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### Madly in Love: Female Identity and Subversion in Nineteenth Century Spanish Literature

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#### Recommended Citation

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CHAPTER ONE

MADLY IN LOVE:  
FEMALE IDENTITY AND SUBVERSION  
IN NINETEENTH CENTURY  
SPANISH LITERATURE

MARÍA LUISA GUARDIOLA

Women writers of the nineteenth century opt to present a series of disturbed women as a metaphor of their own situation, writing within a patriarchal environment that was not allowing them to express freely their desire. The fact of writing, reading, or any other intellectual activity, confers women a certain amount of autonomy, which produces great anxiety in male dominated nineteenth-century society. This essay is the result of several conference presentations that developed in my nineteenth-century Spanish literature seminar on the representation of female characters in nineteenth-century Spanish literature written by women. Although the works span different literary periods, from “costumbrismo” to Naturalism and Modernism, the selected feminine characters openly expose their desire amidst their emotional imbalance using a proto-language, or alternative discourse, to show their own identity beyond the traditional masculine interpretation of what the woman must be. The theoretical base for my study is centered on the ideas of Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, Charon-Deutsch and other feminist critics who underline the common identification of nineteenth-century intellectual feminine activity with sexual deviation.

Lou Charon Deutsch points out to the prevalence of medical and hygienic treatises and other social discourses that caused a greater sexual rift in society given that:

“El *descubrimiento* de la frágil fisiología femenina en el siglo XIX reforzó su diferencia. La patología era una manera fácil y convincente de establecer esta diferencia, ya fuera en el terreno de lo físico o de lo moral.”  
[“The *discovery* of the weak feminine physiology in the XIX century

enforced its difference. Pathology was an easy and convincing way to establish such difference, either in the physical or the moral realm.”<sup>1</sup>

The emerging anxieties as for the incipient role of women in the new consumer society, with the added danger of the possibility of undermining masculine authority within the intellectual realm, are addressed by Akiko Tsuchiya when she considers the complex relationship between women, desire and consumerism in the second half of the nineteenth-century.<sup>2</sup> The selected feminine characters offer a point of view that differs from traditional female representation. These women, seemingly disturbed, open a world of possibilities in which they identify with their own desire. The three chosen women writers through the literary text attain the reconciliation between the disparaging discourses about the female body. As Charnon-Deutsch states, “esta reconciliación se llevó a cabo mediante la validación de la unidad indisoluble entre la vida exterior y la interior, la interrelación entre la salud física y la espiritual.” [“this reconciliation was achieved through the validation of the indissoluble unity between internal and external life, the interrelationship between physical and spiritual health.”]<sup>3</sup> Each character respectively displays the adverse effects of the aforementioned dividing pathology within the patriarchal environment, but manages to diminish the gap between the external and internal world by depicting their authentic stance. The alleged madness of these individuals works like a metaphor of the female author’s situation in a hostile environment toward woman’s advances in the intellectual area.

The three feminine characters presented in this essay belong to three consecutive nineteenth-century literary movements and are the protagonists of short stories, which in itself are a type of generic transgression, allowing further experimentation. As Clare Hanson states, it is in short story where the suppressed in conventional literature is expressed.<sup>4</sup> Showalter adds that the flexibility and freedom of the short story

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<sup>1</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, Lou “El discurso de la higiene física y moral en la narrativa femenina,” *La mujer de letras o la letraherida. Discursos y representaciones sobre la mujer escritora en el siglo XIX*, Ed. Pura Fernández and Marie-Linda Ortega, (Madrid: CSIC, 2008), 187. My translation.

<sup>2</sup> Tsuchiya, Akiko, “Deseo y desviación sexual en la nueva sociedad de consumo: la lectura femenina en *La Tribuna* de Emilia Pardo Bazán,” *La mujer de letras o la letraherida. Discursos y representaciones sobre la mujer escritora en el siglo XIX*, Ed. Pura Fernández y Marie-Linda Ortega, (Madrid: CSIC, 2008), 140.

<sup>3</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, 187. My translation.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Bieder, “Plotting Gender/Replotting the Reader. Strategies of Subversion in Stories by Emilia Pardo Bazán,” *Indiana Journal of Hispanic Literatures*, 2-1 (1993):142.

emphasizes psychological intensity and formal innovation.<sup>5</sup> The literary technique used by the three writers substantiates the above statements. Creating an alternative proto-language to deconstruct dominant masculine discourse attains “formal innovation” and “psychological intensity”. Nevertheless, as Lanser points out,<sup>6</sup> before defying the status quo, nineteenth-century women writers will be compelled to reproduce the traditional structures due to the pressure of the social and textual conventions of the moment. Therefore, these authors will have to use several strategies to defy traditionally masculine narrative authority albeit the apparently conventional style at first glance. The protagonists of the selected texts will demonstrate an emotional imbalance that silences them. However, they will use the alternative language proposed by Elaine Showalter<sup>7</sup>, defying the masculine gaze to express their own point of view from a marginal position. Silence does not imply a form of self-censorship but an alternative discourse paradigm to articulate feminine experience. By not having been granted the ability to speak in patriarchal traditional society, women create their own alternative space to express themselves since they represent the “other”, the non-essential. Cristina Molina Petit observes that in traditional society, “el logos de la mujer no debe existir ni para reconocerse a sí misma ni para hablar de sí misma.” [“the woman’s logos should not even exist to acknowledge or to talk about herself.”]<sup>8</sup> The only way she will be listened to will be by using patriarchy’s voice. Nineteenth-century women authors challenge female silencing, although it is necessary to read between the lines to see the writer’s strategy. Maryellen Bieder refers to Pardo Bazán (one of the selected authors) when she states: “By challenging the silencing of the female subject, Pardo Bazán replots the reader’s response to the silenced and invisible woman modeled in cautionary novels and conduct books.”<sup>9</sup> The three stories in this essay present respectively a challenge to female suppression.

The protagonists of the narratives selected for this study are “la Hija del Sol”, pseudonym of María Gertrudis Hore, a poet who lived in Cádiz,

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<sup>5</sup> Showalter, “Daughters of Decadence,” *Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*, Ed. Elaine Showalter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1993), viii.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Bieder, 139.

<sup>7</sup> Showalter, “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender,” *Hysteria Beyond Freud*, Ed. Gilman, King, Porter, Rousseau, Showalter, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 286.

<sup>8</sup> Molina Petit, “La pregunta por *quién* habla. El patriarcado como el poder de nombrar y de distribuir los espacios,” *Dialéctica feminista de la Ilustración* (Madrid: Anthropos, 1994), 263. My translation.

<sup>9</sup> Bieder, 143.

the southern Andalusian city, in the second half of the eighteen-century. The author of this short story, Cecilia Böhl de Faber, who writes under the penname of Fernán Caballero, gathers this woman's legend fifty years after her death in a book of *Relaciones* published in 1857 with the homonymous title of "La Hija del Sol". The second one is Minia, a relegated orphan in "Un destripador de antaño", a short story written by Emilia Pardo Bazán in *La España Moderna* in 1890. The third character is Nela, the young woman that tells us her misfortune and abandonment in Caterina Albert's—pseudonym Víctor Català—dramatic monologue *La infanticida*, presented to the "Juegos Florales de Olot"<sup>10</sup> in 1898. The three women go mad due to the adverse external circumstances caused by the patriarchal environment; they live alienated in a world that imprisons and silences them.

The three works incorporate an alternative feminine language—or "anti-language" according to Foucault's term<sup>11</sup>—is used by the protagonists to defy patriarchal speech, based on reason and order. The writers use the feminine alternative discourse as a metaphor of their own anxiety within the predominantly male cultural environment of nineteenth-century Spain. Through the dramatization of the emotional imbalance of the protagonists, all very young women, the authors disclose the harsh circumstances of the hostile environment as the reason of such instability and project their uneasiness within the cultural environment of the time. This relates to Gilbert and Gubar's theories that indicate that the woman writer feels mutilated, figurative or literally, for the debilitating alternatives offered by this patriarchal context.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, feminist critic Elaine Showalter indicates the omnipresent association of women with madness and relates the role of the disturbed female as women's double or the manifestation of

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Caterina Albert presented this dramatic piece at the "Juegos Florales de Olot" in 1898, signed with her birth name. The piece received the first prize in spite of the scandal it created when it was known that a woman wrote the monologue. The "Juegos Florales" jury did not permit the reading of the dramatic monologue, as it was customary with the pieces that had received the prize, because of the cruel reality and the shocking theme. Nevertheless it was praised for its quality and structural correctness. The author did not attend the prize awarding ceremony and after this first literary experience she started using the pseudonym Víctor Català. For a detailed account of what happened read Francesca Bartina's article: "(M)othering the Self: La Dramaturgia Femenina de Víctor Català," *IV Congreso de Postgraduados en Estudios Hispánicos* (Londres: Embajada de España, Consejería de Educación y Ciencia, 1996):15-22.

<sup>11</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 99.

<sup>12</sup> Gilbert and Gubar, 57.

her own anxiety and rage.<sup>13</sup> Feminism challenges nineteenth-century well-established belief, reported by Charnon-Deutsch, that hysteria “‘lies in an injury or blockage of the female reproductive system, that affected the brain through the nervous system’, caused by genitalia’s abuse.”<sup>14</sup> Each character in the three stories will be deemed mad by patriarchal society following her acting on sensual desire. Nevertheless, their hysteria will provide an opportunity to connect the spiritual and physical being, partially displacing the traditional difference between both sexes. As noted by Elaine Showalter, hysteria, a specifically feminine pathology, epitomizes a universal female oppression. The female representation in the selected texts verify Showalter’s notion that “hysteria is caused by women’s oppressive social roles rather than by their bodies or psyches”.<sup>15</sup>

Böhl de Faber/Fernán Caballero, Pardo Bazán and Albert/Víctor Català look for alternative ways of telling their experience, drifting apart from the conventional narratives written by male authors of the time. Böhl de Faber writes her “relación” notwithstanding the “costumbrista” intention of painting Spanish life of the epoch as realistically as possible. The nineteenth-century double standard perspective is observed along the story. “La Hija del Sol” displays a twofold behavior according to each system. When she acts following the patriarchal code of submission to the male, her spirit and identity are debilitated; on the other hand, when she is left to act on her free will and follows her desire, she is temporarily liberated in spite of the “madness” that this presumes. Feminine desire is associated with emotional imbalance and the uncontrollable forces of nature.<sup>16</sup> This instability reflects Böhl de Faber’s position. She was suffering the interior conflict of the female writers of the time because of the general rejection of her work given her social status.

“La Hija del Sol” is a framed narrative, like the other two selected stories. It opens with a description of the setting by a framing narrator whose gender is not specified, and followed by an embedded narrator who

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<sup>13</sup> Showalter, Elaine, *The Female Malady. Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, 186-187.

<sup>15</sup> Showalter, “Hysteria, Feminism and Gender,” 286-87.

<sup>16</sup> Susan Kirkpatrick talks about this duality when she refers to María, the protagonist of *La gaviota*, a novel by the same writer: “The opposing sides of María, like the opposing value systems implied in the conventions that characterize her, reflect the unresolved conflict between Cecilia Böhl’s socially defined identity and the desires or ambitions it proscribed.” Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas, Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain 1835-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 332.

tells the story of the protagonist's life to a woman friend as she had heard it. However, the author insists on the veracity of the story and it conveys a male message of female atonement at the end of the story by sending the offender protagonists to a convent. This is important because, as Susan Walter remarks when she refers to a story written by Pardo Bazán, "the use of this male, homodiegetic narrative perspective for the central narration creates stories in which readers feel as though they are on the outside of the protagonist's lived experience looking in."<sup>17</sup> In order to break the presumed difference between the sexes in nineteenth-century society, Alison Piepmeier suggests the representation of the female body as the place where the duality can be defeated,

[...] the female body is the defining feature of the private sphere and of the victim paradigm [...] However, the body is also a site which is mobile and malleable [...] Furthermore, the female body destabilizes binary oppositions through such disruptive energies as pleasure [...] Female embodiment is a site at which the lines dividing the private and the public spheres begin to break down because the body serves as a bridge linking the individual, the material world and the larger structures of power.<sup>18</sup>

Pleasure will be the catalyst to open up the individual lived experience of the female character. By focusing on the body of the protagonist she is temporarily removed from the ostracizing private domain. Madness will make possible the traditionally forbidden performance.

The process of madness of "la Hija del Sol" takes place from the initial phase of stifling exile. The island imprisonment, right in the domestic environment, far away from urban life, exempts her from inspiring intellectual and sensual activities, causing great restlessness and melancholy in the young woman. The intention of removing her from the urban world is to withhold her at the margins in order to halt her desire during her husband's absence. In spite of the precautions, the young woman will follow her passion, which eventually will transform into delirium. "La Hija del Sol" complains about the tediousness to which she is submitted in her island exile and says:

"Mi marido piensa:  
Que entre dos que bien se quieren,  
con uno que goce basta."

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<sup>17</sup> Walter, *From the Outside Looking In: Narrative Frames and Narrative Spaces in the Short Stories of Emilia Pardo Bazán* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2010), 87.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Walter, 89.

["My husband thinks:  
between two persons who love themselves dearly  
it is enough for only one of them to enjoy."] <sup>19</sup>

The protagonist's exile or imprisonment is the first aspect in order to take care of the madress. "La Hija del Sol" receives the same treatment that is given to the madmen, suitable to her previous passionate behavior. She has provoked her own exile.<sup>20</sup> The confinement of the young woman in the island is the ideal setting to trigger the desire that heralds the madress. The narrator insists that "la hermosa solitaria" [the solitary beautiful one] needed an active life, though in nature's pure environment. The exile of "la Hija del Sol" has a double dimension: physical and spiritual. Physically, it is the same isolation imposed on the madmen in the hospitals of the eighteenth-century.<sup>21</sup> The island of León, location of the imposed exile, is where the cure of the frivolous young woman is supposed to take place. The waiting woman's suffering and pleasantness will be exchanged by the passion of the adulterous love. Nature's exuberance is a premonition of the subsequent passion that will be punished by madness. The girl's desire is mirrored by nature's irrepressible power. "La Hija del Sol" will be considered as a dissident being within bourgeois patriarchal hierarchy. Notwithstanding, the clandestine love is considered pure within the romantic paradigm that regards the protagonist as a heroine. Romanticism's search for new symbols and new forms, suggests Lilian Furst, "derives from the Romantic preference for seeing not the surface appearance but the inner reality beneath it."<sup>22</sup> "La Hija del Sol's" desire opens up her inner world, genuine and innocent, as opposed to societal demands based on appearances. Nevertheless, sensual passion creates chaos and bourgeois order is shattered. "La Hija del Sol" is confused, delirious, and thinks she is seeing her previously murdered lover. Such bewilderment causes the young woman to become disenfranchised. Her distress makes her abandon the rational world and is completely isolated. The narrator tells the delirious

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<sup>19</sup> Böhl de Faber, Cecilia, "La Hija del Sol", *Biblioteca de autores españoles, obras de Fernán Caballero*, Ed. José M. Castro Calvo, t. 2 (Madrid: Atlas, 1961), 297. My translation.

<sup>20</sup> According to Foucault, "The madman crosses the frontiers of bourgeois order of it's own accord, and alienates himself outside the sacred limits of it's ethic.." Foucault, *Discipline and Punish, The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 59.

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, 48.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Arkinstall, Christine, *Gender, Class, and Nation: Mercè Rodoreda and the Subjects of Modernism* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2004), 84.

actions of the protagonist: “La Hija del Sol, fuera de sí, clama al cielo pidiendo misericordia; refiere a voces lo acontecido aquella noche.” [“La Hija del Sol, out of her mind, begs the heavens asking for mercy; she shouts what happened that night.”]<sup>23</sup> When “la Hija del Sol” confesses what happened she is considered frenzied. Her shouting is part of the proto-language proposed by Showalter. The hysterics of the young woman are a type of alternative performance that gives her certain autonomy, but they exclude her from society once she is deemed to be mad. This moves us to Foucault's work when it refers to the tyranny of the imprisonment. The confinement causes the alienation, maddening the prisoner.<sup>24</sup> Thus, “la Hija del Sol” is a victim of her own prison. The proscribed young woman confesses the transgression to her husband after suffering a long illness. Through confession, specific of patriarchal speech, the madness is partially redeemed. According to Freud, “la cura para muchos casos de la locura/histeria es la confesión basada en la asociación libre.” [“the cure in many cases of insanity/hysteria is confession based in the free association.”]<sup>25</sup> Words pronounced for confession, part of the conventional discourse, have a sanitary function and are the result of the anxiety produced by women's liberating desire. Social discourse, as well as medicine, had the mission to minimize the danger that the emancipation of women presumed. Lou Charnon-Deutsch highlights the correlation between physical and moral health in female narratives of the first part of the nineteenth-century.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, confession is necessary to expiate the transgression. Böhl de Faber uses “costumbrismo” as a genre that restores the established order. The author needs a narrative that exposes the inherent vision of Spanish society. The madness of “la Hija del Sol” will be cured by a combination of religion, as control agent, and structurally by “costumbrismo”. Susan Kirkpatrick comments on Böhl de Faber's insistence on representing female characters within the patriarchal tenets of submission and restrained desire, to attenuate her own dissent as regards to conventions for the simple act of writing.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Böhl de Faber, 299. My translation.

<sup>24</sup> Foucault, 227-28.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Ciplijauskaite, Biruté, “Entre locura y cordura: la voz de la confesión,” *La Chispa '87: Selected Proceedings* Ed. Gilbert Paolini (New Orleans: Tulane University, 1987), 68. My translation.

<sup>26</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, 177.

<sup>27</sup> Susan Kirkpatrick defines the role of “costumbrismo” in Fernán Caballero as something “to hold together the unintegrated materials of characterization and plot, fill conceptual gaps, explain inconsistencies, and above all, order the rest by imposing a definition of the “natural”. Kirkpatrick, 334.

Emilia Pardo Bazán applies the legendary tale genre in “Un destripador de antaño”. In this story the folktale of the “destripador” [ripper] frames the narrative and is rendered within the gothic outlines<sup>28</sup> of mystery and gloominess in order to subvert it as a parody. The frame’s homodiegetic narrator<sup>29</sup>, who does not display any gender-specific indicator, talks about having heard several versions of the ripper’s folktale, however, decides to tell his/her own account and exhorts the readers to enter “en la zona de sombra del alma” [“in the zone of darkness of the soul ”]<sup>30</sup> to look for the internal reality of women’s real experience in such an environment. The author needs the authority of a narrative voice to challenge well-established standards for each individual gender. Furthermore, the plot simultaneously breaks such authority. The second narrative level begins with the observations of the heterodiegetic narrator that shows at first sight the idyllic environment of the village of Tornelos and its surroundings as something worthy of the art of a landscape painter. The narrator/observant is slowly giving a series of details that reveal the rough reality of this seemingly pleasant place. The emphasis moves from the description of the landscape to that of the protagonist, Minia, a thirteen or fourteen-year-old innocent girl, victim of the patriarchal system. The abuse, hunger, impoverishment, confinement, and the terror produced by a religiousness based on superstitions and ignorance, trigger a state of incapacitation on the young girl that transposes and immobilizes her.<sup>31</sup> Minia has a duplicate

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<sup>28</sup> See my study about the gothic in “Un destripador de antaño” in Guardiola, María Luisa. “Transgresión y género en “Un destripador de antaño” de Emilia Pardo Bazán: lo gótico en la tradición literaria europea,” *Actas del V Coloquio de la Sociedad de Literatura Española del Siglo XIX*, Ed. Enrique Rubio, et al. (Barcelona: PPU, Universitat de Barcelona, 2011): 217-223.

<sup>29</sup> For a theoretical explanation about the narrator types in Pardo Bazán’s short stories’ frame narrative check the first chapter of Susan Walter’s book *From the Outside Looking in: Narrative Frames and Narrative Spaces in the Short Stories of Emilia Pardo Bazán* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Pardo Bazán, Emilia. “Un destripador de antaño,” *Obras Completas, IX (Cuentos)*, Ed. Darío Villanueva y José Manuel González Herrán (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 1999), 5. My translation.

<sup>31</sup> Steven Hart’s quote about *Los pazos de Ulloa*, another novel by Pardo Bazán, correlates the gothic element with the female gender: “The association between the institutions of Catholicism and patriarchy delineated above leads also to one of the central images of the Gothic in Pardo Bazán’s novel, as focused through the female gender, and particularly through Nucha, who begins to imagine that she sees ghostly apparitions.” Hart, Steven, “The Gendered Gothic in Pardo Bazán’s *Los Pazos de Ulloa*,” *Culture and Gender in Nineteenth-Century Spain*, Ed. Lou

in the homonymous patron saint. The saint's image has great impact on the young girl who was "embelesada con la contemplación de la santa" ["spellbound by contemplating the Saint"]. The little girl virtually could get out of her muteness after the patron saint's commemoration festivities.

La chiquilla volvía de la iglesia ensimismada y absorta. Era siempre de pocas palabras; pero un mes después de la fiesta patronal, difícilmente salía de su mutismo, ni se veía en sus labios la sonrisa, a no ser que los vecinos la dijese que «se parecía mucho con la Santa». [The little girl would return self-absorbed and engrossed. She was usually very quiet; but one month after the patron saint's commemoration, she hardly could get out of her muteness, nor could anybody see a smile on her lips, unless her neighbors would tell her that 'she looked like the Saint].<sup>32</sup>

Patriarchal environment, religion in this case, renders Minia speechless. Outside forces are the cause of Minia's inhibition. The heterodiegetic narrator, that is the homodiegetic narrator of the narrative frame, opens the reader's and the main story narratee's eyes, carrying them into the harsh reality of the girl's situation and deconstructing the patriarchal speech centered on appearances.

Hysteria as a condemnation of the laws of patriarchy, as Showalter specifies it, "a specifically feminine pathology that speaks to and against patriarchy"<sup>33</sup>, is also exhibited in Pardo Bazán's story. The internal circumstances of the young girl are revealed in spite of the appearances:

Minia no se quejaba jamás [...] Callada, exteriormente insensible, la muchacha sufría en secreto angustia mortal, inexplicables mareos, ansias de llorar, dolores de lo más profundo y delicado de su organismo, misteriosa pena, y, sobre todo, unas ganas constantes de morirse para descansar yéndose al cielo... [Minia never complained [...]] She kept silent, outwardly insensitive, the girl was suffering privately mortal distress, inexplicable dizziness, longing for crying, pains of the deepest and delicate depths of her organism, a mysterious sorrow, and, especially, a constant desire of dying to rest in heaven ...]<sup>34</sup>

The young girl was living in a constant state of uneasiness and oppression and ultimately she goes into a daze, totally withdrawn, which is representative of women's situation: "Al fin se quedó en ese estado mixto

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Charnon-Deutsch and Jo Labanyi (Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press,1995), 224.

<sup>32</sup> Pardo Bazán, 8. My translation.

<sup>33</sup> Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," 286.

<sup>34</sup> Pardo Bazán, 12. My translation.

propicio a las visiones, a las revelaciones psicológicas y hasta a las revoluciones físicas...” [“Toward the end she remained in this mixed state favorable to the visions, to the psychological revelations and even to the physical revolutions ...”]<sup>35</sup> Minia’s psychological, paralyzing degradation matches the classic model of hysteria. Since she cannot express herself through narrative, Minia will communicate through her mutilated body, specifically through the mortal gash in her throat, her fight and opposition against the “other”.<sup>36</sup> The organic description of Minia’s mutilated body at the end of the story reveals the alternative and live language—emblematic of feminine speech, in contrast with the uniform and stagnant traditional description of the local patron saint, Santa Herminia:

Su doblada cabeza descubría la tremenda herida del cuello; un *mantelo* tosco cubría la mutilación de las despedazadas y puras entrañas; sangre alrededor, desleída ya por la lluvia, las yerbas y malezas pisoteadas, y en torno el gran silencio de los altos montes y de los solitarios pinares. [Her tilted head revealed the immense wound on her throat; a shaggy shawl covered the mutilation of her torn and pure guts; there was blood around, watered down by the rain, the grass and stepped on weeds, and all around there was the great silence of the high mountains and of the solitary pine tree woods.]<sup>37</sup>

The traditional description of Santa Herminia includes the histrionic tone and irony of Naturalism, but it lacks the mystery and vitality of the previous one:

la postura permitía ver perfectamente la herida de la garganta, estudiada con clínica exactitud; las cortadas arterias, la laringe, la sangre, de la cual algunas gotas negreaban sobre el cuello [...] Diríase que la herida iba a derramar sangre fresca.[...] the [body’s] position allowed to see perfectly the wound of the throat, studied with clinical accuracy; the cut arteries, the

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<sup>35</sup> Pardo Bazán, 21. My translation.

<sup>36</sup> Sedwick labels the gothic heroine as a hysteric: “Call, for convenience’s sake, the heroine of the Gothic a classic hysteric, its hero a classical paranoia. The immobilizing and costly struggle, in the hysteric, to express graphically through her bodily hieroglyphic what cannot come into existence as narrative, resembles in this the labor of the paranoia subject to forestall being overtaken by the feared/desired other. Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Metuhen, 1986), vi.

<sup>37</sup> Pardo Bazán, 27. My translation.

larynx, the blood, of which a few drops were becoming black on the neck [...] One could tell that the wound was going to spill fresh blood.]<sup>38</sup>

The Galician author underlines women's impotence and loneliness in a patriarchal system. On having displayed the local patron saint in a static form, she insists on the parody of patriarchal language. Nevertheless, showing Minia's corpse at the end of the story constitutes a warning to humanity of the consequences of the mistreatment against women and presents the alternative feminine language based on performance.

In *La infanticida*, Caterina Albert/Víctor Català uses the short monologue in verse, a characteristic modernist genre, as a transformative mode of feminine speech from the sidelines. This is a reflection of the author's marginal position in the Catalan intellectual milieu at the turn of the twentieth century. The alternative language is used to expose feminine experience and the negative effect of patriarchy, in a sort of re-writing of the differences established by the hegemonic canon at the end of the nineteenth-century to highlight the fear against the "other". Caterina Albert uses hysteria in *La infanticida* to reject female representation in patriarchal discourse. The words and actions of a woman, shut in a mental institution for murdering her own newly born daughter, due to her extreme solitude and terror caused by the patriarchal system, embody a female literary construction challenging the traditional representation of women in male literary works. The monologue's protagonist attains certain autonomy by expressing her experiences, notwithstanding her enclosure in an asylum. The stage directions at the beginning of the monologue are part of the framing devices used by the other two writers and, as noted by Mikhail Bakhtin, "are the basic forms for incorporating and organizing heteroglossia in the novel. All these forms permit languages to be used in ways that are indirect, conditional, distanced."<sup>39</sup> The author underlines the real causes of Nela's madness from the beginning of the monologue. This allows an implied discourse in the protagonist's performance that breaks with patriarchal codes.

Tingui's en compte que la Nela no és un ésser pervers, sinó una dona engegada per una passió; que obrà, no per sa lliure voluntat, sinó empresa per les circumstàncies i amb l'esperit empresonat entre dues paral.leles inflexibles: l'amor a Reiner i l'amenaça de son pare; aquell, empenyent-la cap a la culpa, l'altre; mostrand-li el càstig; les dues, de concert, duent-la a

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<sup>38</sup> Pardo Bazán, 9. My translation.

<sup>39</sup> Bakhtin, Mikhail, "Heteroglossia in the Novel. From Discourse in the Novel 1934-1935," *Criticism: the Major Statements*, Ed. Charles Kaplan and William Davis Anderson, (Boston, New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1975), 441.

la follia. [Keep in mind that Nela is not a perverse being, but a woman blinded by a passion; who acted not by her own free will, nonetheless led by the circumstances and with her spirit confined between two invincible counterparts: her love for Reiner and her father's threat; the former one pressing her toward fault, the later one, flaunting her the punishment; both, as a whole, leading her to madness.]<sup>40</sup>

Nela uses an alternative language despite her imprisonment and isolating madness. She will reveal to the audience her own point of view as a woman under the male gaze that is defied through this alternative perception. By reciting her own history to the audience, Nela deconstructs male discourse and develops her own alternative proto-language. The representation of Nela's madness via her corporal and oral language, while she plays her role as a defeated woman, offers a challenge to the idea of a unique discourse—Bakhtin's sacrosanct and conditional language as he referred to hegemonic traditional speech. The language of the body proposed by Elaine Showalter, is the reflection of the pathological effect patriarchy has had on women who have suffered the devastations of exploitation and social injustice: “anger that has social causes is converted to a language of the body; people develop disabling symptoms, or may even become violent or suicidal.”<sup>41</sup> Nela openly displays her anger to the audience. The stage directions make a direct reference to her corporal language, an implicit discourse that complements patriarchal speech. When she explains the history of her father's abuse, all her senses wake up and she exposes her own internal world full of terror.

Albert/Català's impressionist technique replicates the female character's conscience. The young girl is aware of her progressive annihilation due to conflicting external male forces. She tells the effect Reiner's love had on her: “Xuclava/l'enteniment i el cor amb les ninetes,/talment com si fes beure seguidori.../[“ Extricated my mind and heart through his eye pupils,/as if he made me drink a toxic potion.../”]<sup>42</sup>

Nela's pregnant body is another representation of female embodiment that, as Charnon-Deutsch suggests, it breaks down the discriminating divide between the public and private sphere.<sup>43</sup> Nela shows her opposition to patriarchal tenets through her pregnancy. However, this will be her death sentence. She is fully aware of her alienated state and her circumstances

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<sup>40</sup> Albert, Caterina, *La infanticide*, (Barcelona: La Sal. Edicions de les dones, 1984), 42. My translation.

<sup>41</sup> Showalter, “Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender,” 335.

<sup>42</sup> Albert, 47. My translation.

<sup>43</sup> Charnon-Deutsch, 187.

coincide with Showalter's view: "women are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature and body".<sup>44</sup> When Nela describes the act of giving birth, she performs what Showalter defines as "the hysterical seizure" or "grande hystérie" regarded as an "acting out of female sexual experience".<sup>45</sup> Nela's words relay her irrational state: "Allà...va...ser...Rodant, les moles/ ofegaren els crits...i que patia!/que patia, Reiner, tota soleta!..." ["There ...it was...Spinning, the mill wheel/ turned off the screams...and how did I suffer!/ How did I suffer!, Reiner, all alone!..."<sup>46</sup>

At the end of the monologue, Nela discloses the details of her daughter's involuntary murder by throwing her to the mill wheel. She can hardly speak and she painfully pronounces the words that refer to the horrifying infanticide. Her last message brings up the fictional escape with her lover Reiner and the estrangement from her father, the sickle and the mill wheel, in order to avoid another infant girl's suppression. Nela's final hysteria could be connected to what Juliet Mitchell identifies as "the daughter's disorder", "a syndrome of physical and linguistic disapproval against the symbolic and social laws of the father".<sup>47</sup>

Hysteria is used in the three short narratives as a way to reject patriarchal laws. Women are portrayed as victims of this system. Under these circumstances women endure a double exile, internal and external. Patriarchy's destructive power upon the protagonists of the three tales is suggested by a series of symbols that arrange the text in an organic manner. Extreme isolation of the young women has a pathological effect and serves as metonymy of the displacement of nineteenth-century women writers. The psychological gradual deterioration of these women is due to the abandonment and constant threats of the patriarchal system. There is a relentless tension between what is expected from women and their unfulfilled desires. Hysteria is the only way these women have to expose their internal tension. This feminine alternative language, or proto-language, communicates through body messages that cannot be vocalized. The attempt of recovering the lost feminine subjectivity links it with the utopian hope to demolish patriarchal laws. Showalter's quote offers a summary of the myriad possibilities of the texts written by women: "The feminist content of feminine art is typically oblique, displaced, ironic and subversive; one has to read it between the lines, in the missed possibilities of the text."<sup>48</sup> Each author, Cecilia Böhl de Faber/Fernán Caballero,

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<sup>44</sup> Showalter, *The Female Malady*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender", 287.

<sup>46</sup> Albert, 55. My translation.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Showalter, "Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender," 288.

<sup>48</sup> Showalter, 153.

Emilia Pardo Bazán and Caterina Albert/Víctor Català disclose this subversion in their respective literary works. Their art mirrors the ambivalent position and the internal disconnect associated with women writer's "hysteria" at the time. Madness grants the possibility of performance, partially closing the gender gap by bestowing female characters their full identity, physical and spiritual.

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