

Femininity and masculinity converge strangely in the urinal as it is seen by the protagonist, and not only due to its perceived feminine form. During the search that Antonia conducts she runs into an enigmatic engraving in an old anatomy book of what seems at first like a urinal, then as a phallus, only to be revealed as a sectioned uterus. The page is divided into the following description and below it we observe the

engraving in question[49]:

> Ahí en el papel apareció la imagen de un receptáculo demasiado parecido a un mingitorio. No pudo evitar un gesto de asombro al reconocer que el dibujo aquel formaba parte de un miembro oblongo de clara apariencia fálica. Pero lo que leyó al pie de la figura la sorprendió aún más, pues se trataba no de un pene, como había creído en un principio, sino de un útero seccionado (48).

"You're not going to believe it, Antón," he said with a laugh while pointing at something in the anatomical drawing. "What does that remind you of?"

Antonia stiffly approached. There on the page appeared the image of a receptacle that looked quite like a urinal. She couldn't help but feel amazed to recognize that the drawing formed part of an undoubtedly phallic oblong member. But what she read below the figure surprised her even more, for it wasn't a penis as she first thought, but a sectioned uterus. "Transversal section of the womb," she sacramentally recited from the caption beneath the drawing.* Still incredulous, she turned to Raimundo and insisted, "A womb? Haven't they mixed up the images?"

But can whoever thinks about it a moment have any doubt? As Antonia would discover later, in the 1914 notes for his "Green Box," Duchamp had written, "One only has: for female the public urinal and one lives by it." It's worth saying once and for all: the urinal, which has a purely masculine usage, possesses a gender and it's feminine.

Figure 6

The process that this engraving goes through is similar to the way Clavel works with the image of the urinal- she reassigns different meanings to the same object so that we have to follow her interpretations; although it may seem to us as one thing at first glance it then turns into another. Thus the urinal is transformed into a phallus, which in turn turns into a womb. This paragraph is accompanied by a footnote with a Duchamp quote about urinals and an image of the engraving, so that the text is backed up by an image which appears after the text. The distribution of space in the page itself functions as a division to different sections by boundaries- main text, image and

[49] The image is reproduced from the English translation of the novel, where the division into different sections of the page is clearer to follow. The Spanish original actually includes the image of the engraving twice, which stresses its importance to the understanding of the novel.

footnote- which is made only to blur the differences between them. Although one would expect that the argument will be found in the main text, the explanatory details in the image and the marginal information in the footnote, here the division of the space of the page is different. The separation between text, image and footnote is blurred. In this way the visual art is mediated through the protagonist´s understanding of it and manifests the same process the symbol of the urinal goes through in the text. Transformations are not restricted to the body of the protagonist since they take hold of one of the main symbols in the text, the urinal. This engraving points to the duality of the symbol, two things that are perceived to be opposite are united in one image, feminine on the outside, masculine in the inside and vice versa. At the same time, it is worth noting that the image does seem to be a phallus in spite of the manipulation of its meaning by the text. Our own understanding of images that are coded as feminine or masculine is blurred; both converge in this example, as in the protagonist herself.

As an object of desire the urinal reveals the ambiguity of Antonia's sexual orientation so that it cannot be explained by an attraction to one sex or another, but rather to a hybrid essence. Nevertheless, towards the end of the novel in a conversation Antonia has with Raimundo, a photographer friend/lover, he tells her he knows her secret: "Pero luego lo intuí por tu fascinación por los mingitorios. Sólo una mujer puede mirarlos como tú lo haces, vislumbrar el hambre del deseo, nuestro sexo total, ese que nos deja anhelantes, anonadados […]" (175). A full circle is complete here as we come to realize that Antonia's fascination with urinals is in a way a manifestation of her being a woman with the body of a man (while not being trapped in a man's body). If we thought until this point that Antonia is in a process of searching for and becoming connected with normative masculinity, we now learn that her fascination with the urinal reflects in fact her own femininity. In other words, her

fetish object echoes her interest in the masculine world seen from the gaze of a woman. According to Raimundo, only a woman can see the desire entailed in men's approach to the urinal as well as their true sex. The subject's orientation, therefore, is affected by her gender and not by her sex; by the way she experiences herself and not by the transformed sexed body. This is a peculiar expression that seems almost inappropriate in this context, especially after following the protagonist in her nomadic search for her ever changing orientation. Raimundo's words present here a surprisingly rigid concept of gender, especially when we take under consideration his sexual experiences with Antonia. Is the subject then directed towards masculine spaces as a woman? Our understanding of the symbol of the urinal has been transformed once more.

Shadowy Labyrinths

Since transformations are such a key element in this novel- from the corporal change that the protagonist goes through to the different stages in the meaning of the urinal- one has to wonder what propels them into motion. Clavel has been very clear regarding this subject, and even developed her own poetics of what she calls the metamorphic power of desire (2008). According to the author, her interest in gendered and sexual transformation was what sparked her understanding of shadows and the power of desire, a concept she links to the platonic Allegory of the Cave as well as to Ovid´s *Metamorphoses* (14). In her analysis of the myth of Iphis, who was transformed into a man so that she could marry her girlfriend, the author explains: "Otra lectura posible ubicaría el milagro de la transexualidad a partir de la fuerza metamórfica del deseo y del amor con la que tanto platónicos como neoplatónicos estarían de acuerdo" (27). Transexuality, as it manifests in this myth, is seen to be the

result of desiring the transformation and therefore can be understood as the propelling reason for many other metamorphoses in Ovid's text (such as Daphne and Tiresias etc). Metamorphoses are mentioned in the novel as well- there is a part that is called "Arte de Ovidio" in which Antonia herself runs into a copy of the book (151)- functioning both as reference to the reader and at the same time as a kind of conceptual cartography for the nomadic search that the protagonist conducts.

Clavel's fascination with Greek mythology is echoed in the strong presence of the metamorphic power of desire in Antonia's quest, and at the same time in the recurring image of the Minotaur and the labyrinth[50]. At one point Antonia evokes the image of the Minotaur in a dark labyrinth, a hybrid mythological creature that is doomed to stay confined to this space. Being in a labyrinth brings again the feeling of disorientation:

> Más que náufraga se sintió perdida en un laberinto de sentimientos contradictorios y reconoció que los naufragios también podían darse en tierra firme. […] El mundo se detenía ahora en un fragor sordo que la obligaba a sitiarse cuerpo adentro, desnudo minotauro perdido en el laberinto de su propio corazón. ¿Pero de verdad era su propio corazón el que así la desorientaba? (93).

This paragraph follows the protagonist´s reflections of her relationship with a woman, which explains her feelings of being swept over with emotions, being shipwrecked in midland. The labyrinth is therefore connected with emotions as we can see by the association with her heart, and at the same time it propels the sentiments of being lost, and more precisely, the image of the lost Minotaur. Antonia´s feelings of being disoriented are linked to her emotions at first; however, she soon asks herself whether

[50] Another famous rendition of the mythological Minotaur is Jorge Luis Borges' short story "La casa de Asterión", in which the narrator is the Minotaur himself. This is how he describes his labyrinth/house: "Todas las partes de la casa están muchas veces, cualquier lugar es otro lugar" (El Alef).

they really come from her heart, or if they are triggered by other factors. The image of the Minotaur is interesting in this context since he has been condemned and is in fact locked inside the labyrinth built to contain him, so in this sense and in spite of the fact that Antonia is not restricted to any space, she feels restrained, doomed to remain circling around. At the same time, the labyrinth is a metaphor for being confused by her feelings and the sense of being disoriented within her own skin, supporting my reading of the novel as referring to the body as a spatial unity.

Like a Minotaur lost in a labyrinth made to contain him, the subject has to have some signals that will help her situate herself in space. What can be those symbols and what is it that causes Antonia's disorientation? Given the centrality of desire and objects of desire in this novel, the answer may lie in that direction. I return to Antonia's words:

> Pero yo no sé lo que estoy buscando. A veces pienso que no hago sino adentrarme en un laberinto y que tanteo en la sombra pasadizos y no sé adónde habrán de llevarme. Es como el asunto de los mingitorios: antes no me imaginaba que pudieran llegar a serme tan importantes. Que, de hecho, signifiquen para mí una forma de búsqueda personal (122).

As this quote informs us that being lost in the labyrinth, or disoriented, is a result of not knowing what one is looking for, that is what is the object, the goal. The urinals are part of this process of getting lost within the maze, symbols of the transformation the protagonist goes through and at the same time they function as part of her personal nomadic search for meaning. As objects of her desire, they are reminiscent of Ariadne's thread that leads Antonia in the right path. Since they, too, change their meaning, the protagonist has no choice but to follow them in their dazzling paths in the maze. Disorientation can be perceived as not knowing what the goal is, not having a definite direction to follow, which is why the labyrinth is such a key image.

Although Ariadne is not specifically mentioned in the novel, her counterpart

Theseus, is. As the Greek myth tells us, Ariadne was the daughter of the kind of Crete when she fell in love with the Greek hero Theseus[51]. She is known for assisting him in killing the Minotaur by giving him a thread to mark his path in the labyrinth built by her father's architect, Daedalus. Staring at one of the most significant urinals, Antonia reflects on the challenge it poses her: "¿Sabes tú quién eres o por qué deseas lo que deseas?, reflexionaba Antonia sobre sí misma, suerte de Teseo, Deseo, te-Deseo sin rumbo claro, oscura anguila creyéndose perdida en el mar de sus sargazos, orientada sin saberlo por la constelación oscura de sus sombras" (113). In a game of words the author creates a hybrid word (neologism?) that is a mixture of two central ones: "Desire" and "Theseus" are combined together in a new word that is difficult to translate since it actually results in "te-deseo", meaning- I desire you. Antonia suggests that she is, in fact, a sort of Theseus, which is interesting especially in light of her identifying herself as the Minotaur as well, so that she is in effect both the beast that lies in the maze and the hero sent to kill it. She is both the hunter and the hunted trapped in the same confined space of the body. Playing with the image of the shipwreck and aquatic surroundings, the protagonist compares herself to an eel lost between seaweed, being oriented by her own shadows. In other words, the combination of being oriented and disoriented at the same time is not only sustained by the same person, it is also being lead by her, since they are shadows that she herself casts.

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[51] The maze that holds the Minotaur is said by Ovid to be: "Daedalus, who had obscured all guiding mark and designed it to cheat the eye with bewildering pattern of tortuous alleys. Just as the Phrygian river Maeander sports and plays in his running stream with the ebb and flow of his teasing course […] so Daedalus' warren of passages wandered this way and that. In such a treacherous maze its very designer could scarcely retrace his steps to the entrance" (301-302). The Greek maze is treacherous because of the impossibility to trace one's steps to the entrance and the way in which this is achieved is by creating alleys and passages that seem like the ebbs and flows of the river. This aquatic metaphor will soon become relevant to the understanding of Antonia's disorientation.

Let me explain this idea further by looking deeper into the world of shadows represented in the novel. The person that comes to symbolize Antonia's preoccupation with shadows is Raimundo, her friend the photographer. Shadows are Raimundo's quest, as he searches for them using his camera: "La fotografía es el encuentro de una sombra con una posibilidad de ser, el momento en que deja atrás lo indeterminado e informe para iluminarse y adquirir cuerpo y definición. Por eso las sombras son siempre entidades deseantes. Nosotros, cuando deseamos, nos convertimos en sombras. Sombras del deseo" (79). Shadows are closely connected to desire, so that photography itself becomes an instrument in trying to capture the image of desire. If one perceives the world as ever changing, as Antonia's transformation represents it, then photography can function as a way to capture each of the manifestations of the subject[52]. This paragraph is central to the understanding of the novel since it affects Antonia's quest and links the urinals as objects of desire that help her to orient herself spatially and sexually with trying to capture their essence by taking their photos. Seen in that way, the photos of the different urinals in the text serve as a visual map of what leads the protagonist in her nomadic search. Pursuing the Myth of the Cave, Clavel takes the image of the shadows as dark representation of the real world and uses them to add another layer to the relationship between desire, transformation, orientation and objects of desire.

However, following the urinals and their symbolic function in her path only takes Antonia deeper into the maze, so that she is overwhelmed with disorientation. The image that the text uses to emphasize the protagonist's lack of directionality is,

[52] In the epigraph to *Apariencia desnuda*, Paz describes Duchamp's work: "[..] la obra de Marcel Duchamp es una tentativa de *revelación*, en el sentido fotográfico de la palabra, de las Apariencias" (italics in the text). Revelation of appearances in the photographic sense of the word suggests that there is a certain truth to be revealed by capturing it, similar to Raimundo's words mentioned above.

naturally, the labyrinth, that becomes more and more prevalent in her discussions with Raimundo. This is what he advises her as a possible solution to the maze:

> Antón, Antonia, o como te llames: hay métodos para cruzar un laberinto. El más sencillo: colocar una mano en la pared izquierda o derecha, pero siempre en la misma pared. De esa forma, tal vez no logres el recorrido más corto, pero tarde o temprano, saldrás de laberinto. […] Sólo hay un detalle, Antón- Raimundo pidió un respiro- con el método de la mano en la pared es muy probable que nunca llegues al centro del laberinto, que pases junto a su isla interior y no descubras a tu minotauro (123-124).

This passage ties the process of transformation with the concept of disorientation. The labyrinth is a perfect example of what can be gained by maintaining disorientation since only by not looking for the way out, i.e. by getting lost in the maze, can Antonia find the inner island and encounter the Minotaur, which is none other than a manifestation of herself. In this respect, the subject search for orientation in none other but an internal journey, looking for her one (true?) desire. On the other hand, wandering in a labyrinth is not exactly the same as being disoriented, since the person does have an aim, which is reaching the center of that specific space. Nevertheless, the effect that a labyrinth produces is that of productive disorientation- being lost as a way or reaching an unknown destination. Trying to arrive at the center of the labyrinth is like Ahmed's example of the person waking up in an unfamiliar room, trying to learn the logic of that space by looking for its boundaries. In that sense the text points to the centrality of disorientation as a way of gaining familiarity with the self. Raimundo's advice is only beneficial for Antonia if she aims to escape the maze and leave aside her quest for meaning and is therefore not a real option for her. If she desires reaching the heart of the maze as a transformed incarnation of Theseus looking for his prey, she has to sustain this productive disorientation.

Being disoriented by her own desire is represented not only in the image of the

labyrinth but also in the recurring presence of liquids, starting with the title of the novel- *Shipwrecked Body*. First in this chain of meanings are the familiar urinals as objects of desire and their connection to bodily fluids and by extension to fluidity. This fluidity can be understood as part of Antonia's obsession with her own desire- being drawn in one direction or the other as the liquids in the urinal- or as related with the shipwreck. Antonia's words on the concept open a hatch to an understanding of its function in the text: "¿Cómo había sido perderse en su deseo? En un *naufragio* la embarcación se hunde o se destruye por la violencia de los elementos y, sin embargo, a los que no perecen en él, se les llama *náufragos*. Ahora era náufrago de una mujer" (81). In other words, being lost in desire is like being shipwrecked in the sense that it points to surviving a meaningful event while at the same time the person is bound to that event by feeling compelled to narrate it. At the same time, the correspondence between maps and the world in shipwreck narrative is that of error since it is a result of a wrong map or of a wrong reading of it. One can say that a shipwrecked voyage is, a priori, a failed enterprise that ends necessarily in the destruction of the vessel. In historic shipwreck narratives, as Josiah Blackmore informs us in "The discourse of the shipwreck", the survival march following the event is distinguished by walking in circles and general disorientation (33). The image of the shipwreck is connected both with map reading and interpreting cartography, as well as with orientation and disorientation. Antonia's journey is also linked with liquids and aquatic imagery as seen in the example above; nonetheless, her own approach to the shipwreck is of different kind. The elements that threaten her well being are essentially her desire for a woman that leaves her barely afloat, trying to survive. This metaphor also permeates the subject's fetish for urinals, meaning her fascination with the way liquids disappear inside this female-looking object, a shipwreck leaving no survivors. The protagonist,

comparing herself with a shipwrecked sailor, points our attention to this fascination and the attraction she feels towards being lost to her desire, losing control.

However Antonia remains afloat throughout the novel as she struggles with her need to immerse completely in her desires by following every direction they take her. At the end of the novel after following various different directions of her desire, the protagonist takes a swim in the Mediterranean Sea near Greece, cradle of the myth of the Minotaur, fighting the urge to submerge in the water forever:

> Cuando Antonia salió de aquellas aguas de transparencia infinita y braceó de nuevo hacia la isla, se supo minotauro superviviente. Tan pronto tocó la orilla y pudo reponerse, se miró las manos y la piel translúcidas como si hubiera emergido de una pileta de químicos reveladores. Un cuerpo náufrago, una sombra iluminada al fin (185).

Resisting her desire to dive into the water and stay inside this aquatic surrounding can be understood as part of her search for orientation, the directionality of her desire. As we saw, desire is sometimes associated with liquids in the novel, which explains Antonia´s swimming in the water as giving in to her desires. Choosing to swim towards the island where her partner is waiting for her is therefore deciding to take one direction, finding her orientation. But before taking on this direction, the protagonist declares herself a surviving Minotaur, being shipwrecked by the power of desire and at the same time choosing to survive. Unlike other narratives of shipwreck, the protagonist's journey ends with her selecting a direction and not being disoriented since she is in fact swimming towards the location of her partner. After pursuing the symbol of the urinal in its cartographic distribution all over Mexico City and allowing herself to get lost, literally and metaphorically, the protagonist finds her orientation by electing to be shipwrecked.

The last paragraph of the novel ties together the shipwrecked body with the search for orientation, as well as photography and shadows. Antonia´s (shipwrecked)

body feels to her transparent, as if she were immersed in developing chemicals in a photography lab, so that the water of the sea, also seen as urges and desires, has the effect on her body as photographic liquids on the image taken. In other words, being submerged in the developing liquids of her desire is what helps her to reveal the image on the printing paper of the photograph. Similar to the process of developing a photo in the dark room, in order for it to be coherent the photo has to be taken out of the solutions and be fixed, made permanent. If the exposed paper remains too long in the solution the image first gets blurry and is then lost forever. In *Cuerpo naufrago* desire and directionality are fluid in the same way that the protagonist's experience of her desire is fluid. This last scene in which Antonia toys with the idea of remaining in the sea dialogues with the title of the novel itself- will she be the wrecked ship or the shipwreck survivor? Nevertheless Antonia, after grappling with her own conflictive desires, chooses to take one direction that will eventually carry her outside of the water.

The journey that began with Antonia's disorientation, leaving her apartment for the first time, ends in the water of the sea, which is the largest limitless space one can find. The vast area of the sea, although deprived of walls and aisles, is not contradictory to the disorienting space of the labyrinth. As we read in the words of the Arab King in Borges' "Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos", a large open space (in Borges' case it's the desert) can also be seen as a labyrinth: "Oh, rey del tiempo y substancia y cifra del siglo!, en Babilonia me quisiste perder en un laberinto de bronce con muchas escaleras, puertas y muros; ahora el Poderoso ha tenido a bien que te muestre el mío, donde no hay escaleras que subir, ni puertas que forzar, ni fatigosas galerías que recorrer, ni muros que veden el paso" (158). Borges, who is known for his fascination with the concept of the labyrinth, is introducing here the desert as a

maze that does not necessarily have staircases, doors or walls, but is still an enigmatic and disorienting space. Being lost in the desert in this short story is parallel to the earlier experience described in it, one of wandering in a manmade labyrinth similar to the Greek one designed by Deadalus to trap the Minotaur. Much like the desert, the sea in this last scene of the text, functions as the largest open space that Antonia has to work through. Her productive disorientation has taken her through ever growing spaces into the labyrinth of the sea, and now out of it in the direction of her choice.

This productive disorientation vacillates between the perceived rigidity of performing gender as is reflected by the image of the knight errant, and the limitless desire Antonia experiences. Representing this nomadic journey and functioning as signs on an invisible map, are the protagonist's objects of desire, namely the urinals. Exploring her spatial and sexual orientation in the urban space is transformed into a quest for the perfect urinal. As the novel progresses they keep acquiring different meanings in a nomadic process of change and slippage; first they are connected with masculinity, then they take the form of feminine body parts symbolizing heterosexual (sexual) orientation. Urban space functions in this text as the subjective space, the location where the subject projects her need to find, or to search for the right direction. Part of the tensions that characterize this novel is between the subject's multi-directionality, as seen with the different sexual partners, and the recurring mentioning of a "true" sex. As we saw, Antonia's own sexual orientation cannot possibly match one definition as she is constantly othered, not a woman or a man, however not necessarily both. In spite of this inherent duality of the subject, it seems that she both lingers in the intersection of her multiple sexual orientation, and at the same time desires to find the one "right" direction.

Corporal transformation is at the center of this novel, supported by the visual

photographic aspect that echoes Surrealist aesthetics. Meaning, the subject's changed sex is a crossing of a corporeal boundary, a crossing that reoccurs in the visual aspect of the text as well. Part of the text's impact on the reader lies in the constant transgression of boundaries between masculine and feminine, as well as between literature and visual art. This continuous process brings out the amorphous and unstable nature of boundaries, so that gender and not as fixed as one might think. Re-defining sexual and spatial orientation through the pursuit of objects of desire is an exploration of the subject's relation with both gender and space. The corporal transformation that Antonia goes through changes her orientation, in the sense that it changes the limits of the body, the walls against which she is defining herself. Disoriented within her own body, she searches for the limits of her body and of her desire, much like Ahmed's reference to re-inhabiting the body and the need to extend into space in a different manner. This quest in the urban space and fascination with the public bathroom is a projection of the subject's productive disorientation, a subjective space of exploration. The end of the novel is, in a way an end to disorientation in the sense that Antonia chooses a direction for her desire, at the same time that it is an invitation for further explorations of desire. Disorientation is, therefore, productive and even constructive for this subject, which does not mean that orientation is a limited one- dimensional option. *Cuerpo naufrago* ends with a suggested direction for exploring the subject's orientation, another nomadic journey on which she embarks.

Conclusion- Subjectifying Space, Spatializing the Subject

At the end of this journey the different routes I traveled come together, weaving words and images into a multi-dimensional cartography. This location is composed of narratives of otherness, etched into space and articulated in many voices. Many open doors lead to this moment: question marks and enigmatic texts, transgressive writings and suggestive theories that re-unite in this intersection that is a conclusion. Throughout my study I have tried to illuminate my idea of subjective space, populating it with a plurality of theoretical concepts, subjects, and spaces. In my effort to bring together the different locations my research has taken me, textual and spatial orientations have been a key factor, allowing me to map and explore the way space and subject affect one another.

In my spatial and subjective readings of Clarice Lispector, Diamela Eltit, Carmen Boullosa, and Ana Clavel several themes become apparent. As my analysis of the novels shows, all texts express a spatial preoccupation centered on and manifested through the concept of home. They also share an exploration of urban space. Along these lines, it is no surprise that these texts depict the subject's location in space with an inside/outside spatial dichotomy. Supporting my reading of this spatial and conceptual dichotomy, otherness is represented as external in relation to the subject, or, as Ahmed affirms, as a horizon one tries to reach or distance oneself from. Relatedly, these texts have in common the centrality of boundaries as a category the subject transgresses in different ways. These facts bring me to the conclusion that otherness, especially one that is spatially constructed, is central to the articulation of subjectivity. I will close my comparative analysis with subjective space, showing its workings in the different texts, lighting multiple dimensions of the concept and enriched by it. I will now voice the many dialogues that surfaced in previous pages.

Clarice Lispector, *Passion*

In spite of the fact that *Passion* precedes the other texts I chose chronologically, in many respects it shows the deepest exploration of the concepts of space and subject. Ahmed's conceptualization of the other as a horizon the subject can either reach for or distance herself from is particularly present in G.H.'s attempts to become other, crossing borders between her and the othered/abject maid and cockroach. The protagonist's attempts to become other are a nomadic quest limited to the small space of an apartment, a fact which maximizes the focus of the narrative on the subjective experience of that space. Braidotti's nomadic theory seems at first limited to depicting a large scope of movement across space, but in fact it is enriched by Lispector's exploration of how close a subject can become to an other. Through G.H. Lispector manages to show the extent to which a subject, limited to a small space, can cross symbolic boundaries and destabilize affiliations with hegemonic modes of subjectivity. Although there are representations of smaller spaces in the other novels, G.H. is the only protagonist to remain confined to her apartment and spend the majority of the text in one room. The nomadic grounds that open before G.H. are in no way limited to the location of the narration, and in fact expand over many faraway lands. By focusing on the inner workings of subjectivity and the minute steps it takes to become other, the experience of space opens to external spaces where the protagonist has never been. Thus, the focus on the inside of the subject in fact opens before her spaces that are outside and even beyond her reach, contrasting the subject’s interiority with external spaces.

Subject formation in G.H.'s case is challenged by the desire and the questioned ability to transgress the boundary of the self in order to become other. Boundaries in Lispector's text are well defined and even traditional, in the sense of depicting a

border clearly; it is the social hierarchy that separates G.H. and Jenair, and the racialized distinction between white and black. The boundary in this text is a target on which the subject focuses, symbolized often by encasing limits such as the suitcase and the picture frame. However, Lispector's subject manages to push this limit quite effectively in her efforts to become other, or at least to become as close to otherness as she can. By becoming other, the subject transgresses the limits of her own constitution, showing both the difficulty of doing so and the way boundaries constrain the subject and prevent her from creating alliances.

It was Lispector's text that inspired my idea of subjective space in the first place. Reading through *Passion*, it was impossible to ignore this distinctive category for analysis, and the way in which the text opens for the reader a new dimension of subjectivity. Through G.H.'s quest and the way she perceives the space around her, the inner space of the subject opens up, revealing what at first seems to be a muddle of sentiments, reflections, and reactions. In fact, what Lispector does in this text is to divide the subject into tiny parts that transmit the most intimate of emotions without hindering the protagonist's legibility. The self of this protagonist enables an exploration of the inside of the subject, based on an understanding of subjectivity as interior, presenting it as vast grounds that can be crossed. When the protagonist reaches the end of her becoming, we are carried with her to her self's farthest edge, to the final act of transgressing the boundary of subjectivity. Throughout Lispector's text, subjectivity's spatialized aspect becomes clear, calling for an examination of the subjective space in other texts.

Diamela Eltit, *El cuarto mundo*

El cuarto mundo presented a challenge to both spatial and subjective analysis due to its puzzling protagonists and their unique stance of narration. Through my reading I reached the conclusion that this difficulty was indeed an intended effect, and represents Eltit's dialogue and questioning of normative readings of subjectivity. By depicting a subject that is not only double, but constantly lingers in an incoherent and disturbing state of being, Eltit questions boundaries between subject and abject, first world and fourth world. Most readers experience feelings of unease when encountering the twins' otherness and the relentless ways in which the author purposely deforms her subjects. In fact, this otherness is constantly emphasized by the implied first world presence, understood as a prevailing notion of what is expected of a normative subject, and how these subject are so inherently different. Thus, Eltit's project involves forming and deforming an abject subject, or a not-yet-subject as my reading of the novel concludes, defined by its relation of distance from canonical first-world subjectivity.

Spatially speaking, this text shows a similar focus on the family home, a risky and polemical site of incestuous relationships in this case, populated by images of extreme pleasure and pain. Eltit's twins with their unique engendering evoke images of imprisonment in spaces that are supposed to be intimate and safe, pointing our attention to how space is, in fact, laden with the emotional residue the subject leaves. The subject's feelings of being confined to the restricting intrauterine space stand in contrast to the threatening and exciting urban space, an emotional shift that propels the transition into the incestuous act that leads to the narrative's destructive end. Meaning, the novel's transition from inside the womb to outside in the urban setting, and then back inside the family home, provides a vehicle for and a representation of

the twin's dialectics. While "inside" they either struggle with each other in their efforts to individuate, or completely breach the gap that is understood to be between siblings through their incestuous act.

Eltit's case of the "constitutive outside" (in my analysis of Butler's term) is part of a constant theoretical preoccupation with the outside of subjects. In fact, both Butler's and Foucault's theories of the subject rely on the distinction between forces external to the subject and an inward movement to explain processes of subjectivation. The emphasis on the subject's differentiation from what lies on the outside brings to mind the image of Eltit's twins trying to distinguish themselves from each other. But for Eltit, physical borders are not as contested and highlighted as in Foucault and Bulter; rather, bodies are mere presences that the subject/s transgress at their convenience. That is to say, when the twins are born, they simply exit the intrauterine space, and when they exit the house there is no particular difficulty in leaving home. At the same time, as I mentioned before, Eltit's subjects constantly transgress symbolic boundaries of social conventions--as seen with their incestuous relationship. The corporal descriptions of this disturbing act raise the question whether the writer is trying to portray a "real," or rather, a coherent subject, or if is she actually disarticulating our understanding of subjects. The text's end, with its collapsing of the setting for the novel and its meta-literary trope, destabilize another border, that of fiction and biographic narrative. That is, the text's final phrase, revealing the female twin's name to be identical to the author's, invites a host of questions regarding authorship, literary production, and the distinction between personal and prose narratives. Eltit's work on the concept of boundary leaves the reader un-eased at the end of the reading, looking for answers hidden in the text. In this sense Eltit treats boundaries by manipulating the reader's perceptions of

normative subjectivity, as well as literary texts.

Subjective space in Eltit's work takes on different meanings, as can be expected from a text that destabilizes the concept of the subject itself. In other words, when the subject is a dual and even an abject being, then the grounds of subjective space are more contested. In fact, the intrauterine space is the only inner one that can be found in *El cuarto mundo,* as the rest of the text is populated by external spaces. In many respects, these twins have no interiority, and do not qualify as subjects according to Foucault's and Butler's work on the topic. Eltit's work persistently forms and deforms the subject, as was argued before. This might explain the constant doubts the reader faces, and the questioning of the boundaries between fictional and biographic narratives towards the text's end. On the other hand, space lends veracity to the narration by depicting a location that seems coherent and legible according to the reader's expectations. One can easily imagine an urban setting in Latin America occupied by sudacas who want to integrate into the first world neoliberal economy. The fourth world reference is not a deformed and theoretical approach to location in the way subjectivity is depicted, but rather a familiar and socially legible one. In this sense, the clearest manifestation of subjective space in Eltit's text is the urban space and the two dimensional descriptions of the sudacas in it. This space, with its ebbs and flows of desire and violence, depicts characteristics of what is expected to be internal to the subject. Only in this text the inner parts of the subject are not fully formed, which explains why subjective space is more external than internal in this case. What this novel adds to my reading of subjective space is that a subject without interiority hinders the dimension of the subject’s spatiality. A subject devoid of subjective space is one that is not fully a subject, calling into question the construction of subjectivity.

Carmen Boullosa, *Antes*

Antes is the only text in which the protagonist's name remains a mystery even after the novel ends. Boullosa's little girl might seem to share Eltit's interest in a young character; however, her approach to otherness is anchored in corporal legibility, so much so that the girl's refusal to enter normative sexual adulthood results in her death. As I have shown, this young girl's otherness resides in her approach to time and to her progression in it, a fact we see reflected in her desire to grow sideways rather than upwards, as per Bond-Stockton's work on the subject. Her otherness makes her stand out in her social surroundings: she is the odd girl at school, and the almost-adolescent daughter that refuses to grow out of childish nightmares. Indeed, otherness is experienced in this case as the refusal to take normative paths towards puberty, described by the protagonist's sister's disappearance into sexual maturity, and by her own feelings of persecution by the ominous *clavitos*.

Most of the occurrences in this novel are set in the home--once again, not a safe and protective surrounding, but rather a threatening location that houses invisible and unexplained beings that haunt the protagonist. The family home, then, is the center of the subject's fears of entering puberty, and is ultimately the location of her persecution, as well as the novel's gruesome end. The depiction of the home space and its relation to questions of growth is similar to that in *Passion*, although Lispector's G.H. is at no risk as she becomes and even grows sideways in the direction of the other. Boullosa's protagonist is constantly at risk, even when she is inside her own home, from a different way of growing, that of growing up. Her efforts to continue growing sideways are similar to G.H.'s example, and may be successful in the narrative sense since they allow for a circular reading and prolonged dwelling in childhood's space; however, they result in a bloody and dramatic end to the

protagonist's life.

For Boullosa's young girl, going outside is a distraction from the threatening persecution at home and repeated insinuations of unsafe family dynamics. As the persecution of her own puberty becomes eminent, she clings to the space of home, the inside that is supposed to be safer than outside. Interestingly enough, the protagonist in this case tries to defend herself by creating boundaries inside her home and her room, trying to make a distinction between a safe inside and a dangerous outside. *Antes* toys with the concept of the border as well, mostly through the protagonist's effort to protect herself by creating imaginary borders between herself and a perceived threat. For this protagonist what the rest of the world sees and thinks of as reality is different than what she experiences on a daily basis. One could say that the boundary between real life and "the other side" is contested in this novel; nonetheless, out of all four texts, in this novel the boundary is least problematic and porous.

Boullosa's subjective space is actually a temporal one; it is the vast grounds of childhood as depicted by this subject who remains forever young. Much like Lispector, Boullosa focuses on the subject's becoming, only in her case it is a young person described from birth trough puberty, and not a middle class white woman. The young girl in *Antes* explores the subjective space of childhood, pointing our attention to just how terrifying it can be to not understand other girls' "disappearance" into the next stage of their lives. For this unnamed girl, childhood is populated by risks and insinuations, transforming children's everyday activities into a cartography of fear, a location of threat. The queerness of this subject lies in her temporal location, where it is expected that she will grow up into a normative young woman while she makes the decision to remain in her current childish state, growing sideways instead of growing up. In fact, Boullosa's text contributes a dynamics of directionality to the discussion,

since what determines the end of this girl's life is exactly her choice to not take the normative upwards direction she is expected to take. The subjective space of childhood creates here a circular location where the subject resides, a place to narrate and re-narrate this protagonist's life, lingering on this part of her life forever.

Ana Clavel, *Cuerpo naufrago*

Being the most recently published novel among the texts that I have chosen to analyze, *Cuerpo nafurago* is the most daring in terms of its depiction of gender. Clavel's subject is other, although her otherness is transgressive mainly of gender norms, and answers to other categories of legibility and agency than are expected from a normative subject. In a way, Antonia is not quite as disturbing as the twins in Eltit's *El cuarto mundo* since she reads as a coherent subject, differently sexed and gendered but housed by the same desires and needs as normative subjects. In fact, Antonia experiences change only through one aspect--that of gender--and does not really become a round character in other terms. Her own otherness is encased within her transformed body and sex, questioning the connections between body and self, subject and gendered persona. Antonia's quest begins, in fact, by her transformation into Other, and ends by her choice to follow a path of desire that points her in the direction of her girlfriend.

Clavel's space is the protagonist's urban quest for meanings of masculinities and femininities, at the same time that it is the contested site of the public bathroom. In her novel the many forms that the urinal takes (both the object itself and the space where it resides) serve as a way to represent the many transformations the subject undergoes with respect to gender. This makes the metaphor of the labyrinth and productive disorientation particularly effective in conveying the subject's search for

sexual and spatial orientation, much like Ahmed's work on the topic. For Antonia the outside is not quit as threatening as in other texts, which may account for the ease with which she explores urban space. The outside, for Clavel's subject, is mostly a safe place where she can explore different directions of her new found sexual/spatial orientation; therefore, Antonia's inside space is not as present as in the other texts.

While the protagonist's corporal transformation is her most significant crossing of a boundary, it remains unexplained throughout the novel. It seems that boundaries are not so limiting for this subject, but are rather a concept with which the protagonist works. For Clavel's protagonist, boundaries are often symbolic representations of gender norms that help her orient herself. As my analysis shows, Antonia's search for the "right" orientation, or the way out of the labyrinth in which she finds herself after her overnight transformation, relies on the guiding assistance of boundaries. As Ahmed points out, borders have a constitutive affect on the subject, helping her define herself, find her way in space. The sexually transformed subject is, in fact, the one subject in all four novels who is bent on searching for boundaries, as if looking for certain rigidity. In this sense, rather than crossing thresholds, Clavel's novel shows a keen interest in finding boundaries against which the subject can define herself.

Given this unique subject's approach to boundaries, it is interesting to point out that subjective space in this novel is also more external than internal. It is a more traditional space of exploration than an internal reflexivity, allowing the protagonist to search out a direction for her sexual orientation. In fact, subjective space in Clavel's text tends to be more centered on space than it is on subject. This is why the urinals the protagonist encounters in her quest take the form of the directionality she wants to explore, so that when she is drawn towards heteronormative masculinity the urinals

seem to her as imitating feminine corporality, whereas when she explores her own attraction to femininity they become more masculine. At the novel's end, when she is more aware of the impossibility of separating the feminine and masculine parts of her gendered identity, the urinals become a hybrid being. In this way, the objects Antonia finds in urban space are almost a projection of her inner quest, a manifestation of her subjectivity. Subjective space is in this case, then, a projected interiority on the urban space of Mexico City. It is the metaphor of the quest and the dis/orientation of desire inside the city's open space. For the subject in *Cuerpo naufrago*, subjective space is the searching for direction and the ability to change that directionality in accordance with the object of desire. In this sense, Clavel's work in cyberspace supports my reading of the way subjective space works in this novel: the quest for orientation is pursued online, in what can be called the most open and plural space of all. The subject's fascination with urinals is, then, not restricted to the limited space of the page, but it rather expanded and stretched over pixels and megabytes, available to anyone who can type Ana Clavel/ *Cuerpo naufrago* into their search engine.

Closing time

These four texts depict remarkably different kinds of otherness, with an infinity of ways to represent them. In my reading of Lispector, Eltit, Boullosa, and Clavel, otherness emerges as the key factor in crafting a subject, whether it is through the subject's valiant efforts to become other, as in the case of G.H., or by depicting a subject that is already othered, such as the case of the other three protagonists. In fact, these protagonists share in common an exploration of different aspects of otherness and its effect on questions of subjectivity. These texts point to a vested representation of otherness, spatially characterized and positioned in relation to central or hegemonic

locations. In other words, the other's presence and influence on the subject stands in constant comparison to normativity--the strange little girl in a school filled with happy girls, a black maid and her privileged white employer, a fourth world sudacas subjects and an implied first world order, and a sexually transformed person in a city filled with unsuspecting normative subjects. The other is the Latin American subject, the sexually altered person, the black being within a white house, or the girl that refuses to grow up.

This repeated interest in the other and its spatial relation to the subject manifests in all four texts through a fascination with the concept of the boundary. In many respects, the boundary is either that which separates the subject from others (G.H.), or that which helps the subject define herself as other (Antonia, and the queer girl in *Antes*). Eltit's work on the subject disturbs notions of boundaries that are mainly imbedded in the way we perceive hegemonic subjectivity. Boundaries are, therefore, central to both the construction of the subject in these texts and the deforming of the same subjectivity. These writers share an effort to question the boundary, pointing to the difficulty in doing so and the desire to push further, symbolically and otherwise, in order to expand the subject's proximity to others or its othered gender identity.

The boundary is also central to my understanding of the dialogue these texts maintain with theories of the subject, mainly through the notion of interiority and exteriority separated by a limit. When we conceptualize the subject as a being with interiority, or as a becoming-subject as in Foucault's work, we can grasp these texts' shared focus on the interiority of their subjects as a practice of the care of the self, a process of subjectivation. Lispector, Eltit, Boullosa, and Clavel are all engaged with reworking subjectivity in different ways, some more intensely than others, but all

react to a reflexive subjectivity. Unlike Foucault's and Butler's work on the subject, Grosz's spatial theory and her insistence on the co-dependence of subject and space, as well as phenomenological understandings of the subject in space, approach this link between the inside and outside of subjects as more organic. In other words, for Grosz, space and subject are mutually defined, and cannot be understood separately, supporting Merleau-Ponty's work on the perception of space and the pre-objective nature of our being in space. In this case, I would argue that Lispector's groundbreaking novel can be read as a theoretical text that presents far reaching conclusions for spatialized theories of the subject. G.H. is a subject in formation, matching Foucault's notion of the care of the self, at the same time that she is highly attuned to the space that surrounds her, a being with interiority that affects her own space, who experiences space in a phenomenological manner. At the same time, she is read as a fascinating example of how the actual boundaries of the subject can be pushed further and challenged by the transformation of the other into subject. The subject, in Lispector's case, is both a deep spatial entity highly aware of herself and her processes of becoming, and inherently grounded in her location.

At the end of this theoretical and textual dialogue, the four roads I took intersect at the middle ground that is subjective space. Housed by phenomenological directionality and the reflexivity suggested by both Foucault and Butler, this intersection is where the subject hopefully becomes a more legible spatial entity. What my readings show is that different levels of investment in the subject's development are balanced by spatial explorations. That is to say, when the text generates a fascinating spatial orientation that questions concepts of being in space and sexual disorientation, the level of detail of the subject is also affected. Indeed, Clavel's text may be highly attuned to critical work on space and gender, but this

awareness comes at the expense of its protagonist. Lispector is the only author who manages to equally explore the spatial aspects of subjectivity and the subjective parts of space. Situated in this intersection and after following these four roads, the ways in which space and subject work together become more clearly articulated. Subjective space, then, is populated by others and subjects, directions and vectors, a movement towards boundaries, and an inward focus or sideways growth.

After camping at the theoretical intersection of subjective space, a new road emerges in the distance. If, following the work of both Foucault and Butler on theories of the subject, the subject is conceived as interiority, what does this spatial understanding convey in corporal terms? That is to say, if the subject can be analyzed as a spatial unit marked, as Ahmed suggests, by both physical borders (the skin as a border that feels, to use her words) and metaphorical boundaries, can we say that the body is itself a form of subjective space? Or, in other words, can we spatialize the subject to such an extent as to call the body an actual location of the self? Without oversimplifying corporality to a mere enveloping container for the subject, how do we benefit from embedding the idea of subjective space into the physical grounds of the self? Does subjective space become, then, a more organic and particular set of coordinates, or does it transform into a hybrid and contradictory new location?

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