THE DESERT IN MARÍA TERESA ANDRUETTO: A LITERAL AND FIGURATIVE SPACE

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ABSTRACT

Thomas N. Phillips II: The Desert in María Teresa Andruetto: A Literal and Figurative Space
(Under the direction of Alicia Rivero)

The desert serves as a crucible for processing and creating truth in the novels, novellas, and short stories by Argentine writer María Teresa Andruetto (b. 1954). Simultaneously a literal and figurative space, the desert embodies Argentine history and economic development with particular focus on the northwest and Patagonia. Response to political turmoil and the introspective search for identity and family coalesce as we view protagonists encountering frontiers; coupled with alterity, gender, and language, this results in a new amalgamation that is a retelling of Esteban Echeverría's "La cautiva."

The first chapter of this dissertation analyzes spaces as both literal and figurative oases, the interior as a microcosm of Argentina, and movement within the desert related to border crossing. The second chapter presents a macro-level view of geopolitics that focuses on an alternative reading of history in the desert, and the veracity of claims and truth are under a microscope in a manner that questions the official discourse of the Dirty War, as well as the creation of a national mythos. In the final chapter, the sexualized and gendered—but not sensual—queering of bodies, time, and space all connect with linguistic transgressions that break down past, present, and future; this results in a new, nationalized vision of the *cautiva*, the woman who crosses borders and who challenges a singular, patriarchal view of Argentina.

To those who wander and to those who wonder.

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INTRODUCTION

With an inescapable ocean to the east, an almost impenetrable mountain range to the west, a wild and windswept steppe to the south, and vast scrublands to the north, Argentina is surrounded by deserts and seemingly endless paradoxical frontiers and limits. The Argentine desert is a crucible for processing and creating truth in the works of María Teresa Andruetto (b. 1954). Exceedingly important to understand the scope of this research is to acknowledge that locations are intentionally nuanced and weighted spaces that carry more meaning than their prima facie appearance. In Andruetto's Argentina, the desert is not just a landscape or a particular climate but, rather, a premeditated location full of significance: it is not limited to an empirical and literal *desierto*, since it is also a figurative and liminal space. Duality and paradox are on display: the desert is both life-giving and life-taking, limited and limitless. At an intimate level, the desert provides space and serves as a proxy for relationships, offering almost anthropomorphized sites.

These seemingly contradictory aspects are deliberate. On a larger scale, the Argentine desert in Andruetto embodies the wilderness and emptiness with respect to economics and the development of the Argentine republic. It offers a dual notion of the interior versus the littoral. Implying migrations of people and populations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the desert is a space of movement, of the crossroads, and of the margins. Furthermore, the desert becomes a gendered space where women manage to find an escape from political

threats before and during the junta, as well as attempt to make meaning following the Dirty War's end.

This study contributes to the understanding of Argentine literature, particularly to the analysis of almost the entire corpus of María Teresa Andruetto, adding to the base of knowledge of critical readings on her work. Until the recent publication of *Miradas desobedientes: María Teresa Andruetto ante la crítica*, edited by Corinne Pubill and Francisco Brignole, few critics had analyzed Andruetto's output in much detail. *Miradas desobedientes* provides a framework to begin understanding Andruetto's place in the Argentine literary cannon that constitutes a response to the Dirty War. What my study contributes to the existing body of criticism that is new is uncovering the context of the nineteenth century in Andruetto's texts that others overlooked, in order to focus on the techniques used by Andruetto that connect place, space, and time within the desert. My research will prove how the desert becomes the nexus where Andruetto combines the individual and the collective, particularly within the framework of national (re)building, in response to the military dictatorship and the return to democracy after the Dirty War. The combination of the individual and collective protagonists—cited by many critics as quintessential to Andruetto's works—reposition the past and present within the confines of an *argentinidad* that arises from the literal, liminal, and figurative desert. I analyze Argentina in general and the desert in particular in Andruetto from a multi-disciplinary point of view, using history, economics, and geography, in addition to literary theory.

The Latin etymology of the word "desert" ("left waste," per the *Oxford English Dictionary* online) has implications for this research, especially regarding the Argentine context. Javier Uriarte highlights these connections in *The Desertmakers: Travel, War, and the State in Latin America*, with emphasis on "abandoned, alone, empty. So, the desert, in its very

etymology, *was not always there*.... The desert is, properly speaking, a place that was *made* desert" (1).[1] Uriarte also offers a distinction between "frontier" and "border" in Spanish (both signified by the single word "frontera"). I agree with his notion that "[w]hile *desert* connotes lack, stillness and void, *frontier* suggests action, transit, and movement" (27). What we will see in Andruetto is a mixture of both. For this study, when I say "desert," I mean the physical desert, in a geographical sense, and the *desierto* as "wilderness" or "emptiness." I take liberty with the term "desert" to include the following: nature, wilderness, arid zones, liminal spaces beyond civilization, the interior of the country, and marginalized areas.[2]

I also look to George Huntston Williams's depiction of the desert and wilderness as "not only geographical but psychological. It can be a state of mind as well as a state of nature. It can betoken alternatively either a state of bewilderment or a place of protective refuge and disciplined contemplation, as well as literally the wilds" (4). In addition, I utilize Tim Cresswell's definition of "place" in human geography, since it is derived from "space" and "landscape" (8). Cresswell defines place as "how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power. This process of investing space with meaning happens across the globe at all scales and has done [*sic* so] throughout human history" (12). Furthermore, the Argentine desert matches Julia Kristeva's notions of the abject with respect to the border and breakdowns of established order, of being defined by the question "where am I" as opposed to "who am I" ("Approaching" 235). In other words, this desert is simultaneously a state of being and a state of un-being.

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[1] In keeping with MLA conventions, all quotations appear in their original format unless otherwise noted.

[2] Although there are descriptions of the fauna and flora of the desert in Andruetto, these are not the main aspects to which she devotes the narratives that we will explore. Thus, analyzing the ecosystems in the desert from the perspective of environmental studies would divert us from the primary focus of the dissertation.

From an historical perspective, Argentina can trace much of its national, symbolic roots to gaucho epics and narrative pieces centering on life in the pampa, starting with notions of nation-building and the civilization vs. barbarism debate of the nineteenth century. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo o civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (1845), José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* (1872/1879), and Esteban Echeverría's "La cautiva" from *Rimas* (1837) are a point of departure for the historical context of the desert in Argentina with respect to nation-building, as well as a place of refuge, a literary motif that resounds in nearly all of Andruetto's works as both a literal and figurative space.

In *Facundo*, according to Mónica Scarano, "la imagen de la frontera prefigura una estética transida de cruces, pasajes, traducciones, desciframientos y desplazamientos, perfilando un espacio entretejido de ambigüedades y contrastes, tensiones y dualidades, siempre presentes en la superficie textual" (n.p.). Scarano also highlights the desert itself as an early aspect that appears in Sarmiento's *Facundo*, since the frontier was unknown to Europeans and was the thing to fill; the latter suggests the act of nation-building, which is echoed in Uriarte's notion that the desert was "made" (*The Desertmakers* 1). Scarano cites the fact that Sarmiento wrote *Facundo* without actually having been to that location (perhaps relying on travel writing concerning the Southern Cone by Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin, among others). Thus, from an early stage, writing about the desert was an act of creation, not only geopolitically, leaning toward nation-building, but also more in terms of literary and cultural production with an agenda. Scarano also explains how perhaps one of Sarmiento's major acts is contributing to "el orden simbólico, instalando el 'desierto' en el naciente imaginario nacional como problema" (n.p.).

Mary Louise Pratt's reading of Sarmiento sets the backdrop of the landscape and the space (185-87), and the conflict between cultures in *Facundo* echoes her "contact zones,"

particularly as they showcase "highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (4). Argentine literature and governmental policy offer portraits of a landscape, especially Patagonia and the pampa, as "nation-spaces" meant for white people, while native lands were "wasted" (Hanway 167). In Andruetto, however, this racist idea is revisited through the problematic reconstitution of motherhood and motherland, as detailed by Nora Domínguez in "Lengua-cuerpo-madre: una relación problemática en escritoras argentinas contemporáneas" (43-48). Andruetto's works often trace the history that is essential to the creation of the mythos of *argentinidad* from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries via politics, class, gender, and race; these are some of the underlying aspects of the Dirty War that she reveals. The figurative desert suggests a negative, violent wasteland and/or a positive land of opportunity in Andruetto's *El país de Juan* (2003), *Veladuras* (2005), and *La niña, el corazón y la casa* (2011), all short novels for juvenile audiences which we will examine, together with her other narratives. *Veladuras* displays an inversion of Sarmiento's racist notions of civilization and barbarism.

The desert as an interior space in Andruetto serves a dual purpose: first, protagonists are placed literally in another space, in another dimension, confined and defined at the same time. Second, the interior can be read in two ways: as a literal and as a figurative space, as was indicated earlier, both of which have implications for individual and national identity. The novels *Lengua madre* (2010), *Tama* (1993), and *Los manchados* (2015), for example, refer to multiple desert regions of Argentina and the world, suggesting a global dynamic in three main areas: Europe (a location of exile and migration), a small town on the Pampa (the Argentine heartland), and a basement in Trelew (in Patagonia) where Julieta, the protagonist of *Lengua madre* and *Los manchados*, is born. Despite humble origins in said basement in southern Argentina, her life spans the globe as she oscillates from one region to another, torn between places in a form of

exile. I propose that the desert creates a twenty-first century mestiza, in her case, that embodies *argentinidad* through an economic and geopolitical lens, creating a citizenship that is not simply based on heritage or birth; it is also the result of economic systems and political contexts that have been formed in the desert.

Any new mestiza narrative must, of course, consider Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La frontera*, as well as traditional notions of *argentinidad*, traced to the contact between Europeans and indigenous populations that resulted in an uneven economic system grounded in Spanish colonialism (Rock xxvi). The exploitation of the original indigenous inhabitants by means of the *mita* system in Argentina sets the stage for cycles of boom and bust: there are economic depressions followed by military intervention, which later bring more subsidies and further governmental intercession (Rock 117). The question of whether Andruetto operates in a colonial setting is valid; I posit that she does not echo colonial hegemony but, rather, subverts colonial paradigms in the way the desert is portrayed. With a focus on the feminine and female, Andruetto offers an alternative that also incorporates indigenous identity, challenging patriarchal notions of the *patria* rising from the desert. Andruetto's works seem to subtly blend what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui has explored as an alternative view of coloniality and indigenous perspectives in Latin America that clash with hegemony:

> El postmodernismo culturalista que las elites impostan y que el estado reproduce de modo fragmentario y subordinado nos es ajeno como táctica. No hay "post" ni "pre" en una visión de la historia que no es lineal ni teleológica, que se mueve en ciclos y espirales, que marca un rumbo sin dejar de retornar al mismo punto. El mundo indígena no concibe a la historia linealmente, y el pasado-futuro están contenidos en el presente: la regresión o la progresión, la repetición o la superación del pasado están en juego en cada coyuntura y dependen de nuestros actos más que de nuestras palabras. (54-55)

Some of the foundational texts that this study takes into account when considering the context arise completely from colonial notions. Florencia Antequera, for example, has explored the

“fascination” with the desert (and recalls the feminine connection to this word “fascinate”) in Sarmiento as well as the “colonized” space connected with the gaucho (286-87). Antequera’s feminine components echo Rivera Cusicanqui’s non-linear view of history in indigenous cultures, and this alternative notion of time is one we will see in multiple examples throughout Andruetto, particularly in the economics of Argentina that cycle through boom and bust.

One key element of the nineteenth century that arose from the colonial setting that is the backdrop of Andruetto’s alternative Argentina (referring to Tama, Aldao, and Patagonia, among other locations in her novels and short stories) is the arrival of the railroad. The latter provided more economic opportunity, yet left behind unequal land settlement and disruption in labor patterns (Rock 145). The uneven distribution of wealth did not stem from market forces but, rather, was due to government directives and certain political interests that viewed the interior as open for business and settlement by particular populations (Rock 146). An official policy of expansion into the continent did encounter one strong form of resistance that paradoxically has been “white-washed” from history and that clearly resonates throughout Andruetto: indigenous populations. The infamous *conquista del desierto* of the 1870s attempted to quell uprisings and instability throughout the vast territory; it also can be viewed as a psychological process that left an impact not only on indigenous populations, but also on the entire Argentine republic (Rock 154). After the *conquista* and the nineteenth-century nation-state building process, political boundaries were drawn on maps through policies and laws enacted during the Roca government; encompassing nearly all the interior and the frontier, provincial borders reflected the stalemate between the concentrated federal district and other regions that “thereby prevented Buenos Aires from fulfilling a long-cherished ambition to absorb Patagonia” (155). For Uriarte, there was a disconnect between the supposed vision of the Argentine desert and reality:

> in the case of the Argentine pampas and Patagonia, . . . those lands were not only populated but, contrary to what has been sometimes argued, many of the indigenous communities living there were actually sedentary, and, most importantly, had well-structured forms of government and had established robust networks via which news, people, and texts circulated. (133)

Thus, in Uriarte's view, the desert was made a desert to establish a notion of nothingness, as opposed to something already occupied that would require an official acknowledgement of genocide and war.

Nineteenth-century nation-building processes reflect the vast nature of Argentina. The periphery of the country is, literally, the frontier and, figuratively, it refers to the spaces beyond the political control of the elites in Buenos Aires. It is also the site of conflict at geopolitical levels: there were armed battles there during independence movements; Sarmiento's ideas take hold, and later, the *conquista del desierto* occurs in the desert as well, for example. Fermín Rodríguez explores Sarmiento's motivation, stating, "Vencer será, para Sarmiento, avanzar disciplinadamente, a caballo, vestido a la europea, por un espacio que bajo la imprenta, el mapa y la estrategia se vuelve objeto de un dominio crecientemente abstracto" (1111). For Antequera, Sarmiento attempts to create the idea of a nation by entering the void, with the goal of "conocer el terreno para su apropiación, establecer continuidades territoriales donde no hay comunicaciones" (285). For Uriarte, the desert is a construction site, a place in the second half of the nineteenth century where governing officials make real what had been imaginary (1). Rodríguez comments on how little Sarmiento actually knew of Argentina as a space, given that he was in exile when he wrote *Facundo* (1114). As we will see later, Andruetto's Julieta corresponds to this idea of not having been to a place, but being tasked with making meaning and naming.

In essence, Sarmiento successfully created an idea of the desert, just as Andruetto is recreating an idea of a desert. Ironically, Sarmiento and Echeverría are not simply revisited, but rather, are recreated in Andruetto, and Antequera describes these nineteenth-century writers just as we will view Andruetto through the prism of exile or *insilio*: "Sarmiento y la Generación toda están marcados por el exilio. Son los exiliados de una nación inexistente, a la que intentan dar una existencia objetiva pero ideal, a través de un corpus literario. La Argentina se convierte en un asunto a resolver en libros que remiten a otros libros" (286).

Clashes also take place at cultural levels, including in the figure of the gauchos and national myth. Debra Castillo captures this on-going problem in the "white-washing" of southern South America:

> [I]n Chile and Argentina the indigenous peoples have been almost completely excluded from mythic conceptions of national identity. . . . Unlike Mexico, and more like the U.S., these Southern Cone countries have a historical stake in defining themselves as nations of (European) immigrants; the Indian defines the limits of this identity and remains outside it. (48)

Furthermore, she posits that the "Indian is an impossible subject partly because in familiar occidental discourse s/he cannot be an autonomous subject at all, but [is] rather a marker for a certain kind of distanced and exotic collective" (42-43). In fact, as Pubill notes, Argentina did not include "indigenous" as a racial category on the census until 2001 ("Estigmatizaciones" 165).

Andruetto showcases a clear contradiction of an Argentina that is supposedly open to all, yet is still inaccessible for some, especially regarding representations of regions like the desert, indigenous populations, and women. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's discussion of indigenous discourse regarding identity fits closely with Andruetto's world of ambiguity, as in protagonists who are of both European and indigenous roots, but whose realities are not completely binary. Rivera Cusicanqui recalls the notion of "ch'ixi" that traces itself from "la idea aymara de algo

que es y no es a la vez, es decir, a la lógica del tercero incluido” (69). Furthermore, this is not a third-culture possibility that blends two nodes: “plantea la coexistencia en paralelo de múltiples diferencias culturales que no se funden, sino que antagonizan o se complementan. Cada una se reproduce a sí misma desde la profundidad del pasado y se relaciona con las otras de forma contenciosa” (70).

Ambiguity of meaning is not limited to history or to reconstituting the past. In Andruetto, language plays a role in this game of gaslighting, that is, recanting what was said or meant to induce uncertainty. For example, we will see that distances are not literal or linear, as in the Spanish *allá* or *allí*; measurements are uncertain, and locations are negotiable in Andruetto. These alternative methods of making meaning are a type of queering of space, and I read the desert in Andruetto as a queer place outside the bounds of heteronormativity (sexualized and gendered, but not sensual). These multi-pronged, linguistic connections are not new; they arise from the beginning of textual writings about the desert. Uriarte’s comments on the subtle difference between the desert and the frontier are relevant here: “On the ground, frontier and desert are not clearly differentiated, their primary distinction lying in the condition of absolute *exteriority* that characterizes the desert in intellectual discourse, while the inherently changeable frontier remains, in the state’s view, opaque and not yet subject to its laws” (134). In other words, being out of bounds, in a no-(wo)man’s-land, appears as a violation to the laws and the cultural hegemony of the state, and is a queering of legality. Florencia Antequera adds to our understanding of the desert as no-(wo)man’s-land: “Entonces, en el desierto, en este espacio sin ley, sin letra (y aquí la letra es ley), la guerra es la práctica común (malones, montoneras caóticas, etc.) para ocupar el territorio y extender fronteras. El desierto en el imaginario es el horizonte sin fronteras, es el centro sin centro que bulle” (288-89).

Gendered connotations of the Dirty War appear as a recapitulation of the *cautiva* tradition in Echeverría, not unlike Susana Rotker's view of the origins of the *cautiva* myth in the case of Lucía Miranda (147). In particular, the *cautiva* was related to a macho desire to control and dominate, populate, and rule, nearly the proposal of nation-building and nineteenth-century national origins. In that respect, a woman of European roots who lives with *indios* is a violation of supposed norms or of the national mythos (Rotker 151). The feminine center of the family was meant to embody Argentine nationalism and the *patria*. Any departure from that cultural expectation would be viewed within the same prism as the lawlessness of the gauchos. Rotker underscores connections between women and deviation from the norm with that of sex workers. In particular, she explains that the law and the government treated women accused of sex work prior to legalization as outlaws, not unlike gauchos, going so far as to round them up and send them to the frontier where they would be detained as a type of sexual servant (156-57). This also matches Anzaldúa's border crossing and reconstitutes the "*virgen/puta* (whore) dichotomy" (31). Bodily autonomy—that women can do what they wish with their own physical beings—clashes with cultural rules of the junta later in the twentieth century as women, again, are relegated to the home as the keepers of the patria; any deviation from those norms constitutes violation of rules and crossing into another realm, or transversing a barrier.

The queering of the desert in Andruetto does not come from sexuality, as was already mentioned, but from an Othering, as well as from the location of bodies that inhabit a third space. Berlant and Warner's notions of citizenship are on display here, and I view women's relegation within Argentine society as second-class: "National heterosexuality is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship. A familial model of society displaces the recognition of

structural racism and other systemic inequalities" (549). In my study, I rely on Sara Ahmed's notions of orientation, especially the relationships between bodies and the spaces they inhabit (3-8). Furthermore, Ahmed's view of temporality comes into play, in that it "reminds us that orientations are effects of what we tend toward, where the 'toward' marks a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present" (Ahmed 20). I also look to Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time," particularly "cyclical and monumental" temporalities, to analyze the desert in Andruetto, emphasizing that these spaces do not function in a linear or progressive manner but, rather, in a continual spiral or almost repetitive reconjuring of past-present-future all at once (17). In mathematical terms, I posit that Kristeva's temporalities in Andruetto are asymptotic: they are functions that approach a certain line, but never quite touch them. The notions of "almost" are also evident in Andruetto, specifically in conversations among women that are ambiguous with respect to time and location. By reading the desert space and the protagonists as queer, especially Julia and Julieta in *Lengua madre*, we find an alternative place within Argentine literature and its official history: the desert in Andruetto offers a new *cautiva*, a reworking of Echeverría, as will be seen.

Alternatives in Andruetto draw heavily on the act of defiance and resistance to authority, especially regarding official discourse and hegemony from those in power, such as during the Dirty War. A clear example is the novel *La mujer en cuestión* (2003), since the disappeared protagonist remains unnamed well after her physical description is offered (16). Uncertainty, in the form of interstitial physical and chronological locations, causes readers to pause and question the testimony as, by its very nature, it does not offer a body of evidence. Andruetto explains in an interview with Pubill that multiple possibilities—multiple truths—are part of her motivation in the novel: "En *La mujer en cuestión*, que relata la época de la dictadura, no me interesaba

encontrar *una* memoria, *una* verdad, ni tampoco encontrar respuestas, sobre todo no me interesa encontrar *una* respuesta, porque creo que no la hay. Hay en todo caso muchas respuestas posibles, dadas desde diferentes registros de memoria" ("Interview" 64). In fact, the problematic elements of cases of *desaparecidos* are hallmarks of the Dirty War, as *¡Nunca más!* attests about that historical period. Children separated from their families, especially their mothers—either by outright kidnapping or as babies stolen from detention centers—marks an uncertainty which not only intimates that the children are possibly "illegitimate," but which also "bastardizes" the very notion of parenthood. This lack of assurance in Andruetto tends to conform with late twentieth-century Argentine literature. Fernando Reati's take is that Argentine authors move away from tradition and hegemony toward a more postmodern notion of multiple truths, instead of focusing on a single truth, and that they emphasize questioning over certainty (*Nombrar* 55). Pubill notes the connection between supposed bastardization and stigmas ("Estigmatizaciones" 181).

Clearly, deviation from official positions during the junta was not only dangerous for individuals, but was also perceived by the junta as a menacing act of resistance. In fact, *El proceso* was meant to feminize any defiance within the confines of patriarchy. Marilyn French, in *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*, views this deliberate feminization as a process of "purification" to root out the "Other" or the "feminine" (352-53). While the Dirty War had an impact on the entire nation, women received the brunt of the storm. Thus, writing by Argentine women can be understood as a product of and resistance to the historical context of the military junta (Brignole 279). Also of interest to this study regarding deserts are Uriarte's notes about the military dictatorship's penchant for celebrating the centennial of the *conquista del desierto* as a parallel to their own conquest of supposed subversives during the Dirty War (136).

In Pubill and Brignole's *Miradas desobedientes*, critics have noted Andruetto's penchant for merging national myth with national memory. I propose taking this idea further by reading Julia in *Lengua madre* as a new *cautiva*, reinterpreting Echeverría. The ins and outs of the desert as a geographical and economic space, the queering of the desert, and the interstitial marginalization all come to a head as we view protagonists in their historical context; coupled with alterity, gender, and language, this results in a new amalgamation that is a retelling of the *cautiva*. Susana Rotker's analysis in *Cautivas: olvidos y memoria en la Argentina* impacts our view of Andruetto's protagonists as literary and historical figures in Argentina. Battles in colonial borderlands rival internal conflicts during and after the military junta of the twentieth century. The *cautiva* tradition begins in the wilderness and the desert, functioning within a false dichotomy of nineteenth-century Argentina (as in the civilization vs. barbarism continuum) (23). Rotker indicates that the *cautiva* has crossed to "el otro lado," revealing a sinful border violation (27). She also notes a more contemporary parallel between the Madres de Plaza de Mayo and the *cautiva* that becomes a threatening image of solidarity for the patriarchy and the junta (31-32). Perassi (117) and García (156) highlight the collective struggle in Andruetto, like that of Rotker, in that a cause or search—especially that of identity—is no longer an individualized undertaking but, rather, a coalescence of multitudes. Further layering of the past and the present is seen in *insilio*, per Pubill ("Insilio"143-44), as forced interior exile; *insilio* echoes the *gaucho neto*, who is another victim of the *conquista del desierto* due to the loss of homeland, in a political sense, because the borderlands no longer exist as a refuge (Rotker 62).

Review of Andruetto's Primary Works

For readers unfamiliar with Andruetto, I offer a short summary and contextual placement of the works that we will study in the chapters of this dissertation. Her four primary novels are

somewhat related: *Tama* chronicles a small mining town in the Northwest of Argentina that has suffered a series of earthquakes. *La mujer en cuestión* is written in the form of a report from an investigation that details the search for the protagonist (the actual woman in question), who rarely narrates in the first-person but, rather, appears as the subject of discussion. The novel is considerably related to police tactics during the Dirty War that investigated supposed subversives and subsequent investigations into *desaparecidos* following the return of democracy in the 1990s.

Lengua madre features Julieta as a young adult who searches for her own family's history, piecing together the past via letters and vignettes saved from family members who attempted to communicate clandestinely during the Dirty War. Her mother escapes to Patagonia, where she spends months hiding in a basement while pregnant, later giving birth to Julieta. Contextually, the novel is contemporary as the protagonist attempts to understand the past, particularly the maternal side of her family. *Los manchados* is nearly an extension of *Lengua madre* in that Julieta continues to seek more details about her family's history, this time about her paternal side in the town of Tama.

The novellas *Stefano* (1997) and *Veladuras* are not directly connected to the aforementioned novels, but they do focus on similar themes of family histories, immigration, and identity in Argentina. The short stories and juvenile fiction studied throughout this dissertation include a variety of contexts; some individual stories are practically fairy tales, while others are definitively connected to the Dirty War within a collection of similarly themed texts. The novellas and short stories do not contain near the volume of historical or geopolitical references as the novels, and the majority of this dissertation reflects that divide.

Chapter Summaries

The introduction explains a few of the terms discussed above, such as my reading of the desert as wilderness. The theoretical framework for "place" as Cresswell defines it is analyzed. A point of departure in Echeverría's evocation of the *desierto* in "La cautiva" and a reading of Kristeva's "abject," in relation to borders that define "where am I" instead of "who am I" ("Approaching" 235), are explored.

The first chapter of this study, "The Desert as a Navigable Space in Andruetto," is divided into two main sections. The first subdivision is the physical desert, which includes spaces that serve as both literal and figurative oases. They offer a simultaneous view of beauty and harshness, as well as safe harbor and danger, as will be seen when we examine exile in *Lengua madre*, *Los manchados*, and short stories from *El anillo encantado*. The focus is on the desert and the interior; these are spaces that the protagonists inhabit in the novels and short stories. In addition, the heartland of Argentina is opposed to littoral locales. The contrasts between urban areas (mainly Buenos Aires) and regions that reach the extremes of Argentina (particularly Patagonia) are analyzed for their allowances of space and restrictions therein in the novels *Lengua madre* and *Los manchados*, as well as in *Stefano* and *Veladuras*.

The second portion of this chapter focuses on movement within desert spaces, with special emphasis on character development and change for the protagonists that is marked by crossing a border or frontier. These changes also correspond to external exile and internal exile (or *insilio*); they have implications for family structures and gender within a larger Argentine context before, during, and after the Dirty War. Kristeva's view of the abject and taboo draws our focus toward the act of creating alternatives that challenge traditional cultural norms. These are all viewed through the analysis of *Lengua madre*, *Los manchados*, *La mujer en cuestión*, and

Stefano, as well as of selected short stories from the collections *La mujer vampiro* (2001), *Huellas en la arena* (1997), and *Cacería* (2002). This chapter presents a detailed micro-level view of the desert and spaces in Andruetto with a focus on the protagonists within their domain and how the desert has an impact on representations thereof.

The second chapter of this dissertation, "The Desert in Andruetto: Alternative Spaces and Politics," is a macro-level study with a broader view of what Andruetto implies with respect to protagonists within their geopolitical context, moving from representations at a ground-level in chapter one to a global view. Although this chapter is not divided as such, it could be construed as a study of nineteenth-, twentieth-, and twenty-first-century Argentina with respect to economic development, the building of the nation-state, and personal identity as three integrated approaches. *Lengua madre*, *Tama*, *Los manchados*, *La mujer en cuestión*, *Stefano*, *El país de Juan*, *Veladuras*, and *La niña, el corazón y la casa*, in addition to short stories from the collections *La mujer vampiro, El anillo encantado*, and *Cacería*, are probed using historical contexts, together with their economic and geopolitical ties. I use David Rock's treatise on Argentine history to document these concepts, and I interrogate Sarmiento's polemical "civilización y barbarie." Andruetto turns Sarmiento's racist notion on its head, offering an alternative history of Argentina that is not "whitewashed" (Debra Castillo 48).

This second chapter also focuses on the difference in the government's policy regarding the desert and the lived experiences of the protagonists in Andruetto, as well as the implications for gender. Exile or *insilio*, as clarified by Pubill ("Insilio"), is different for women, and border crossing creates a space like Pratt's "contact zones" that becomes a negotiation of meaning between competing narratives. *Argentinidad* is also a focus in that economic and cultural development strays from the nexus of Buenos Aires. Early twentieth-century nationalism comes

into play, in addition, with the geopolitical desert, especially in the case of Patagonia. History is reconstituted in personal narratives that parallel the creation myths of the Argentine republic, especially in terms of (im)migration. More recent historical events, including the Dirty War, occupy primary spots in relation to detainment and obstetric violence in Andruetto. The chapter closes with a focus on the third-space, no-(wo)man's-land of gaucho narratives that leads to an alternative reading of Argentine literature in Andruetto and the creation of a new *cautiva*, which will be a highlight of the third chapter.

The final chapter, "A Queer Time and Place: The Feminine Desert in Andruetto," complicates notions of exactness, that is, of measurements within the desert. *Lengua madre*, *Tama*, *Los manchados*, *La mujer en cuestión*, *Stefano*, *El país de Juan*, *Veladuras*, and short stories from the collections *El anillo encantado* and *Cacería* are analyzed in this chapter. I explore how time is calculated (or not) in Andruetto's desert and how naming (or not) is used as a weapon of silence and protection within the context of the Dirty War. This is particularly true in *La mujer en cuestión*, since the protagonist has neither a voice nor a name for much of the novel. I explain my use of the term "queer" from a temporal perspective, mainly from Sara Ahmed's understanding of temporality (20) and of Julia Kristeva's "cyclical and monumental" time ("Women's Time" 17), as well as Ahmed's notions of "almost," that temporality drives one toward something, yet they never reach it (20). Kristeva aids our understanding of the alternative measures in place, that is, how women's bodies offer a different method of meaning-making, as we will see with the way pregnancy and birth delineate concepts of eras in *La mujer en cuestión* and *Lengua madre*.

The veracity of claims and truth are under a microscope in a manner that challenges the official discourse from the military junta during the Dirty War. Queering of bodies, time, and

space all connect with linguistic transgressions that break down the past, present, and future in a tripartite system that rejects the official (his)story. Interior spaces, as analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2, provide a location for a new world with respect to time and women; that is to say, women move from the individual to the collective in Andruetto via deserts. The shared experiences in detainment, especially obstetric violence—"the violence exercised by health personnel on the body and reproductive processes of pregnant women, as expressed through dehumanizing treatment, medicalization abuse, and the conversion of natural processes of reproduction into pathological ones" (Herrera Vacaflor 65)—reveal the victims who suffer collectively. There is also long-term fallout from the junta's techniques of torture. Post-traumatic displays of time and uncertainty become the twenty-first-century state of mind in Argentina.

With respect to gender, I rely on Debra Castillo's view of the "*loca*," as she reworks Castro-Klarén's "la loca criolla en el ático." Castillo places her next to the "loca de la Plaza de Mayo," an immediate declaration of an Argentine, feminine space counter to that of the *machista* junta (Castillo 6-7). Written words, especially those by women in Andruetto, take on an important role in confronting the hegemony of the junta. Finally, all these elements of Andruetto's works result in a new, nationalized vision of the *cautiva*, the woman who crosses borders in Pratt's terms and who challenges the singular, patriarchal view of Argentina.

This dissertation's conclusion offers a recapitulation of my findings, as well as a consideration of questions and other issues provoked by my research. For example, does Patagonia proper deserve its own focus when considering the desert in Argentina? Furthermore, the actual letters and autoreferential vignettes in Andruetto deserve discussion as an archive of sorts: they are simultaneously a first-hand account, yet they offer a compromised and unreliable, postmodern reading of history.

CHAPTER 1: THE DESERT AS A NAVIGABLE SPACE IN ANDRUETTO

From El Chaco and the Puno in the north to Patagonia in the extreme southern ends of the Americas, Argentina is surrounded by deserts and, consequently, endless paradoxical frontiers and limits. In this chapter, I will analyze the physical descriptions of the desert as an act of placement, that is, a process of naming tangible landscapes that mirror individual identities and the search for those identities. The paradigm of the desert is not limited to a few of Andruetto's tomes: nearly all of them contain myriad references—some overt and others veiled—to the desert in Argentina. Throughout *Tama*, *La mujer en cuestión*, *Lengua madre*, and *Los manchados*, the desert is both an arid environment and a peripheral wilderness that provides a location for the development of the plot and characters. In particular, the northwestern region is full of mining operations in *Tama*; there are also locations for hiding in southern Patagonia in *Lengua madre* and *Los manchados*, which serve as a marker of personal identity, as various generations explore their familial origins. Multiple times, there is a voice crying out in the wilderness that bears truth; it proves to be a nexus for the plot and characters, as well as for further defining Argentina as a space. The desert provides the setting in which Andruetto's protagonists evolve, as will be seen in the short story "Todo movimiento es cacería," for example, where sojourns into the desert and wilderness become a crucible for new skills and tests for characters. Short stories for children also factor into this chapter with the desert as setting, including "Huellas en la arena," "Había una vez" (a re-telling of Scheherazade and *One Thousand and One Nights*), and "Olor a nardos." Finally, "Misterio en Patagonia" mirrors the

search for family, heritage, and identity in *Lengua madre*, themes that are also found *Los manchados*.

To analyze the protagonists in their environments, I will apply Tim Cresswell's use of "place" in human geography, as it is derived from "space" and "landscape" (8). For our purposes, throughout Andruetto, we will see how the desert is not merely a landscape or a description of a certain climate but, rather, an intentional location with meaning. Cresswell defines place as "how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power" (12). Furthermore, in this chapter, I will first begin to examine the desert in a descriptive manner, deliberately referring to its qualities as landscape. To clarify, when using "desert," I mean both the physical desert in a geographical sense, as well as a *desierto* as "wilderness" or "emptiness"; thus, I agree with Perelmuter's understanding of this notion as a Northern European construct that is not found in the Spanish language otherwise (250). I will take liberty with the term "desert" to include any space beyond civilization, in a sense, nature, wilderness, arid zones, and the interior of the country. I also utilize George Huntston Williams's summary of the desert and its Biblical connections:

> There are three millennia of Biblical and ecclesiastical history behind the impulse to plant a seminary in the barrens, a garden in the wilderness, a paradise in the desert. It is indeed so basic a concept in Christian history that the wilderness motif might be said to exceed in significance the frontier as a category in the interpretation not only of American history but of church history in general; for, like the frontier, the wilderness is not only geographical but psychological. It can be a state of mind as well as a state of nature. It can betoken alternatively either a state of bewilderment or a place of protective refuge and disciplined contemplation, as well as literally the wilds. (3-4)

These dualities resonate in Andruetto, as protagonists seek not only livelihoods, but also to save their own lives in the desert.

What we see in Andruetto, first, is not a limited concept of *desierto,* but one with multiple connotations. Depending on the work, it is life-giving and life-taking or limited and limitless. Intimate portraits of the desert in a spatial sense serve multiple purposes: providing space, serving as a proxy for relationships, and giving an almost anthropomorphized notion of locations. These seemingly contradictory aspects are intentional, but the binary divisions here are not exclusive or exhaustive, as Andruetto provides more doubt than certainty. I also view the desert in Andruetto through the prism of Kristeva's notions of the abject with respect to the border, that is, the destruction of an established order ("Approaching" 235). Her new order materializes especially in Andruetto's penchant for blurring the lines between interior and exterior with respect to the home, as the breakdown thereof deflects the tactics of the junta to sow chaos and maintain control. The wilderness or emptiness is a much broader term, as it encompasses both a figurative heartland and the literal interior of Argentina, including the vision of a land of economic opportunity. Finally, the desert is space for movement and is deliberately chosen for certain purposes, in particular the location of character development and change, as many plot elements surround the crossroads, the countryside, and the margins. My view of the desert in Andruetto is that it is fluid; it can be defined intrinsically, as well as externally. For example, cities and towns often appear as the opposite of the wilderness, while sometimes, paradoxically, these civilizations become an urban jungle, a wilderness in another form that threatens the survival of human beings. Finally, while marginalized as an "Other" elsewhere, especially during the military dictatorship, women are allowed a positive sense of space the desert and the interior throughout Andruetto.

The Desert, the Interior, and Oases

Crossing the Argentine desert in Andruetto—that is, reading the desert—begins figuratively with a map charted by Esteban Echeverría, in particular from an almost Romantic notion of the desert as setting, when it is not seen as a protagonist itself in Andruetto. In fact, multiple examples abound in Andruetto's texts of nature as a splendid place, not unlike the first stanza of "La cautiva" that evokes the "Desierto / incommensurable, abierto / y misterioso" (Echeverría 33). The personified description of the desert in poetic terms places Andruetto's novels within an Argentine setting that is clear to the reader. Also of note is the multi-faceted definition of "desert," at once a dry, harsh land with certain climatic conditions, yet also a wilderness. Another passage from the opening section of "La cautiva" sets this sublime sense of the desert almost as a *mise-en-scène* and seems to be echoed throughout Andruetto; the desert is construed nearly in Romantic terms with grandiose descriptions, and this method is not reserved solely for nature or place settings within arid climates or wilderness areas. Memories and the past are coupled with grandeur, and urban spaces are often littered with oases. First, in *Lengua madre*, the death of Julieta's grandmother is accompanied by an almost idyllic description of the village, yet with turmoil that evokes movement and escape (102). Throughout *Lengua madre*, readers are at times offered a glimpse of a nostalgic place, an interior space in the patio in which there is much life (and, at other times, duress), as seen in a letter from Susana:

> El libro que me mandaste es hermoso, con esos poemas sobre damascos y nísperos. ¿Sabés que cuando tenía dos años mi abuela me llevó al fondo de su casa, me dejó en una canasta y se puso a juntar damascos y yo me metí uno en la boca y casi me ahogo? Menos mal que ella no se asustó y me puso los dedos y el carozo saltó, que si no. . . . Los poemas me llevaron otra vez al patio de mi abuela Rosalía, a ese lugar de encuentro que es el recuerdo. (104)

I want to call attention to the words: "al fondo de su casa," *a priori* a sacred oasis, but later comes the terror that "y yo me metí una en la boca y casi me ahogo." These childhood memories

are idealized, but they contain realistic elements of danger. Again, readers later see a letter from Stefano, Julia's father, that reveals an Eden-like description of the family, that the parents are in their garden alone, trying to eke out an existence: "Hoy salió Lina para Córdoba y mañana llevamos a Pippo al internado, así que nos quedaremos solos los dos, trabajando con los animales como siempre y preparando la quinta para poder comer verdura nuestra en el invierno" (111). Family, home, and existence—despite any difficult circumstances—are on display here.

Images of the family, particularly of food, trigger a memory for Julieta in *Lengua madre* that also presents the inner perfection of the home alongside the nothingness of the countryside in a juxtaposition of harshness (death) and possibility (beauty):

> Su abuela había hecho una rosca bañada en glacé y la colocó sobre el hule a cuadros que cubría la mesa grande. Recuerda la frutera de vidrio tornasolado y las peras que habían juntado las dos del peral que estaba al fondo del patio: los cabos rotos, la piel manchada de las frutas, los gusanos. Recuerda que su abuela le había hecho una trenza, y que estrenaba un vestido rosa, con canesú de nido de abejas. Recuerda que era víspera de Reyes y que su mamá le había mandado una muñeca enorme que reía y que lloraba. (111-12)

Among these images, the interior space of her childhood garden appears as an oasis, one of both memory and possibility, again idealized as if viewing the past through rose-colored glasses.

Further evidence comes in a letter written by Julia's brother that includes an overwhelmingly positive description of nature, where we see the transnational Argentine identity linked to Italy, followed by the praise of everyday scenes that suddenly become idealized through a nostalgic view (122).[3] Even tangible items in the novel evoke bucolic visions; Julieta comes across a small childhood drawing of a horse, and the description of the patio through the window again calls readers to see a space of beauty within harshness, an enclosure of life made

[3] See Adrián Ferrero's interview with Andruetto for a discussion of her family background and Italian heritage.

from nothing: "Mira, por la ventana que da al patio, el manzano todavía pequeño que plantó su madre. Tiene en el borde de la cazuela una circunferencia de piedritas blancas" (169).

This particular combination of beauty and harshness appears in the beginning of *Los manchados* as the description of Tama:[4]

> Martirio Linares llegó desde el Oeste una mañana de comienzos de septiembre, asombrada por el trajinar de gente, desconocido en el sitio donde había vivido hasta entonces, y por los jazmines que empezaban a perfumar el aire. Era por entonces muy joven, pero ya había vivido lo bastante como para escuchar a su corazón y lo que el corazón le dijo la mañana aquella fue que en Tama encontraría su lugar.
>
> Extensos jarillales rodean a Tama y el viento le silba entre los cerros. No siempre ha sido así, pero ahora duerme en un arrullo de bagualas y despierta moviendo sus majadas hasta la mina. Los hombres suben al Nevado antes del alba. Tocan el oro con las manos, el polvo dorado les acaricia la piel, se les pega en los pulmones, les vacía la cabeza, les chupa el corazón, y bajan encogidos, secos como lagartos, a la noche de Tama. Las mujeres visten casi siempre de negro, porque nunca falta un muerto para entregarle el alma. (39)

The town itself seems to rise from the region as a halcyon of sorts, and it takes on a larger-than-life feeling via personification. This contrasts as the benefits of nature (gold) often belie hazards that exploit workers, ending with widows left behind to mourn. There exists a simultaneous positive, yet negative tone to the setting, offering possibility, yet warning of danger. Shortly, we will see this same dichotomy applied to Patagonia and other locations in Argentina.

Further descriptions of locations in the environment provide nearly a mirror image of plotlines, that is, the past is often viewed in a nostalgic manner, with a focus on positive experiences. In *Lengua madre*, a lovely afternoon that Julieta and her grandparents spend during the autumn, while visiting a supposed crazy lady, provides a near pastoral picture of youth (173). What seems to be happening is that whenever Julieta has a memory of her grandparents, it appears with a filter of nostalgia and hazy warmth, whereas memories of her mother are cold and

[4] I will consistently refer to "Tama" as the location in Andruetto's works, whereas the italicized *Tama* indicates the novel.

faint. This seems to harken to a faraway past (or, rather, a more distant generation) than to an immediate past (Julieta's mother), in addition to revealing her relationships with her family. Even other physical descriptions that do not involve memory offer this trope of beautiful spaces, in particular when an asylum is depicted in nearly the same terms as pleasant afternoon outings to a park (174).

Similar to this duality of harshness and beauty, both present at the same time, the desert is the location of miracles, especially in the interior spaces and patios that show life in a barren land. The narrative voice in *Los manchados* explains to Julieta this apparent marvel:

> La casa donde me crié ya no está; la tiraron abajo hace unos años para levantar un supermercado. . . . Una ristra de cuartos en hilera, paredes de adobe y techos de cañas amarillas que daban una galería con jazmines. Tenía un patio enorme aquella casa, con el horno de pan y los piletones y al fondo los mandarinos, las higueras, las damascas [*sic*], los parrones y el curso de agua jabonosa hasta el cantero de las calas. Me parece todavía un milagro que ellas le hubieran podido sacar vida a ese desierto. . . . (94-95)

In an opposing way, the town of Tama seems to be cursed, despite the beauty of its surroundings. While something has risen from the desert, nature reclaims what is there following four fateful earthquakes (42-43). These disasters seem to draw a line in the sand between the ill-fated and previously bucolic, in particular when Julieta hears of how things used to be in the region:

> Sucede que todas nosotras provenimos del Oeste, lo mismo que sus otros parientes. De Esteco, sí, ¿nunca ha escuchado nombrar ese sitio? Es el poblado que supo estar en antes tras el cerro; estaba, como le digo, en antes, en el tiempo en que el Señor de la Peña no nos había castigado, cuando no habían llegado el terremoto ni los tembladerales que vinieron después, ni la lluvia de cenizas que dejó por años la tierra como muerta, ni se habían derrumbado las laderas destos cerros, de tanto que han agujereado la mina para sacarle el oro. (*Los manchados* 77)

The desert in *Los manchados* offers a physical space with unusal occurrences, whether these are earthquakes or floods: "Casi nunca llueve en Tama, pero por aquella época las inundaciones hicieron estropicios y el agua corrió como un río sobre la tierra seca, arrastrando a su paso cuanto

encontraba" (100). The dry and dusty setting of the desert—despite the miracles of interior patios—would welcome rainfall, but in an unfortunate twist, it becomes feast or famine, far too much to handle at one time. Nature has its way and scars the land. While this is not a case of environmental determinism, humans take on the characteristics of the landscape by owing disaster and misfortune to flaws (such as the supposed curse that both families and the town suffer).

Returning to interior visions of the home, we see more extraordinary examples of *nostos*, that is, the inner corridors that offer a respite and an idealized space:

> La casa tenía una ristra de cuartos en hilera, con paredes de adobe y techos de cañas amarillas, que daban a una galería con jazmines. Más allá estaba el patio, con el horno de pan que había hecho el abuelo Timoteo y al fondo los mandarinos, las higueras, las damascas [sic.], el peral, los durazneros, los parrones bajo los que mis manos construían casitas, almacenes, ciudades enteras. Dueña de ese territorio, yo seguía el vuelo de las reinamoras o el trayecto del agua desde los mandarinos hasta la ribera jabonosa de las calas, en el extremo del terreno. Aunque sé que todo era fruto del esfuerzo, me parece todavía un milagro que Martirio le hubiera sacado tanta vida a ese desierto. (*Los manchados* 164)

Despite harsh surroundings, not all is terrible in this community, as the narrative voice sometimes returns to the beauty of the area: "Como le decía, Julieta, cuando yo era chica todo lo que había en este pueblo me gustaba y ahora que me he puesto vieja otra vez me gusta. La luz, los cerros, este aire y estas vides, creo que no podría ya vivir en otra parte, pero cuando era joven no pensaba en otra cosa que en irme" (*Los manchados* 89-90). This echoes Julieta's own search for understanding, as we later will see her personal exile in Germany as she studies literature. The redemptive story of her own family appears as an offshoot of the natural setting of the town. The duality present in the change over time—from wanting to run away to being at peace in a place—gives us a glimpse of the extremes found in the desert. Later, we again see a sensational description of Tama that becomes a place of refuge in old age:

> [H]e sentido por mucho tiempo a la vez rechazo y apego por todo lo que tenía que ver con Tama, pero finalmente la nostalgia pudo más, porque al jubilarme, aunque ya no quedara aquí quién me quisiera, decidí volver y eso hice, como usted puede ver. Nostalgia de las mañanas junto a los cerros, del techo de quincha al despertar, del trajinar en el fondo del patio, entre los mandarinos, las gallinas, los zorzales. . . . El verano aquí es muy lindo, la luz es increíble, distinta de cualquier otra, y siempre hay un desafuero de chicharras, abundancia de higos en las higueras, tunales abarrotados, mujeres haciendo arropes y preparando frutas secas. . . . (*Los manchados* 91)

The theme of nature as a place of beauty, but later of hardship, continues in *Los manchados* with Rosa's sketch of how things were originally and how they later changed, due to locusts that ate everything (156-57). It is not difficult to see the Biblical reference to the plagues of Egypt devouring the land, as well as the floods that demarcate a pre- and post- type of existence, not unlike using "antediluvian" to refer to the time before the Biblical flood. In a sense, the town of Tama matches victims of human rights abuses who were detained before and during the Dirty War; trauma marks lives, and time is measured before and after such painful events. This reliance on nature and non-linear time markers to tell tales and to serve as a demarcation of sorts will be examined in Chapter 3 as it relates to non-linear time and to the queering of time and space.

The setting of Andruetto's novels and short stories are often described in natural terms that shape not only the way the protagonists are depicted, but also readers' perspectives of those central characters. Lovely or bucolic locations are also on display in the short story, "De luz y de sombra," from *El anillo encantado*. In this story, readers view a tale of time and place obscured by darkness and lack of vision, ultimately with the unknown preventing the reunion of the lovers. Like much of Andruetto's work, especially texts set in the desert, the story begins with a playfulness of beauty and setting, and its poetic nature starts with a line repeating the previous line in a palimpsest-like continuation. Particularly of note here is that it is, indeed, a short story,

but its form tends toward poetry in a deliberate repetition of lines that resemble fairy tales or nursery rhymes, where each line of the text begins a new paragraph:

> Había una vez una ciudad.
> Una ciudad antigua y luminosa, poblada de torres y campanarios.
> En aquella ciudad antigua y luminosa poblada de torres y campanarios, había una plaza.
> Una plaza verde salpicada de heliotropos y jazmines. (37)

This pattern of going from a whole to a part, of naming a large piece and moving toward a smaller section, continues when more oases appear practically anywhere, including in urban locations. A description of Munich in *Lengua madre* matches that of urban areas in Argentina: Munich's contradictory oases are renowned for their manicured and manufactured nature, as opposed to the wilds of Argentina's nature:

> Cuando tenía veintiún años, inició un viaje del que no ha regresado. Una huida. Poco importa que el destino haya sido Munich, sus montañas de cuento y sus bosquecitos artificiales con ardillas, hurones y corzuelas. Desde la edad moderna, ésa es una ciudad rica, con iglesias, mansiones señoriales y un paisaje de postal, tan cuidado que deja ver en su belleza perfecta la mentira. (56)

In this city—not unlike those of Argentina—nature provides an oasis from the mundane. It does so in an attempt to recover that which is lost in the move from wild to domestic, from exterior to interior, and within the scope of the novel, from access to self and national identity within Argentina to exile and identification as Other in Germany.

Just as we have seen the seemingly Romantic descriptions of the desert in Argentina, Julieta's living situation in Germany is described in almost idyllic terms, yet they soon reveal the negative realities associated with exile: "Desde la ventana de la habitación podía ver el lago helado, más allá un castillo, coto de caza de los reyes de Baviera . . . y mirlos sobrevolando los techos de pizarra" (68-69). This clearly defined location literally mentions the fatherland of Germanness, but this contrasts with further conversations and descriptions of those Argentines

and other exiles living in Germany, for whom life is not an Alpine permanence, but rather, a nomadic encampment:

> Los dos argentinos, la mujer sobre todo, tenían una profunda tristeza, como un no ser de ninguna parte, un haber perdido el suelo bajo los pies. . . . Los amigos argentinos de la profesora no tenían hijos (*los extranjeros no tenemos hijos, es una cosa del alma*, comentó la mujer, se vive *siempre de paso, como en un campamento*). . . . (69)

The lack of lineage demonstrates a lack of roots, that is, of having no connection to a particular place, aligning with Kristeva's view of the abjection of the self when the "impossible constitutes its very being"—that it is defined not by what it is but, rather, by what it is not or what it no longer is (232). In other words, belonging to and participating in a culture at large—marriage, children, economic activity—is not permissible to these Argentines in their situation in Germany. There is a clear distinction with one's identity not as oneself, but as an outlier of what surrounds them, that is, Bavaria around them underlines their otherness. Since Bavaria is the heartland of German identity, this also underscores the lack of a father (or mother)-land for these Argentines when compared to the nationals of this host-country.

In this case, Julieta, along with the other Argentines, embodies the complications of exile when viewed in Kristeva's terms in that she is simultaneously Other, yet remains in a state of "not-being" as opposed to being ("Approaching" 235). She is defined by the loss of her original essence and moves into an identity not characterized by the self's existence, but by its location—per Kristeva, it has to do with "place: '*Where* am I?' instead of '*Who* am I?'" (235). Brignole cites a duality in Julieta's exile in Europe that it is voluntary and involuntary (272-73). This becomes possible through the spaces that Julieta creates; they are not an anthropomorphized oasis changing into a mirror for self-examination, but, rather, they become a conduit that brings forth memories of former spaces and times in which identity was certain (as in her childhood in

Argentina), while she is confronted with an otherness that is underlined by the gardens in Bavaria.

This marks a shift in our view of spaces in Andruetto: they are not merely figurative locations, but also verisimilar, physical realities for the characters. In fact, it is often through sensory perception that Andruetto captures the desert. In some letters in *Lengua madre*, the bitter cold of the desert—a hallmark of the southern reaches of South America—is a focal point of the one-way conversation: "Parlando d'altro, cómo te trata el frío, ¿es como aquí o más? Nosotros nos estamos acostumbrando de a poco, todos los días aumentan las heladas y es cada vez más lindo quedarse a dormir por la mañana. ¿Tenés estufa? Decinos, porque podríamos mandarte la eléctrica ahora que hemos hecho la conexión de gas" (24). This physical description of the cold and the implication that winter is the time this letter was written aligns with Chapter 3 as another example of nature providing the framework for human history and records.

Beyond its use in Andruetto's novels, the desert looms as a central figure of space and location in Andruetto's short story, "Olor a nardos," from *El anillo encantado*. From the beginning of the story, the context includes distant civilizations and historical periods pertaining to the desert: "En los tiempos en que Almanzor dominaba el califato de Bagdad, los mongoles bajaron del Turquestán y asentaron en aquella ciudad de maravillas la guardia personal de los sultanes" (45). Otmán I conquers this state and imprisons the princess Halima, whose description matches that of other feminine persons and locations in Andruetto: "La princesa se llamaba Halima. / Tenía la piel suave. / Y el pelo negro. / Y olía a nardos" (45). Images of an attractive East wrapped in mystery abound in the tale (not unlike those of Scheherazade), including references to the Ottoman Empire, Zagros (in Persia), and Baghdad, all desert locations (45-51). These references to the East evoke Edward Said's notions of orientalism, particularly with

respect to supposed European hegemony and superiority that downplays or views the East as exotic or Other (7). I contend that Andruetto deliberately uses the desert as a setting to draw a parallel between colonial and post-colonial Argentina, reminiscent of Sarmiento, and that one can compare Argentina to Said's Orient. The geopolitical and economic implications of colonization and globalization will be discussed in Chapter 2.

Returning to an exotic east in "Olor a nardos," we must note that Almanzor offers a handsome reward, plus the hand of his daughter in marriage, to the person who can save her from prison. The tower in the story merits mention as it underscores the "más allá" seen in other places of Andruetto (in particular, the description of Patagonia as a frontier of limitless possibility that will be discussed shortly). The form of the text resembles poetry in the constant breaking of paragraphs that repeat previous phrases, as was shown already in "De luz y de sombra":

> Aquella torre estaba más allá de las tierras verdes.
> Más allá de las cadenas montañosas del Zagros.
> Más allá de ese desierto cuya arena tiene el color de la manteca.
> Más allá.
> Más allá del río de café que muere entre las dunas.
> Más allá de los palmares.
> Más allá de los pueblos que migran de un sitio a otro en busca de alimento.
> Más allá. (46)

The promises of riches for rescuing Halima extend far and wide, and many potential heroes attempt to rescue her in vain; some die in the process, with others being sidetracked and settling where they find themselves (47-48). This latter situation, in addition to the notion of untold promise in the desert, also seems to correspond to patterns of economic development in Argentina (discussed in Chapter 2), as well as to family history in *Stefano*, *Tama*, and *Los manchados* in which Ema, Julia, and Julieta's family stories are explained and uncovered through letters and conversations/investigations.

The desert in Andruetto serves as a proxy for relationships between characters. In *Lengua madre*, the closeness between mother and daughter approximates an intimate portrait of the landscape with an almost pastoral quality that we have already seen: “Se despierta temprano en la mañana y sale al pequeño jardín de su madre, para escuchar un concierto de pajaritos patagónicos. Son mañanas heladas y claras, que se parecen a las de un tiempo de niña en su pueblo: pura contemplación de las cosas elementales, sencillas. Aunque hacia las bardas siempre hay nubarrones negros” (51). A return to the garden, to the oasis in the desert, offers a safe space for thinking and being both on a national and geopolitical scale as well as on a personal level, while danger seems to loom in the distance.

While the desert can be viewed as wilderness, it also can be represented as nothingness. The desert of Patagonia is described as the latter while Julieta visits Trelew: “Después se alejó un par de kilómetros hacia la meseta, hacia la nada” (91). This region is bisected by a fertile valley, fed by Andean rivers that rise from glacial lakes, but the nothingness of the desert is nearly all encompassing. Reaching in, exploring inside is a recurrent theme in the works of Andruetto, and, again, readers are treated to a nearly Romantic description of the environment where that search must take place: “Por la noche, la luna como un melón en el cielo, increíble de amarilla, reflejándose sobre la meseta. La miró largo tiempo, mientras tomaba un café junto a la ventana. Después volvió a la mesa del comedor, donde ha colocado la caja. Pasó rápidamente varias cartas que fue sacando de una bolsa” (39). The *meseta* in question surrounds Trelew, situated in Chubut province, on the Atlantic side of Patagonia. This beautiful description allows readers to see the nostalgic and Eden-like setting for Julia’s actions: reading the letters and reconnecting with her mother.

Moving on from ideas of what the desert is and how it is described, we now will examine how it is used in Andruetto as a stand-in for the heartland of present-day Argentina, especially when it is compared to the urbanized periphery along the littoral. The geographical desert and interior spaces in Andruetto can be juxtaposed to the more confining spaces of urban locales. In *Lengua madre*, for example, Julieta's first visit to Buenos Aires with her grandfather implies a sweeping contradiction between the empty interior and the city: "Y vio la Plaza de Mayo, el Obelisco, la Avenida 9 de Julio, impresionada por la gente, los autos, el ancho de las calles, las palomas, ella que llegaba desde un pueblo pequeño, en la llanura" (35). Unlike the nothingness of locations without names (i.e., a random patio or an interior courtyard in the *llanura*), here the locations are presented as "places" in Cesswell's terms, with clear cultural and political significance; Julieta travels to the seat of power of the Argentine presidency at the Plaza de Mayo. This Plaza is simultaneously the location where power was reclaimed by the populace, such as during the protests by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, who demanded an acknowledgement of human rights violations by the junta in the case of the *desaparecidos*. Julieta also travels along *Avenida 9 de Julio*, often claimed to be the widest in the world, a symbol of the grandeur and elegance of a cosmopolitan capital that is juxtaposed to the small town she calls home. These locations are substantial in and of themselves, but coupled here with Julieta, we see a young girl in search of herself as she passes by places with significant national meaning. Returning to the particular images of what is seen in these urban settings, Julieta later remembers this day as she flies home after her mother's death: she is reminded of the pigeons, a bench in a plaza, and the avenues coursing through the city (36). Just as other locations have correlated to positive memories, the city here does not equal the opposite of a lush landscape; it is indeed full of life.

The above description of Buenos Aires tends to match that of the desert. It consists of life as seen from an observation point, such as in travel-writing, often with glass in between, as if it were a cage or tank for scientific study:

> Más tarde pasa las horas deambulando, buscándose, buscando qué, haciendo nada, por calles de Buenos Aires. Luego el traslado a Aeroparque: edificios, árboles, gente, tiempo para mirar por la ventanilla del taxi, sin esperanza de conocer a nadie. Piensa que el mundo es insondable, no entiende nada, sin embargo tiene una certeza: está pisando el país donde nació. (48)

Before the reader knows Julieta's final destination, an intermediary one is revealed, the Aeroparque, which is the secondary airport of Buenos Aires that links to national destinations, in the interior of the country. Sure enough, the next paragraph explicitly mentions "[l]a llegada a Trelew" (49). The juxtaposition, yet apparent contradiction, could not be clearer: in order to arrive at her destination—her mother, her truth—she must travel to the interior, into Patagonia. The process of traversing the city in the cited passage, with its "edificios, árboles, gente," happens in a paradoxical immersion/separation as she peers at them through "la ventanilla del taxi" with the sense of knowing nothing, a hallmark of the return from exile for the marginalized. At the same time, this journey inward affirms "una certeza: está pisando el país donde nació." Again, the dual comparison of the city, Buenos Aires, to the interior of the country demonstrates the two supposed faces of the nation: one can be present within one realm, while still being absent; nevertheless, one must venture into the other in order to make meaning (such as in Cresswell's concept of place). Further commentary on the city appears in a letter sent by Susana in *Lengua madre*, revealing the city as an urban desert: "*Esta ciudad es muy dura y no hay lugares para descansar el fin de semana, solo autos y ruidos. Pero sigo con mis planes de irme a vivir al campo (después del 2000…)*" (74). In this case, the countryside, however, is the antidote, the dreamland of "más allá" that beckons the weary soul.

A complicating factor in this seemingly simplistic dichotomy is that even within the fields and wide-open spaces of the *llanura*, there are differences. Civilized agriculture contrasts with orderly, small towns, and drastically so with wild, windswept deserts (wildernesses):

> Si volviera a su pueblo en la llanura y viera otra vez los silos, la sede del Club Atlético . . . si pasara por la ruta y viera, una vez más, hacia la izquierda el cementerio donde están los restos de sus abuelos y después, a la derecha, una vez más la portada del Asilo, la invadirían los recuerdos más remotos, la vida de cuando era chica, la vida de una chica que espera a su madre. (53-54)

In this passage, the elements of patriarchy and a nation-state are clear with respect to the Club Atlético, and contrast with the enigmatic feminine of Julieta. The latter resembles Kristeva's notions of time, in that "female subjectivity" does not align with constructs of time that mirror masculine or patriarchal cultures, such as "time as departure, progression, and arrival—in other words, the time of history" ("Women's Time" 17). The quote from *Lengua madre* references organized agriculture, cemeteries (religion), and athletic clubs, compared to the time-crunch of past/present and the flood of memories, particularly those associated with Julieta's search for her mother.

From nearly the beginning of *Lengua madre*, the interior of Argentina—the wilderness—takes center stage not only as the primary location, but also as the focus of all movement: "En algún momento, hace muchos años, antes que ella naciera, su madre había viajado de incógnito *al sur*, en las peores épocas de su país, al borde de un golpe de Estado y en la inminencia de una dictadura" (16; my emphasis). This movement to the south is not coincidental; it underscores notions of Patagonia as a potentially limitless frontier, the place of endless possibility. Following an almost Biblical sojourn into the desert (not unlike the Hebrew people escaping famine and seeking refuge or Mary and Joseph fleeing turmoil with the infant Christ child), Julieta's mother casts her lot to the fortunes of the road that leads south.

Another letter from the grandmother reveals that the south equals possibility, that even in duress, there is another space beyond the limit: "¿querés ir más al sur? encantada" (55). A resigned tone accompanies this question, stating that "sos dueña de tu vida" and later, the other side of the coin: "¿querés volver? encantada" (55). A simple view notes that there are two options: return home or continue toward the frontier, into the desert. On a national level, this echoes Argentine history—*la conquista del desierto*, which will be further discussed in Chapter 2; this is not unlike the North American counterpart of westward expansion. This *conquista* appears as a direct contrast to the mythos of the construction of Argentina, particularly in that the gauchos, celebrated as national icons, had previously been discriminated against and expelled. Rock describes this change as an advent of agricultural development: "Sheep, agriculture, and *gringos* transformed society in the pampas. Here, as in early modern England, where 'the sheep ate the men,' the spread of sheep farming drove the free *gauchos* to the far periphery" (142). The Other was propelled to the outside, toward a frontier of sorts.

As throughout much of Andruetto, Claudia García notes that the "pendular" movement of Stefano and de Rosa, protagonists and immigrants in *Stefano* and *Veladuras*, is not in the linear sense of migrations, but a to-and-fro, mirroring real-life (García 146, 151). Stefano and de Rosa, as well as Julia in *Lengua madre*, the titular subject of *La mujer en cuestión*, and Juan in *El país de Juan*, are outsiders like the gauchos referred to in Rock, pushed to the edges of the desert as they search for survival (seeking economic opportunities in the case of the men, while the women are searching for sanctuary).

Locations in Patagonia may be scrutinized by the characters, not merely as space, but because the uncommon and unexpected can happen: "Recién llego del criadero y encuentro tirada esta carta con un remitente extraño: 'una amiga de Comodoro Rivadavia.' Me parece raro

que haya llegado una carta desde Comodoro, de todas maneras te la mando" (78). Comodoro Rivadavia is an oil town, mushrooming not long after the turn of the twentieth century; it is also the largest city in Chubut province, the same province where Trelew is found, although the distance between them spans nearly 400 km. The mentioning of Comodoro Rivadavia itself would not raise alarms normally, but anything out of the ordinary at this time would be a concern, due to the Dirty War. During the military dictatorship, surveillance, suspicion, and the state were omnipresent: "espero que no sea un chiste ni nada que te traiga problemas, porque con las cosas como están, ya veo que hay que aprender a moverse con pies de plomo" (78). In this case, the south is not only a land of all positive possibilities, but it is also a dangerous *terra incognita*. This also potentially matches Andruetto's own personal history of receiving letters via truck drivers for fear that fictitious addresses would be substituted, should one send mail via the postal system domestically within Argentina ("Interview" 69).

Patterns of early European settlements in Argentina again affirm this notion of the interior—the desert—as a destination that is accompanied by danger. Rock states that the origins of life in the interior are hazardous: "The burgeoning pampas' ranching economy spurred a demographic movement from the city into the countryside. The first rural settlers were few in number, partly because of the Indians and because the early estancias needed little labor. In the early years life on the cattle frontier was isolated, primitive, and risky" (47). This trend continues in Andruetto, especially in *Lengua madre*, as we see a comparison of two options: as was mentioned previously, the return home to family (to a safe, yet boring and entrapping place) or to remain at large in a dangerous, but free space. The comparison of Argentina in the Pampas and Argentina in Patagonia cannot be clearer than in the section in which desires and fit are juxtaposed:

> A mí siempre me pareció que lo mejor era que ella volviera a Aldao, que estuvieran cerca las dos, que fueran reencontrándose de a poco, se lo dije, que me parecía la única forma, pero eso es algo que ella nunca terminó de aceptar, odiaba Aldao, la gente, la incomprensión de todos, odiaba la sola idea de volver a vivir en la casa . . . lo que quería era traerte a Trelew, pero a tu abuela no le gustaba mucho la idea, a ninguno de los dos los convencía, a tu abuelo tampoco, estuvieron un tiempo en que sí, en que no, en que había que esperar que te hicieras un poco a la idea, y el tiempo fue pasando. . . . (*Lengua madre* 94)

In some ways, going home to be with family would be the sensible choice, but to return from exile is not always easy, and in this case, the exile is internal (*insilio*). Again, these comparisons of different interior portions of Argentina—the Pampas vs. Patagonia—stand in contrast to each other as great distances that are not easily overcome. The location of Julieta's birth merits mention for its relation to the surrounding region, firmly placed in Chubut, as she states in her conversation with José Guerrero, "Mi hermano murió hace dos años y dos meses, pero mi cuñada vive en Gaiman" (*Lengua madre* 132).

The south is not just a geographical place, but also a figurative location. A frantic letter to Julia, obviously showcasing the turmoil of the Dirty War, instructs her to avoid returning home and is quite explicit in its geographic direction:

> Julia, te pido un poco de cordura, **por favor no te vuelvas**, haceme caso, no podemos tenerte acá, es peligroso, seguro que alguno se enteraría. Después hablamos, pero TENÉS QUE QUEDARTE AHÍ EN TRELEW, más al sur si querés, pero aquí JAMÁS, JAMÁS, anoche me enteré de cosas que te harían correr peligros que ni te imaginás. Te lo dice quien más te quiere en el mundo. (112-13)

The directive to remain in Trelew, or "más al sur si querés," matches the image of Patagonia as the limitless land of possibilities, of exile from that which constitutes "Argentina." In this sense, geopolitically, Julia's case is indeed *insilio*, but practically, it might as well be another world.[5] Thus, Julia cannot be "at home" with her family and share in her *argentinidad*. That right is

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[5] See Pubill's "Insilio y representación de la memoria en *Lengua madre* de María Teresa Andruetto," as well as the interview with María Teresa Andruetto (65) for further discussion of *insilio*.

forfeited, not unlike for so many others who experience exile; nonetheless, she is still within the borders of her own country.

Often in Andruetto, the interior means both inside and outside, that is, it becomes a metaphor for Argentina, as well as for the periphery. Textual subtleties reveal strong connections to actual locations. In a few instances, we see locales that intimate or suggest storylines throughout the novels, for example, in *Lengua madre*: "Pippo estuvo el fin de semana en carpa en las sierras, vino cansado, no quiere saber más nada de 'montañas, sol y río'. Bueno, contestame (si podés), si no te escribo de nuevo el otro sábado. Con ésta va una carta que te llegó desde Salta, sin remitente" (34-35). The sierras refer to the region near Córdoba, the interior of Argentina. And clearly, without saying what or why, the letter arriving from Salta could be from family or from Julieta's father (in addition to potentially from investigators searching for subversives). The location is the giveaway: the northwest of Argentina. The letter's post-script mentions pregnancy, questions whether Nicolás could have entered the basement, and implies that Pippo will pray for her at a religious landmark: "Aunque tu padre dice que son estupideces, le dije a Pippo que si va a la Difunta Correa, rece por vos, por todos nosotros, no se olviden de rezar. A ver si salimos adelante" (35). The reference to "Difunta Correa" could not be clearer as a celebrated, quasi-saint in the interior of Argentina, directly related to the popular legend and folklore of a woman who attempts to reach her dying husband, ultimately losing her life in a brave journey across the desert while she miraculously saves her child in the process. (This also recalls elements of "La cautiva" that will be further discussed in Chapter 3.)

Along these same lines, readers learn in *Los manchados* that Julieta's paternal grandmother lives on the periphery, along the road to the mines: "La madre de su papá todavía vive, niña Julieta, es la mujer de esa casa llena de perros que está subiendo el cerro, como quien

va para la mina abandonada" (63). Not uncommon during times of distress in Argentine history, we also see protagonists hiding themselves in the interior, their whereabouts unknown and those left behind questioning the veracity of reports or rumors:

> Cuando tu papá se fue de aquí, alguien nos dijo que se había metido en líos y tiempo después Clivia recibió unas llamadas, un hombre hablaba de parte de él, pedía que lo ayudáramos . . . decía que Nicolás estaba refugiado en una casa y que necesitaba contactarse con alguien de la familia, pero todo era tan arrevesado que ni Clivia ni yo estuvimos seguras de que fuera cierto. (*Los manchados* 146)

Rumors of whereabouts, especially in *La mujer en cuestión*, are central to places and locations in Andruetto; they stem from the precarious situation that the protagonists would face during the Dirty War, evading potential accusations of being subversives.

Often, there seem to be contradictions. In *Lengua madre*, Julia's mother writes that the distance through the desert is at once the preferred location, due to the protection from political turmoil that it offers to those far away, while later, she criticizes the distance as the reason they have not been reunited: "*Es verdad que primero fue así como decís, que te pedí que te quedaras allá o que te fueras más al sur porque teníamos miedo, un miedo pánico de que aquí te pasara algo*" (148). Again, the indication of "más al sur" underlines the desert as the limitless frontier into which one can escape further. Julia's mother shifts gears and laments the actual distance that, in essence, has provided salvation: "*Me reprochás que no fuimos a verte, que muchas veces te prometimos ir y que siempre aparecía alguna cosa y qué sé yo qué más, pero ¿te parece que se pueden hacer mil quinientos kilómetros cuando a uno se le antoja? ¡Te vas a la otra punta del mapa y después somos nosotros los culpables!*" (149). As an echo of the beauty and harsh reality found in descriptions of the desert, the removal from danger into the desert simultaneously protects families, but also alienates them.

Distances and the enormity of the country are echoed in the feelings of separation between the protagonists. The periphery even appears in her family's history: Julieta's father wanted to call her "Julieta," while the name itself is a derivation of her mother's name, coupled with her grandparents' decision to give her the surname of her mother because her father had already supposedly fled to Stockholm. A passage relating to this naming of Julieta provides a strange emphasis on location, in particular, the desert south: "De manera que ella se llama Julieta Pronello y esta mañana, en Patagonia, Julieta Pronello—que no ha regresado a Aldao desde que enterraron a su abuela—está invadida por recuerdos de su pueblo" (*Lengua madre* 175). Curiously, Patagonia and her town are mentioned, placing her at once in both locales—in the desert and in the pampa. This connection to her mother is continued by comparing and contrasting Patagonia and Munich (where Julieta has been studying):

> Aquí, donde lee estas cartas, no es su casa ni es su pueblo. Su pueblo está *allá*. *Aquí* es la casa y el pueblo de su madre, el que su madre eligió, como ella ha elegido Munich, para construir su vida: un pueblo en Patagonia, una casa pequeña llena de libros y testimonios que el discurrir de los días va dejando en una persona, constancias de lo que ella no vio, de lo que no le fue dado. . . . (176)

Obviously, both regions are found in the south and exist as the frontier of their respective countries. They are the source of legends and have nation-building reputations as the *hinterland* (if one were to compare classic German folk myths and Argentina's *conquista del desierto* controversy).

Literal passage into the interior complements the figurative distance of Julieta's separation from her mother and the search for her personal truth. In fact, this notion is explored in depth:

> Punctum/mancha. Su madre es como una mancha que no alcanza a tocar: estira el brazo en la oscuridad y el brazo sigue inmóvil. Ella es esta que no puede alcanzar a su madre. Para alcanzarla debería recorrer la mitad del espacio que las separa, pero su madre ya no vive para avanzar la otra mitad.

> Ahora está—paradoja de Zenón—frente a su tumba: cuatro palmos de tierra las separan, pero su madre está más lejos que aquellos que están lejos, más lejos que los que no estuvieron nunca, no la puede alcanzar. Para alcanzarla debe saltar un muro, borrar el tiempo, romper el mármol. Lava el jarrón, pone en él las flores, crisantemos blancos, pasa un trapo húmedo sobre la piedra. Y mientras hace todo esto, su madre se aleja cada vez más.
>
> Una piedra las separa. El amor es húmedo, moja, pero es insensible la piedra. Está ocupada en la paradoja de saberla junto a ella sin tenerla nunca. (49-50)

The notion of "crossing the bar," tearing the curtain that separates this life from the next meets the impossibility of the enclosed space. She literally would have to enter the interior of the tomb in order to reach her mother, but time and death create an impenetrable barrier.

The Desert and Movement

Now that we have established the interior and the desert as significant portions of Andruetto's texts, it is paramount that we investigate what happens in those spaces, that is, the idea that the latter are not simply significant in and of themselves but, rather, exist for certain purposes. The interior spaces in Andruetto are not always the destination; sometimes, they are the point of departure. Julieta's father in *Lengua madre*, for example, reveals that exile, at times, emerges from a space of *nostos*, from the center of family life and the home:

> Los que son culpables de expulsar nunca podrán imaginarse cómo es ser expulsado de un país. Nadie puede figurarse esa experiencia vital, ni lo que eso deja en los que se quedan. De la noche a la mañana una persona es despojada de todo: *de su casa, de la familia, de los amigos, de lo que adquirió en toda una vida o en varias generaciones, del idioma por sobre todo.* De los hijos, en caso de que existan. Su padre fue despojado de todo eso. (67; my emphasis)

Furthermore, this notion of leaving interior spaces is a rebellious or queer manifestation of the desert as an alternative space, as will be probed in Chapter 3.

In many incidents, the action—or significant events—tends to happen at a crossroads, which is not unusual in literature, and certainly not uncommon in Andruetto's novels and short stories. In *Lengua madre*, in a letter from Julia's mother, we see a moment of duress stemming

from the constant inquisitiveness and suspicion of the population, in general, come to a culmination at a crossroads:

> Ahora te cuento lo que le pasó a Pippo el viernes pasado a la noche, hizo dedo y lo alzó un camionero, pero a él solo, no quiso alzar a otros chicos, y se lo vino charlando, era un trolo, dice que le cambiaba conversación pero el tipo seguía con su tema, él le pidió que lo bajara en el cruce, le dijo que no se sentía bien, que iba a dormir a lo de una tía y se vino en ómnibus. (79)

As almost a premonition of what readers learn in *Los manchados*, the crossroads has been a dangerous spot, the site of the murder of the Monseñor (123-24).

Furthermore, Andruetto includes the crossroads and the byways as spaces of danger and mystery, as seen in the short story, "Un viaje en taxi," as a journey down a gravel road without the use of headlights and into the darkness. The protagonist is met by a devilish figure exclaiming, "cortame las uñas" (*La mujer vampiro* 18, 20). The wayside spaces, on the periphery, are ironically front and center in the short story, "Los sueños de José": a trip to a *curandero* involves traveling down a dirt road to another town, that is, entering the interior spaces and a void in order to be transformed by the local spiritual healer, who functions outside the bounds of what is considered acceptable by national cultural norms and standards (*La mujer vampiro* 28). The entire storyline of the tale "La mujer vampiro" recalls a family wandering from village to village for 80 years following a curse, throughout the wilderness. Nearly identical to "La mujer vampiro" is the curse of Tama in *Los manchados*. Again, it happens on the periphery, while workers head out into the desert where they face exploitation:

> Dicen que han visto en el boquete del cerro que está pasando La Puntilla, como quien va a la mina por el camino viejo, a los culpables de que a Tama la hayan maldecido. Que han dejado sus risas grabadas en la ebonita del cerro y que si uno ingresa a esos senderos, puede escuchar las risas de la Salamanca, porque a ese hoyo del diablo fueron invitados mister Lilican con el látigo y las botas, el Comandante con sus mujeres, la del ojo aguado y la del perro con el animal a cuestas, el dueño del bar El Maharajá, lleno de andrajos como cuando era un hombre del pueblo y no había recibido los halagos del dinero, y el Doctor con su bastón y su monóculo. (138)

The periphery—the wilderness and the desert—is the site of exploitation, which we will also note later in the case of women who are victims of sexual and obstetric violence.

Continuing the motif of a cursed family in the short stories, *Los manchados*, in particular, reveals Julieta's father as an aimless rolling stone:

> Una vez alguien, ya no recuerdo quién, me dijo que Nicolás siguió teniendo esos arranques de cuando era jovencito, que cualquier cosa que no le gustaba amenazaba con irse, y que así siguió en la vida, de un lado para el otro. . . . No sé si será así pero lo que es acá, se fue desde la casa de los padres a una sacristía, de una sacristía a un hospedaje y de un pueblo a otro pueblo, para el Norte y para el Sur. . . . Sin rumbo ni cordura, ¡y así habrá seguido hasta llegar a Suecia! (151)

The apple, indeed, does not fall far from the tree, as readers will recall Julieta's life leaving Argentina for Germany with an interest in finding herself via her studies. These selected examples of protagonists—Julia and Julieta in *Lengua madre*, Julieta and Nicolás in *Los manchados*—continually moving, echo Argentine history with the near constant arrival of immigrants, first from European shores, and later internally within Argentina to the cities (as well as from other regions of Latin America). Claudia García cites this movement as pendular, with a coming and going, as opposed to linear or one-way (151), and I contend that it is found in nearly all of Andruetto; this will be explored further in Chapter 2 as it relates to its geopolitical and economic ties.

In these novels, protagonists often face changes or a flood of memories while entering the natural world. For example, nature is a harbinger of memory in *Lengua madre*, as we see Julieta in Munich; her walk in the park becomes a flashback to her childhood in Argentina:

> Por la mañana desayuno, tomo fotos y después una caminata por un parque donde retozaban ardillas, hurones, y revoloteaban los pájaros. Ahí se despidieron. Ellos a correr por el bosquecito, ella hasta el Botanischer Garten a conocer un poco.
>
> Por el camino, de regreso al Schloss, vio a un grupo de hombres y mujeres que jugaban un juego parecido a las bochas, y se acordó de su abuelo jugando los domingos con amigos, con vecinos, en la cancha enarenada, con alpargatas todos, con pantalón y camisa

> blancos todos, juego de bochas sobre el hielo, sobre el lago helado. Estaban muy abrigados, llevaban gorros de piel y reían toscamente, ingenuamente le parece ahora que recuerda los juegos de bochas en el pueblo, a su abuelo sobre la pista de arena, vestido con ropa suelta, mirando hacia un punto imposible, tirando el bochín, oscuro, bordó. (70)

Even beyond Andruetto's novels, her short stories are rife with passages of nature telling tales and revealing things which are otherwise to remain secret. In "El secreto de Amarú," a young child witnesses a murder and attempts to keep this knowledge hidden, but then nature betrays the child's intention and tells the secret, revealing the truth in a way that suggests that humans are incapable of guarding everything; eventually, the truth will come out (*Huellas en la arena*).

Similar to the anthropomorphizing of the desert and other locations previously mentioned, a day in Córdoba to visit a sick aunt provides a splendid take on human behavior in terms of nature: "*Fuimos a la mañana los tres (¡tu hija se portó que es un sol!, se quedó calladita, con un libro de cuentos—El León Feliz—que le regaló Lina, en la sala de espera), después la llevamos un rato al parque y volvimos a casa a la noche*" (*Lengua madre* 119). Later in *Lengua madre*, Julieta's day trip to Rawson to the sea with her gentleman companion, Diego, allows a glimpse of a location matching her internal monologue. As they travel to the beach, we see Julieta thinking in terms of the voyage, of driving in a vehicle (her mother's car). Her internal monologue speeds up and slows down in the actual act of driving, while thinking of the care one takes to avoid death, specifically that the "*Oscura voluntad*" prohibits one from choosing life, but rather, life chooses him or her in a fatalistic way (123). However, she attempts to "mirar hacia delante, pero también sabe que es necesario mirar hacia atrás. . . . Es lo que ha intentado hacer en estos días: ir hacia delante, sin dejar de mirar hacia atrás" (123). This duality of the road, that cars are moving in opposite, yet parallel directions, matches our notion of the interior, that one travels into the interior spaces of Argentina to understand what Argentina is. Further locations mentioned in this portion of the novel include Gaiman, a community renowned

for its Welsh heritage and teahouses that populates a ribbon of green along the Chubut River within the barren *meseta* (125).

Furthermore, a conversation that Julieta remembers (and later questions) shows again that action happens in the country, in the interior:

> Fue en la casa en Aldao . . . su madre trajo algo que le había sucedido o que había leído en alguna parte, no sabe ahora en relación a qué su madre había llevado ese relato hasta la mesa donde estaban aquella noche: *Escuché unos disparos y corrí por el campo hasta que llegué a una casa y entré, así nomás, sin golpear las manos, sin llamar . . .* y después, otra frase en la memoria: *Me dieron un batón y unas chinelas, pusieron en la mesa un plato de sopa y me dijeron "no te asustés, si vienen y preguntan, les decimos que sos de la familia"*. (128-29)

Again, salvation is found in the countryside, and the only way to obtain safety is to flee and enter the void, as we will see in Chapter 2 regarding Julia's escape into the southern desert. At the same time, however, security is a fleeting concept in the dangerous no-(wo)man's-land of the interior, as rumor and uncertainty abound, due to the realities of the coming military junta.

In the years of a proxy war leading up to the Dirty War, rumor and dis-ease abound throughout Argentina, and the example cited above of hospitality in the face of hostility underlines the danger and risk taken by families to harbor a supposed fugitive (and what we saw earlier from the family who did not necessarily believe the story about the need for refuge).[6] Battlelines were not clearly demarcated or binary in the sense of one side versus another, and this multi-sided political and extra-judicial conflict left all segments of the population vulnerable and ultimately victims. Andruetto mentions this trope in the interview with Pubill, that the entire country entered into exile, internal exile, or *insilio* of sorts, as they had to move into a state of not living their prior lives to evade death. In essence, it was an invisible imprisonment ("Interview" 66). Furthermore, Andruetto refers to the time that she actually spent in limbo in Chubut as full

[6] Prior to the military coup of 1976, multiple factions were fighting a somewhat clandestine proxy war; the coup and subsequent dictatorship were hardly sudden. See Rock (352-66).

of “soledad. Mucha soledad . . . lejos de la familia y de los amigos, desperdigados todos en cualquier parte, sin poder escribirnos por el temor de que las cartas fueran abiertas, cosa que sabíamos sucedía” (“Interview” 67).

Travel into the desert, nearly unavoidable in Argentina, is the principle focus of one vignette of Julieta’s life in *Lengua madre*, when she goes to Villegas to see her father’s birthplace and the bus in which she is travelling breaks down along the way (144). Particularly telling is the moment in which a play on words between the bus company’s name (“La Estrella del Sur”) evokes an image of the southern sky, as well as the importance of said star for navigation (as it may have been used by gauchos): “En el silencio nocturno, interrumpido cada tanto por el zumbar de algún auto sobre la ruta vacía, ella vio cómo pasaba, cómo se iba, La Estrella del Sur” (144). Again, the action takes place in the desert, and as inconsequential as it may seem, introspection and more insight into her character is provided at this crossroads of movement within the interior.

Similarly, this same process of personal investigation returns in *Los manchados* where readers see Julieta’s sojourn into the northwest of Argentina with a multi-faceted agenda. In particular, her interaction with the director of the historical archive of the *noroeste* region, which is presented only from the conversation of the director, reveals this exact notion of going into the desert to find personal meaning, as well as for the sake of documenting the history of Tama and the *noroeste*; that is, the desert is the archive of these regions:

> Adelante, señorita, ¿de modo que usted está intentando reconstruir la historia de Tama y la Región Noroeste? Y, disculpeme [*sic*] la curiosidad, pero ¿de esta solicitud podría derivarse una investigación para alguna universidad, o se trata simplemente de un interés suyo personal? . . . Pase por aquí, por favor, adelante. De modo que incluso en sitios tan lejanos se preocupan por nuestra región, vea usted qué interesante, una distinción para el trabajo que realiza este servidor. No, no es molestia, de ninguna manera, nos interesa mucho que pueda conocerse en aquellas latitudes la riqueza histórica de nuestra región,

> cuyo patrimonio intangible es, como enseguida podrá usted ver, de grandes proporciones. (*Los manchados* 47-48)

Clearly, the idea of "reconstruir la historia de Tama y la Región Noroeste" calls attention to the notion that Andruetto is doing just that; this will be elaborated further in Chapter 2 regarding the importance of the desert. For now, however, we will refer to the physical nature of the entrance into the desert, that is, the journey into the northwest for the sake of research, both personal and professional, that Julieta undertakes. The archive's director begins to elaborate on the history of the region from a natural perspective, that of humans combined with their environment:

> Pero por favor, pase por aquí porque quisiera mostrarle algunos libros y documentos que pueden serle de utilidad, orientarla en la búsqueda. En esta sección tiene documentos sobre la fundación de Tama, el primer fuerte y la creación de la encomienda de los Padres Franciscanos. En estos estantes inferiores, los primeros asentamientos, calchaquíes y diaguitas o serranos, como se suele llamar a los originarios que hubo aquí. Cultivaban en terrazas, zapallos, porotos, maíz, y criaban llamas y alpacas, tenían sistemas comunitarios de trabajo y eran muy buenos ceramistas. (*Los manchados* 48-49)

Not lost in this passage is the image of a civilized, indigenous culture, that is, the exact opposite of Sarmiento's *barbarie*. Pubill explores this notion further in "Estigmatizaciones sociales: entre ausencias y presencias en *Los manchados* de María Teresa Andruetto" (177-79).

A common thread found in Andruetto is the search for foundations. In *Lengua madre*, Julieta's origins, not unlike those of Argentina, are rooted in mystery, allowing the reader to recreate her identity and Argentina's history. This is made obvious and emphasized when contemplating the location of the story: the desert. The nothingness and vastness mirror the unknown circumstances of how people end up where they are. In particular, the physical description of the town emphasizes its role and place for Julieta:

> La estación de tren de su pueblo, la portada del Asilo de Alienados, los enfermos deambulando con su locura a cuestas, esa madre con la que no llegaba a encontrarse nunca, siempre fueron para ella un misterio. Misterio puro. Lo cronológico, lo topográfico, los sencillos datos biográficos dan estructura a una vida y sin embargo la

> vida, la suya—la vida de cualquiera—, no alcanza jamás a definirse por ninguna circunstancia, siempre se le escapa. (*Lengua madre* 146-47)

First, Julieta's geographic origins are nameless in the sense that they are "Anytown, Argentina." Second, she takes on the role of an archetype for a lost generation, not unlike the missing children of *desaparecidos*, for whom identity and verified origins are perpetually unavailable. Finally, Andruetto explicitly marks Julieta as "every(wo)man" in the sense that we are viewing her life as "la vida de cualquiera." This notion is not unique to *Lengua madre*. Again, the mystery of the outskirts is a common thread in Andruetto. In the short story "Misterio en la Patagonia," the protagonist travels with his father into Patagonia because school is on break and because ever since his parents' divorce, his father has not been present (53). In other words, just like Julieta in *Lengua madre*, the protagonist is going into the desert in search of family.

These questions of origins are not exclusive to Julieta, but also appear in her father's story, as related to her in *Los manchados*. The paternal lineage begins with a tale of murder, mystery, and intrigue in a family's patio:

> Como le comentaba ayer, señorita Julieta, un buen día le dijimos todo a su papá, le contamos que teníamos al Ingeniero enterrado aquí mismo y que nunca supimos si lo habían matado por deudas de juego, por venganza de los mineros o de otra gente perjudicada o si fue por un asunto de polleras. Le contamos también que nos dio miedo porque hacía poco que se había muerto el General y ya habían empezado a llevarse a la gente. (23)

This last line is important: when political strife starts during the lead-up to the dictatorship, protagonists retreat within their own world, into their own interiors, accompanied by silence, similarly to what Andruetto states regarding the "invisible" imprisonment ("Interview" 66).

This clearly matches a flashback told to Julieta later about her paternal grandmother's life, about the hardships endured by working class women in Tama who were sexually exploited:

> Lo cierto es que cuando a ella le vino ese arrobamiento y por causa de eso se preñó, tuvo miedo de quedarse sin trabajo y pavor de que le sacaran al hijo, como solían hacer los

> patrones en antes, o que le hicieran tal vez daño a la criatura; así es que nomás nacido su cogollo, se fue para el lado de Los Llanos con el ánimo de instalarse en esos páramos pero terminó dejando a la criatura en un sitio de caridad, si es cierto lo que dice la gente y si la memoria que yo tenía y ahorita ha comenzado a desmedrar no me traiciona. (*Los manchados* 64)

In this case, we see in a literal sense that, in essence, these women are moving into the interior and the desert in order to save their own lives, as well as to save their babies. This cycle repeats itself with the case of Julia, Julieta's mother, and her escape into Trelew in Patagonia where she hides in a basement.

The wilderness in Andruetto can often occur ironically in the middle of civilization. The cemetery, in a town or urbanized area, is empty of life, even though it is full of the deceased. This island in a sea of society represents at once a fundamental element of being human because we are mortal. Yet, at the same time, the cemetery defines that which living humanity has not yet become—dead. In *Lengua madre*, Julia's mother remarks about her role of keeping up the cultural to-do list, but she is alone: "Recién vengo del cementerio (hoy es día de los muertos, fui sola, aquí nadie les lleva el apunte a estas cosas, ni tu padre que antes me llevaba)" (115). Furthermore, this is a commentary on the era of the military dictatorship in that much of the country was arrested, that is, stuck in the sense of in-betweenness, betwixt uncertainty due to political and economic turmoil and the drive to maintain cultural norms. In other words, they are trapped in the wilderness and simultaneously attempt to maintain a sense of normalcy through obligation and hope for return from exile (whether internal or external).

The wilderness or desert imparts the doubt that arises in a prior comment: "si la memoria que yo tenía y ahorita ha comenzado a desmedrar no me traiciona" (*Los manchados* 64). Whether rumor or innuendo or the danger of information falling into the wrong hands during the years leading up to and including the Dirty War, veracity of claims and fidelity of testimony are

all in question; this is embodied in Andruetto's *La mujer en cuestión*, since it resembles a report of an individual being investigated and is not a primary biography or testimony. In fact, Andruetto herself states that this process of creating truth happens via the construction of memory: "Lo verdadero y lo ficcional se funden y se confunden en los procesos de creación de una obra. Una novela es una mentira que construimos para decir una verdad que todavía no conocemos, una verdad más verdadera que la verdad" ("Interview" 63).

While Andruetto's novels and short stories share many similar characteristics and storylines, the characters in her novels are sometimes developed intertextually, according to the plots of works written by other authors; these references continue the streak of interior settings, if not literal deserts. For example, Julieta's journey to her father's town reveals a number of salient features of Argentina that bring to mind Manuel Puig's *El beso de la mujer araña*: first and foremost, her father is from the same town as Puig (*Lengua madre* 147). Andruetto subtly inserts a description of the small town reminiscent of *El beso de la mujer araña* in that "las radios y los radioteatros en las casas de aquel tiempo, el mundo de Hollywood remasterizado en un pueblito de provincia, alimentando—como en su pueblo—la melancolía de la pampa" (147). The intertextuality returns later in *Lengua madre* when Puig appears in more detail, with respect to his *The Buenos Aires Affair*:

> *¿Escuchó hablar de Puig?*, le preguntó la encargada del hotel donde se alojaba. Claro que sé de él, pensó, conozco a sus personajes más que a mi padre. Llegan ahora mismo a su memoria, mientras está frente a esta caja de cartas, dudando entre tomar una u otra, unas líneas de Puig que por azar quedaron en su memoria: *cada vez que lograba recordar un trozo de su repertorio, Clara Evelia se sentía reconfortada*. También ella, como la Clara Evelia de Puig, cada vez que logra reconstruir un fragmento de su vida se siente reconfortada, siente que algo se edifica en ella, algo que se parece a ella misma. (151)

A lengthy description of the town, of citizens, of histories and scandals, leads the reader to a key line, reminiscent of Puig's novels: "*Como yo le digo a mi marido, ella, que ya murió pobrecita,*

¡estaba predestinada para el cine! Era muy linda y yo creo que si hubiera vivido en otra época o en otra parte y no en este pueblo, hubiera sido una estrella de cine" (152). The final comment in this passage mirrors Chapter 3 in the queering of time and place—the could-have-beens—allowing glimpses into a parallel universe in which identities are imagined and created, not unlike the very process undertaken by Julieta in reading letters and piecemealing her own family story from a bygone era.

An even stronger case of intertextual reference appears with a man who is singing "Agamennone" (174). This clear allusion to antiquity and the king who sacrificed his daughter in the famous tragedy by Aeschylus, Iphigenia, could suggest the loss of a daughter (both Julia and Julieta) at the onset of a monumental journey across distant lands (and an inland sea of grass, through the Aegean). In literal terms, Lina, the "crazy" aunt they are visiting, recalls a chinchilla of the same name as the Greek figure, a chinchilla that was "destinada a morir" (174). This passage serves two purposes: first, its pastoral quality links the bonds between Julieta and her grandparents, and second, it refers to Greek tragedy and marks Julia as a tragic heroine of the novel, in that she sacrifices her relationship with her parents to keep herself safe, then later sacrifices a relationship with her daughter.

Additional references in *Lengua madre* offer a comparison with other literatures and places beyond Argentina that are meaningful for Julieta, a student of literature: Karen "Blixen decía *África, África, África mía*, como su madre hubiera podido decir Patagonia. O como ella misma quisiera decir ahora Argentina" (18). Julieta identifies with Blixen's works and substitutes her own family story into those of locales on the other side of the world. In doing so, Julieta simultaneously embodies a globalized citizenship, as well as a national identity bound to the story of her family. These clear identifications of place, as defined by Cresswell, can be seen

when Julieta declines an invitation to join Diego in Puerto Madryn due to her preference to remain in the desert in the middle of nothingness (224). Moving within Argentina has proven difficult for Julia and Julieta's family, and the movement even within the same region couples with immobility and arrested love interests. Puerto Madryn, Trelew, and Rawson form a triangle along the coast of Chubut, but even those short distances are too much to conquer.

Voyages loom large oneirically, and they mimic the interstitial nature of dreams in that characters are in between two worlds in Andruetto. This passage places Julieta in Patagonia as well as Europe:

> Una noche más tarde, soñó con un viaje desde su pueblo a la ciudad, en avioneta. Había estado hablando con Diego de su viaje a Alemania. Después, cuando volvieron a encontrarse, como han estado encontrándose en estos días, y le contó el sueño, él le dijo que había soñado con el viaje primigenio.
>
> *Como el viaje que hace Mirta, de Liniers a Estambul, en aquella película*, dice, *¿la viste? La tengo en casa, si querés podemos verla en video*.
>
> Estuvo tentada de preguntarle a Diego adónde es que ha viajado su mujer y cuándo regresa, pero solo le dice que necesita ir a Gaiman, al geriátrico donde vive la cuñada de José Guerrero. (*Lengua madre* 158-59)

The subtitle of the film *Sentimientos* is *Mirta de Liniers a Estambul*, the plot of which is similar to that of *Lengua madre* with regards to the dictatorship.

Julieta eventually does travel to Gaiman, the aforementioned village founded by Welsh immigrants, to visit the elderly woman who knew her mother. During that conversation, again like the dreams, Julieta oscillates between the present and the distant world of thought: "¿Es que su madre visitaba a esa mujer? ¿Hablaba de ella en ese geriátrico de Gaiman? ¿Le contaba intimidades? Miró hacia afuera, hacia las bardas, perdida en un inmenso agujero negro, sin saber qué pensar, qué decir, hasta que Diego la tomó de la mano y le preguntó si se sentía bien" (161). Further interaction with Lidia de Guerrero again reveals Andruetto's trope of travel within the

desert and the continual movement toward another location, perhaps more secure: "*Antes había estado en el campo, cerca de Pringles, pero después tuvo miedo de que la descubrieran . . . él sabía que teníamos ese lugar en el sótano . . . estaba detrás de un armario empotrado y había que entrar por ahí*" (161). Again, the literal indication of having to enter the safe space via a passageway through the armoire is not coincidental, but rather, a recapitulation of the movement into something, along the lines of *insilio*. Geographically, Pringles is most likely a reference to the small city of Coronel Pringles in the province of Buenos Aires, near the coast and toward the traditional boundary of the pampa and the beginning of Patagonia. Pringles as a place is properly situated in the pampa, in the interior, or if we can call it such, "the desert." Julia had to cross the desert and venture further into it to escape. Similarly, as the conversation between Julieta and Lidia draws to a close and Lidia reveals intimate details that place Julieta's father as part of the escape into Patagonia (and not merely as having abandoned his family), Julieta reaches a moment of catharsis, refusing to budge, despite Diego urging her to come home: "Diego intentó levantarla: *Vamos a casa*, pero ella siguió ahí llorando. Él intentó otra vez. La mujer dijo: *Déjela que llore, le va a hacer bien*, y quedaron largo rato las dos abrazadas, una llorando en la falda de la otra" (163). As we have seen, this occurs in the geriatric home in Gaiman, in Chubut, in the middle of a green oasis in the vast Patagonian desert.

The line of escape of Julia in *Lengua madre* nearly follows the map of Argentina via the desert: "desde Córdoba a Realicó, desde Realicó a Pringles, desde Pringles a . . . siempre corriendo, siempre a hurtadillas, hasta encontrar un sótano en Patagonia, un pozo oscuro donde permanecer por unos años" (210). Julia's own life is later described in geographic terms: "Ella, una mujer nacida en la llanura argentina, en un pueblo pequeño de la pampa semihúmeda. Ella, que ha crecido entre a la tragedia de la dictadura, la fe por la vida en democracia y el

escepticismo de los noventa" (212). She nearly encompasses Argentine history in her geographic biography. First, her humble origins on the pampas, which I read symbolically as the nascent republic's founding after being a Spanish colony. Second, her childhood during dictatorship and political turmoil, literally for Julia during the Dirty War, but figuratively for the entire country, between cycles of *caudillos*, military regimes, and interspersed, democratically elected governments. Finally, there is the return to democracy in the 1990s that has been rife with an economic boom and bust. Curiously, within the coda of the novel, the reader is treated to the novelty of radio communications in Patagonia; this is especially useful for those living on *estancias* in remote areas. The tagline for *Radio Bizarra* seems poignant: "*Radio Bizarra, la voz de los que no tienen voz. Comodoro Rivadavia.* ***En el 91.3 del éter***" (222). The radio, in fact, is the means of sharing Julia's obituary (221).

Movement within the Patagonian desert is not limited to women in Andruetto. Julieta learns of her father's escape into the south, on a parallel trajectory as her mother, but he goes even farther toward the Antarctic and, later, leaves Argentina completely:

> Casi todo el tiempo que estuvo con nosotros se quedó entre estas paredes. Después, cuando se fue hacia el Sur porque la chica peligraba, vinieron a buscarlo los gendarmes, pero como nosotros no sabíamos a dónde había ido, no tuvimos problemas porque no se dice lo que no se sabe. Por más que nos hurgaron no dijimos nada, de eso puede estar segura, señorita Julieta. . . . Hasta que un día nos enteramos de que se había ido al extranjero. Se lo dijo a Pepe un camionero, un hombre que iba para la Patagonia, para el lado de Comodoro Rivadavia, manejaba un Scania y trabajaba para una pompa fúnebre, llevaba cajones de muertos para aquellos lados. . . . (*Los manchados* 28)

Of note is that the messenger is a truck driver, calling attention again to Andruetto's own assertions of the near impossibility of communicating via the postal service during the political instability of the Dirty War ("Interview" 69). Without actual evidence of his whereabouts, his existence relies on rumor and whispering, recalling the echoes of *La mujer en cuestión*, where testimony is subject to speculation. Furthermore, the region where the driver works refers to

Comodoro Rivadavia, the southernmost city in Chubut province, whose importance we explained earlier as part of the beyond and of possibility. Readers also recall that Julia hides in a basement in Trelew, in the north of the province on the Atlantic, while her father's supposed whereabouts are in the same province, but they are geographically toward the extreme south and the ends of the South American continent. Ultimately, these two protagonists—Julieta's father and her mother—are juxtaposed in exile and *insilio* respectively.

Movement, as referred to by Claudia García in "Migración y adolescencia," appears again in *La mujer en cuestión* as the protagonist's whereabouts are described in relation to the village of her parents, as it offers the only solace to her predicament: "en el pueblo de sus padres, a donde ha ido a parar luego de la desaparición de Aldo y de 'la sucesión de descalabros que vinieron después' (Orlando Mondino)" (36). Telling, again, is that this movement toward the village happens after the disappearance of Aldo. Travel and moving from place to place—during perilous times—places Eva with other protagonists in Andruetto, including Julia in *Lengua madre* and in *Stefano*, in which the protagonist escapes into the interior to find salvation (*Stefano* 39). Political exile, or making a personal choice to depart, is not the only form of expulsion in Andruetto, and that direction would force one outside the confines of the home. Eva, the protagonist of *La mujer en cuestión*, is subject to the ire of some townspeople who would not mind seeing her thrown out of town: "Al decir de algunos, lo que más hubiera gustado a 'ciertas personas' (Lila, este encomillado y el siguiente) del entorno más amplio de Eva, en especial a las del pueblo donde nació y donde todavía vive su madre, es que ella se viera 'lisa y llanamente expulsada de allí'" (41).

In addition to in these examples, movement—especially crossing borders—looms large in "Todo movimiento es cacería," the first story of Andruetto's *Cacería*. I underscore that, in

particular, it is movement into the interior that empowers women: the first paragraphs provide a litany of actual locations with the common thread being that they are interior spaces, although some are near border regions, but again, this paradox plays into Andruetto's motif of somewhere/nowhere. Among the locations mentioned in "Todo movimiento es cacería" are "Misiones Africanas"; this evokes northeastern Argentina, the triple-frontier region with Brazil and Paraguay, and immediately calls attention, in racist terms, to indigenous elements of the Guaraní and an "otherness." "Boca do Acre" also is referenced, as are the following other locations. Boca is in the Brazilian Amazon, in relative proximity to borders with Peru and Bolivia. "Río Das Mortes" could refer to the concept of death and/or to two rivers in Brazil, one in Minas Gerais and another in Mato Grosso, yet both states notably are in the interior. "Niamey" is the capital and largest city of Niger, located on the banks of the Niger River. "Matadi" is the principal seaport of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, situated on the Congo River. "Katanga," a state in the DRC that marks the southern third of the country, borders Lake Tanganyika. "Port Etienne," the former name of Nouadhibou, is the second largest city of Mauritania in Saharan Africa, which is on the Atlantic and within close proximity of the border with the disputed Western Sahara. "Molucas" is an eastern Indonesian island, at some point colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese. "Tricomalee" is a resort and port city on the east coast of Sri Lanka. Finally, "Calamianes" refers to a group of islands in the Philippines. All of these places are named in *Cacería* (17). Before tackling the relationship of these locations with characters and plot elements of the short story, it is important to note the common threads of all these locations: they are located on the water (rivers, oceans, lakes); all are former colonies and sites of untold violations of human rights; all are locations of exchange among cultures, particularly with the trade of goods (and, notably, enslaved persons). These settings also evoke a

tropicalization within the story that sounds like travel literature, recalling movement into the "uncivilized" interior, and they also echo Said's *Orientalism* in that they involve purported exotic lands that had been colonized, similar to Argentina under the Spanish crown. This matches Andruetto's penchant for questioning Argentine identity and history, in particular, as well as the trope of a "civilized" Buenos Aires as a European cultural and political center vs. the "barbaric" interior, such as is found in Sarmiento. (This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.)

Beyond the simple addition of place names that have historical and geographical connotations, the locations serve as a nexus of learning in that women return from these places with seeds of knowledge for their plans and schemes. In particular, "Verena se ocupaba de los asuntos de cocina y de la maceración de las carnes con adobos y pesadumbres que había aprendido a preparar en las Misiones Africanas" (17). Verena continues this culinary learning tour, in that she "había estado en Boca do Acre y a orillas del río Das Mortes y llegó una vez hasta Niamey para aprender entre salvajes [a racist reference to indigenous and racially diverse inhabitants of the region]—casi muerta bajo el sol—a condimentar carnes de caza" (17). Notions of travel and exchange continue with all the characters, finally resulting in the crucible of Buenos Aires where it all comes together:

> Galia había vivido algunas temporadas en Matadi, Katanga y Port Etienne. Diana, en cambio, sólo había realizado en una ocasión un crucero por Molucas y—ya embarcada en el proyecto—recorrió Tricomalee y Calamianes con el propósito de perfeccionarse en modos de acceso a la presa; pero ninguna aprendió a cocinar como Verena. Eso, la habilidad que Verena desplegaba en la cocina, llevó a Diana a ocuparse de las relaciones públicas y las cuestiones de la caza—intensa, febril—e hizo que Galia, que tenía un gusto refinado y estaba emparentada con lo más granado de Buenos Aires, se encargara de la decoración de las salas, así como de la atención personalizada de las clientas, que era el sello distintivo del club. (*Cacería* 17-18)

These women all learn new skills in far-flung locations; in a sense, they gain agency by taking matters into their own hands when they leave their original domain. Furthermore, they exhibit

entrepreneurial tendencies by opening this club (that is simultaneously a supper club of sorts that doubles as a brothel).

The supposed "exotic" qualities of the food and the connection to the previously mentioned ports of call continues in the naming of the plates:

> Acordaron en llamar al plato el manjar prohibido, aunque en la carta figuraba como *Carnes rojas de caza a las finas hierbas*. Verena lo había probado por primera vez en el Congo Belga y más tarde conoció otras versiones en Guinea Konacry y en Níger; desde entonces hizo infinitas combinaciones de ingredientes y condimentos hasta dar con el sabor que lo caracterizaba, un sabor contundente pero a la vez delicado que las socias sabrían apreciar. (*Cacería* 21)

Again, the "otherness" is reinforced, this time emphasizing the blackness of the African interior, highlighted in these forbidden fruits. The movement into these areas has aided in the acquisition of merely culinary knowledge that does not provide the characters with a greater cultural understanding of the peoples whose cuisines they appropriate. By crossing borders and dabbling in dark arts or taboo subjects, these women undermine the social order and follow nearly verbatim Kristeva's definition of the abject: "It is thus not the lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, position, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (232). Furthermore, their physical appearances also have crossed a border and have entered what Kristeva highlights as taboo (243). By indulging in food, they move from the stereotypical Western vision of a lean, feminine body to a much more corpulent physique that would be more akin to standards of beauty in far-flung locations (such as Polynesia). Via this newfound and forbidden knowledge, something fresh is happening, and Pampa Olga Arán claims that *Cacería* is performative writing that "creates a new reality" (94; my translation). Not unlike Andruetto's motif of the interior of Patagonia as a mystical land of promise, previously seen in *Lengua madre*, these lands embody the Other, that which is racially and/or ethnically "exotic," and ultimately pave the way for

rendering fat and flavor, all part of the plan of the club to offer the sexual exploitation of women of corpulent abundance. Western Europe's most fattening items, however, do not hold a candle to the "exotic" elements: "desgustando las numerosas pruebas de cocina habían engordado más que con los bombones, el chocolate en rama y la *nuttela* que hacían traer en cantidades desde Milán" (22).

Far-flung locations appear in *Lengua madre* in that Lessing's life and literature underscore the desert as a place of being outside preferred locations. This contrasts with women's supposed place in the home during the military junta's regime in Argentina:

> *Los soldados tuvieron intensas experiencias en las trincheras y descubrieron que ya no toleraban quedarse en casa,* dice. De regreso a Inglaterra pidió que el banco en el que trabajaba lo enviara a alguna parte y lo mandaron a Persia. Y otra vez de regreso, unos años más tarde, se entusiasmó con el stand de Rhodesia del Sur en una exhibición imperial y fueron a vivir a Rhodesia. (86)

Again, the mention of Persia and Rhodesia comes with images of plains and grasslands, deserts with their nothingness, yet they are places enriched by ancient cultures and life. Crossing into another realm is not merely a literal jump, but also a figurative notion, in particular crossing the boundaries of what is acceptable in the satirized culture of Argentina's matronly, high society, as Arán highlights in the grotesque, large bodies of the protagonists (79).

Andruetto's short stories also contain similar changes in place and in character development following these movements across borders, such as the desert in "Olor a nardos." Halima's beauty—appearing like an oasis in the desert—inspires the hero to begin his journey. In a minor incident in the short story "Cuernos sobre una chiva" (from *Cacería*), the protagonist has changed her name following her arrival to the city from the wilderness (13). This is not unlike the demarcation between incarceration and escape referenced in Chapter 3—change

functions in lieu of Western temporal markers to indicate the beginning of an era that, in essence, is stamped when one crosses from the wilderness to the city or vice versa.

This importance of the location—the wilderness or the desert—as *mise en scène* for particularly profound moments in the lives of the protagonists cannot be understated. In *Los manchados*, readers hear the testimony of Rosa and her brief encounter with Julieta's father (who was already on the run), and she describes a clear moment of entering the beyond that leaves her—as well as Julieta—changed:

> Unos días más tarde de aquel día, cruzamos los dos el monte hasta una acequia y nos sentamos ahí; después no sabría decirle qué sucedió, sólo que se me desabotonó la blusa y él me miró las tetitas, porque yo era por entonces muy menuda, muy pequeñita era. Fue esa sola vez, como le digo, que estuvimos juntos, porque enseguida él se marchó y ya después no volvimos a vernos; y más después yo tuve a mi hijo. Era un niño, le puse el nombre de su padre: Nicolás, Colachito . . . , mi niño tuve y eso me tragó la vida, porque como le digo, el niño nació enfermo y murió seis años más tarde, después de mucho sufrir, este hijo mío que vendría a ser medio hermano suyo, Julieta. . . . No llore, hija, no llore también usted, hija mía . . . , no se me ponga así. . . . (161-62)

This is a clear reference to the rape and impregnation of the child, Rosa, by Julieta's father, an incident that parallels the obstetric violence often used by the military junta in the torture of female prisoners. Andruetto is not simply citing atrocities committed during the dictatorship of the 1970s and 80s, but she also emphasizes that Argentine history is rife with exploitation (both economically and sexually) from its colonial origins well into the twentieth century; this will be explored further in Chapter 2.

In this first chapter, we have seen the desert in Andruetto on a micro-level—what I mean by that is an up-close look at protagonists in their physical spaces, how their lives and surroundings function in an anthropomorphic desert, in which the desert is simultaneously life-giving and life-taking. What we will see in Chapter 2 is more of a macro-level view, a discussion of Andruetto's desert and all its implications for Argentine history and literature. It is a place of

contact between Europeans and indigenous first peoples (often "whitewashed" from an "official," historical view). There will also be an examination of gender in the Argentine republic, with respect to nation-building and national identity. In essence, while Chapter 1 is concerned with the characters in their physical environments, Chapter 2 will focus on the characters in their geopolitical and economic surroundings.

CHAPTER 2: THE DESERT IN ANDRUETTO: ALTERNATIVE SPACES AND POLITICS

The desert as a space looms large in human history and especially in literary endeavors. Not unlike the United States with its cowboy culture and "Go West" mythos, Argentina can trace its national, symbolic roots to *gaucho* epics and narrative pieces centering on life in the pampa. In Argentina, that representation stems from notions of nation-building and the civilization vs. barbarism debate of the nineteenth century. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo o civilización y barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (1845), José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* (1872/1879), and Esteban Echeverría's "La cautiva" from *Rimas* (1837) are three examples of precursors who provide the historical context of the desert in Argentina. The recurring motifs of the role of the desert with respect to nation-building appear in nearly all of Andruetto's works as both a literal and figurative space, where it also functions as a refuge. Mary Louise Pratt's reading of Sarmiento (185-87) sets the backdrop of the land and the conflict between cultures in this chapter; I also rely on Pratt's definition of "contact zones" as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths" (4). A clear pattern in Argentine literature emerges in portrayals of Patagonia (in addition to other deserts) and of the pampa as "nation-spaces" meant for white people, whereas some lands were believed to be "wasted" by natives (Hanway 167). In Andruetto, however, this notion is turned on its head as national identity is revisited, particularly in the form of reconstituting motherhood and the motherland, as detailed by Nora Domínguez (43-48).

In addition to more contemporary events, Andruetto's works often trace a history essential to the mythos of *argentinidad* from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Further commentary on Argentine history, politics, class, and race can be seen through the figurative use of the desert negatively as a violent wasteland and positively as a land of opportunity in Andruetto's *El país de Juan*, *Veladuras*, and *La niña, el corazón y la casa*, all short novels for juvenile audiences. *Veladuras*, in particular, offers a glimpse of the inversion of Sarmiento's racist notions of civilization and barbarism. For this chapter, the definition of the desert is not a literal space defined by a lack of rainfall or other physical characteristics: instead, it refers to the notion of the wilderness or of Argentina itself, more along the lines of Cresswell's "space" and not entirely dependent upon the concept of a "landscape" (8). In other words, meaning emerges from the way the world is experienced by humans and from structures of power (12). *Lengua madre*, *Tama*, and *Los manchados*, for example, refer to multiple regions of Argentina (including the desert) and the world; this suggests a global aspect of the definition of *argentinidad*: Sweden and Italy are locations of immigration to Argentina and emigration from the Southern Cone, respectively; a small town on the Pampa (the Argentine heartland), or the basement in Trelew (in Patagonia) where Julieta was born in *Lengua madre* are other instances. Julieta can trace her roots from nearly all corners of the globe, but as an Argentine, her lineage and heritage begin in a basement in the desert.

I propose an interpretation of Andruetto here that the desert creates a twenty-first century mestiza who embodies *argentinidad*, seen via an economic and geopolitical lens. Andruetto continues extrapolating an alternative understanding of Argentina and Argentine history:

> Todo el mundo siente nostalgia, su país está construido sobre nostalgias. Tal vez por eso muchos extrañan antiguas mentiras, las de Perón los más viejos, otros aquel cuento escolar que decía *Las Malvinas son argentinas*, la Revolución Productiva, los engaños de Menem, el *que se vayan todos* . . . su país es complejo y contradictorio, lo sabe. También

> sabe, todos lo dicen, que es un país creativo. La creatividad nace de la imaginación y la imaginación es la forma artística de la mentira. (*Lengua madre* 30-31)

The contemporary mestiza in Andruetto is not simply a case of heritage or birth; it is also the result of economic systems and political contexts of the present-day nation of Argentina, forged in the crucible of the desert. It also mirrors Gloria Anzaldúa's recapitulation of the border and the new mestiza in *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La frontera*. Although Anzaldúa references the borderlands between Mexico and the United States, her words provide an uncanny resemblance to the protagonists of Andruetto (namely Julia in *Lengua madre*) in that she is "doubly threatened in this country. Not only does she have to contend with sexual violence, but like all women, she is prey to a sense of physical helplessness. As a refugee, she leaves the familiar and safe homeground to venture into unknown and possibly dangerous terrain" (Anzaldúa 34-35).

Historical and Economical Context

Traditional notions of *argentinidad* can be traced to Spanish colonial times as the encounter between Europeans and indigenous populations that resulted in an uneven economic system (Rock xxvi). Even the actual naming of Argentina is rooted in an erroneous assumption, arising from Western European notions of "silver" and the allure of tangible riches that ultimately were dwarfed by human capital in the form of the coerced labor of indigenous populations (Rock 6). This exploitation of natives via Spanish colonial norms of labor (the *mita* system) lays the groundwork for patterns of boom and bust: economic depressions required military intervention that later resulted in subsidies and eventual further declines (Rock 117). Inequitable patterns of development continue throughout the nineteenth century, creating "a still rootless and unstable society in the pampas, and a situation in which a high proportion of the new immigrants were absorbed in the cities, despite the rural base of the economy" (Rock 119).

In Tama, Aldao, and Patagonia, among other locations in Andruetto's novels and short stories, a key development of the nineteenth century for Argentina was the arrival of the railroad. It expanded economic opportunity, yet it left behind a clear disruption to patterns of labor and, thus, of land settlement (Rock 145). The fortunes created by the coming of the railways were not equitable; some people prospered, others suffered, and both were the direct results of policy and politics. To say that market forces caused this uneven distribution of wealth is inaccurate: government directives and certain political interests added to the notion of an interior open for business (Rock 146). A government-favored policy of expansion into the hinterland did encounter one strong roadblock that paradoxically has been "white-washed" from the pages of official history, but it clearly resonates through Andruetto: indigenous populations. In the 1870s, the infamous *conquista del desierto* was a deliberate attempt to quell uprisings and instability throughout the vast territory, and it also served as a larger psychological process for Argentina (Rock 154). The *conquista* was not solely an immediate allocation of territory or resources, but rather, a long-term view of a limitless frontier as a future reserve, which will garner our attention in Andruetto shortly. Again, this was not merely a popular notion, but one that originated in policy, and the financial backing for the *conquista* mirrored this top-down trajectory in that a small portion of landowners purchased vast swaths of territory in an uneven fashion (Rock 154). Following the *conquista* and the nineteenth-century nation-state building process, the demarcation of regions and political boundaries through policies and laws enacted during the Roca government merits our attention; addressing nearly all of the interior and the frontier, provincial borders and a stalemate between the concentrated federal district and other regions were established that "thereby prevented Buenos Aires from fulfilling a long-cherished ambition to absorb Patagonia" (155). In addition to Sarmiento and Echeverría's roles as founders of

national and literary myth of the desert, Francisco P. Moreno joins the ranks as a major player in the formation of Patagonia within the national psyche. Javier Uriarte summarizes this process that is a precursor for our understanding of Patagonia in Andruetto:

> [Moreno's] attitude toward space and movement was also shaped by the fact that he represented his government in the tense negotiations with neighboring Chile over the necessity of establishing the international border in the Patagonia regions. He was, then, a traveler who sought to draw an exact border and thus read the territory in nationalistic terms. At the same time, his movements through these supposedly deserted areas helped bring the presence of the state to frontier regions, where the state did not possess a monopoly on legitimate violence since indigenous communities and other local *caciques* controlled transit and circulation of people and goods. (14)

Nineteenth-century nation-building processes—both by claiming territory through charting maps and by the creation of nationhood—underscore the vastness of what constitutes Argentina. The geographical periphery of Argentina consists of territory existing at the extremes of land masses bound by the Atlantic Ocean, the Andes, and river systems; figuratively, they constitute the spaces beyond the political control of the elites in Buenos Aires. The fringe is the site of conflict at political levels: there are the nineteenth-century independence movements, Sarmiento's ideas about immigration, and later the *conquista*, for example. Fermín Rodríguez highlights that for Sarmiento, the limits are not the issue, but rather, the expanse. There also is a factor of time that contrasts the supposed debate between city and country, as in *civilización y barbarie* as Sarmiento "lee la Revolución de Mayo como un acelerador, un medio de acción que revela fuerzas invisibles, reprimidas por la inercia colonial" (1115). Uriarte highlights a global element among Latin American "deserts, their connection with war, with resistance, and with states' efforts to control nomadic or unknown populations, and to conquer territories" (3). Furthermore, beyond Sarmiento, Perito Moreno "'denaturalizes' Patagonia, reading it as a collection of resources" (127). Uriarte posits that Moreno's "writings evince a shift from the desert as a fantasy, as the invention of a conquerable void, to its construction as another void, now the result

of said conquest," further contending that Moreno's texts must be viewed through the prism of war (128).

In addition to conflict over the desert, there are also disputes that exist at cultural levels. As we remarked previously, Debra Castillo explores Argentina's desire to "*white-wash*" (my emphasis) the country's identity, and Claudia Briones expands on this history:

> [I]n the Latin American context, Argentina has been one of the countries that has most explicitly and systematically sought to negate any indigenous contribution to the constitution of a national being, which is imagined as deeply Europeanized in appearance, aspirations, and lifestyle. In this environment, indigenous people have emerged time and time again either as anachronistic testimonial subjects or as evidence of an extinction that is as imminent as it is definitive. Second, the notion of uniform whiteness has emerged from the construction of cultural hegemonies which have persuaded a large majority of the population that their "distinctiveness" is the direct result of a melting pot that was as "open to all the men of the world" as it is closed to native populations. This story has also cemented a self-image of exceptionality vis-à-vis other countries in the region. It is upon this master narrative of the nation, as well as upon the doubts and critiques it has generated, that the indigenous demands for the recognition of difference have been forged, and it is upon this narrative that these demands seek to operate. (252-53)

This contradiction of an Argentina that is open for all, yet still off-limits to some becomes clear in Andruetto, especially regarding the representation of women and regions like the desert, recalling Rivera Cusicanqui's discourse of indigenous and de-colonial movements (70). With respect to Patagonia in particular, Uriarte recalls the *civilización vs barbarie* polemic in Moreno, noting that Moreno claims that an abandoned orchard seems to be traceable to the Spanish crown and explorers. Furthermore, Moreno's characterization of Patagonia as belonging to the *patria*, yet not being a part of the *patria* calls our attention to the parallel with Andruetto's descriptions of exile and *insilio*, in that the latter is happening within the bounds of the country, yet it creates an existence outside the regular confines of *argentinidad* (141-42).

The classic binary of Buenos Aires versus the rest of Argentina reveals clues that shape our understanding of different regions and especially of the desert. Even as early as the first

years of post-independence, fortune and misfortune were never far from each other. As John Lynch states, "The greatest danger lay on the frontier, and the frontier was uncomfortably close" (2). It would continue to be a major theme in the making of the nation (as well as the demise of its original inhabitants), namely that more and more land was required to satisfy the perpetually increasing need to accommodate growing flocks of cattle and sheep (Cortés Conde 50). An historical view of economic factors shows how policy left an impact on the population, particularly the popular view of provinces and the possibility for immigrants settling therein:

> The littoral provinces and those of the interior differed from Buenos Aires in a number of ways. In the first place they were less prosperous. The wars of independence and the subsequent civil wars damaged the economies of the littoral provinces—Santa Fe, Entre Rios and Corrientes—and retarded their development. When at last they began to recover, they found Buenos Aires dominant, resolved to monopolize trade and navigation—and the customs revenue therefrom—and to dictate a policy of free trade. (Lynch 7)

Immigration continued to be a major factor as the country, more than anything, needed labor (Cortés Conde 54-61). If original indigenous populations could not satisfy the demand for labor, then immigrants would have to fill the void (and either case often ended in exploitation). Writings at the time give credence to this argument that culturally, Argentina was being made into two dissimilar pieces. Florencia Antequera calls our attention to the differences between cities within the interior in Sarmiento, that Córdoba and La Rioja are not at the same level due to years of scientific study at the universities in the former, representing civilization, and that there are hardly any educated elites in the latter. Furthermore, these cities are not regarded by the populace in the same way as Mendoza, which is lauded for its agriculture, while the others represent barbarism (289-90).

Throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, investment in the interior of Argentina did not match that of Buenos Aires and the coastal regions; foreign incursion of

capital halted at the pampas, while there needed to be governmental policy to continue such efforts further. In essence, it was not just a psychological belief or ethos that the interior held untold riches or possibility, but rather, it was actually the policy of the government (Rock 144). The aforementioned differences between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country did not arise during the nineteenth century, but were a by-product of colonial days:

> Conditions in the littoral differed from those in the rest of the country. Although there was progress almost everywhere, the disparities between regions continued to be very significant. These disparities were due to various factors, many of which had obtained before the beginning of the period under discussion. The displacement of the centre of economic activity from Upper Peru to the Río de la Plata, which had begun in the late colonial period, led to the comparative stagnation of those regional economies that did not adapt themselves adequately to new conditions. This happened in the case of Santiago del Estero and most of the old provinces of the north-west. (Gallo 88-89)

In other words, the interior had become ripe for the benefit of Buenos Aires and not a stand-alone entity, echoing colonial patterns inherited from the Spanish crown. The development of railroads, previously mentioned, was swift and not without social consequence; while economic opportunity expanded, there was a clear disruption of labor and social relationships due to the arrival of foreigners and the impending upheaval (145). This will be discussed further regarding *Stefano, Veladuras*, and movement throughout the desert, as well as through the Argentine nation-space.

The geographic regions where families migrate, as well as ones that they populate or evacuate within Andruetto, are linked to patterns of development in the nineteenth century that underline this uneven nation-state: "In 1869 half the nation's people dwelt in the five pampas or littoral provinces of Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Entre Rios, Santa Fe, and Corrientes, but by 1895 the proportion was three-quarters. Throughout this period the pampas, as the heartland of the new export economy, drew migrants from the interior and immigrants from across the Atlantic" (Rock 132). There seemed to exist a duality even within the terms of settlement, that is, the

populations "building" the country and "taming" it from the natives, in particular that those in favor of colonial expansion "could argue that farmers posed no threat to the ranchers, as the farms would be located on new land and thus serve as a buffer against the Indians, and that farmer immigrants would broaden the tax base, allowing ranchers' taxes to be reduced" (Rock 137). Clear class distinctions emerge as actual policy, and the echo of this inequity appears in Adruetto's *El país de Juan* and *Los manchados*. One curiosity is the photographic evidence cited by Rock that reveals women and children participating in the economy of grape harvests, circa 1905, who "were most likely immigrants brought in seasonally by rail through Córdoba" (192). This harkens readers to recall Andruetto's *Tama* and the northwest, particularly as Pubill notes that "la novela de Andruetto retoma la cuestión de la mezcla de razas, pero le da una nueva tonalidad al centrarse en los prejuicios y las injusticias, de clase, de género y de raza, es decir en las marcas de la estigmatización social que siguen afectando a estas capas marginadas de la zona norteña argentina" ("Estigmatizaciones" 169).

The dual Argentina—Buenos Aires and the rest of the country—rears its head following economic development throughout the nineteenth century. There appears a dichotomy of greater and lesser in the twentieth century where Argentina rose to the highest levels of prosperity in the world, concentrated in Buenos Aires, whereas the interior featured "rambling *haciendas*, an impoverished Indian or mestizo peasantry, feeble towns, inertia, and stagnation" (Rock 162). In fact, development typically was seen in the port capital and not in the interior, which remained rather stagnant with few new immigrants and little economic growth (181). A contradiction appears in that the country was open for business and immigration, as a haven of opportunity, but the reality away from the coast did not match this image. Particularly germane to Andruetto's settings, the examples of Trelew and locations in Patagonia proper feature surroundings that

were definitively barren; small populations, enormous distances, and limited opportunities (in some respects) were hallmarks of Argentina in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, exactly the purported times that Andruetto describes in *Tama*, *Los manchados*, and *Stefano*:

> The population of the interior was wracked by bronchial pneumonia, tuberculosis, and a variety of gastric ailments. The infant mortality rate was double and often treble [*sic*] that of Buenos Aires. Illiteracy approached 50 percent. Yet the interior was also empty, less so than Patagonia, but more so than the pampas. In 1910 it was estimated that only 1 percent of its land area was under cultivation, the rest remaining in a pristine state as *sierra* or desert. (181)

This is paradoxical with respect to other reports of the land as a place of riches, yet even with historical accounts, we hear the echoes of the "pristine" land coupled with the harsh reality.

Changes in the economic system created a culture with distinct rules of land ownership versus tenancy; the latter was a reality for most of the population in both the city of Buenos Aires and the outlying region of the pampas (Rock 175-79). Most interesting to this study, however, is the notion of policy and tradition continuing to marginalize people in the interior, in which wealth was concentrated in a few hands, while farm tenancy created an almost perpetual cycle of debt for most citizens (178). Noteworthy is the revival of a "rootlessness," first visible in the gaucho tradition that matches the situation of non-gaucho protagonists in Andruetto in *El país de Juan*, *Tama*, and *Los manchados*:

> After 1900 farm machines were widely adopted in the pampas, but farming remained heavily dependent on seasonal labor. During harvest periods the rural population would swell by as much as 300,000. In areas farther away from Buenos Aires, like Santa Fe or Córdoba, the harvesters were often migrants from the interior. However, the majority of those who entered the province of Buenos Aires before 1914, when the war brought an end to the system, were immigrants from Europe who returned there after the harvest. Such "swallows" (*golondrinas*), as they were known, resurrected the tradition of social rootlessness that had prevailed in the pampas in the days of the now-extinct *gauchos*. (178-79)

Promises of riches seemed to go unfulfilled, as Michael Goebel notes: "After 1930, most Argentines became convinced that the nineteenth-century ideal of setting up an overseas Europe

would never materialize, and ever since then the Argentine nation-state has been primarily understood as a spectacular failure. As the liberal consensus broke apart, explanations began to mushroom as to what had gone wrong" (4). Of course, the idea of another Europe is problematic in that Sarmiento's vision is a racist attempt to erase indigenous populations and downplays immigration from less desirable locations.

The divide between Buenos Aires and the rest of Argentina increased approaching World War I, while the 1930s saw a slight shift in the view of the extreme regions of Argentina (Rock 172). There may have been paradisiacal notions of Eden or more immediately of El Dorado; however, they began to take on a sentiment of value for possession's sake only. Mere ownership or a claim was enough to justify their perceived worth, whether true economic riches could ever be extrapolated from the region. This ties in more closely with the idea of *argentinidad* and the nation-state than any scalable or enumerated figure. Rock summarizes the origin and subsequent development of these notions in the national psyche:

> Nationalism emerged as a major force in Argentine politics in the mid 1930s and soon after became a central one. . . . As the nineteenth-century economic expansion reached a climax and confidence in the future soared, the elites adopted a form of Manifest Destiny which at times threatened, like its northern prototype, to permutate into aggressive territorial expansionism. Around 1900, for example, Argentina entered serious disputes with Chile concerning boundaries in Patagonia, and Tierra del Fuego and its adjacent islets. . . . [S]uch impulses were curbed by the realization that war might well jeopardize prosperity, a view the British in particular were at pains to encourage, and they eagerly accepted invitations to arbitrate the territorial disputes. Second, Argentina came to recognize that beyond the pampas lay little of real value, little worth seizing or attempting to annex, and that for the present, at least, local resources were well sufficient to satisfy any incipient appetite for land. Nevertheless, the idea that Argentina was a nation graced by Nature and by God, predestined for power and greatness—an idea whose origins lay in Roca's generation and the positivist tradition—lingered on into the 1930s, becoming the foundation for the eventually intimate association between nationalism and the armed forces. (228)

Nationalism in the early-twentieth century led to a trend of revisionist history as traces of folklore and national identity were woven into propaganda, in particular in the view of outsiders

(such as the British) colliding with the burgeoning sense of national identity (230). From here, we view Andruetto operating within a new nationalism, that is, an attempt to subvert the widely held beliefs of *argentinidad* that discount the experiences of those on the margins. Nationalism in the 1930s often pounded the drums of rumor, if not war, and lands long mythically held as a salvation or distant opportunity took on a sinister view for certain segments of the population. Rock cites that among banning political parties and sowing civic chaos, this era of nationalist ideology brought about unrest, particularly for Jewish populations, "as rumors, which proved false, spread that the government was setting up concentration camps in Patagonia" (250).

Even in widely accepted national accounts of history, we see that with Peronism, there is a thread of liberation coming from the desert, and Eva Perón tends to embody this sentiment of an eternal pilgrim moving from the rural area to the metropolis (harkening back to civilization vs. barbarism) (Rock 288). Economic instability—in particular, the continuing boom and bust of the Perón years—meant that Argentina as a geopolitical entity was highly underdeveloped (330). I contend that this leads to the Argentine perspective that there was a halcyon further on the horizon, a land of possibilities, that does not exist in reality; Andruetto offers descriptions of these potentially safe spaces precisely that way, especially in Patagonia.

Patagonia as a Southern Escape

In the Argentine desert, an important region for understanding Andruetto is Patagonia, the vast wind-swept plain extending from the Andes to the Atlantic as the Southern Cone narrows before plunging into the Southern Ocean toward the Antarctic. Even as early as the late-eighteenth century, Bourbon reforms in Spain brought about a continued enthusiasm for maintaining the crown's interests in the vast territory, and Spain's timeless rivals—Britain and Portugal—brought change: "To guard against British and Portuguese naval bases in the empty

south, plans were laid for settlements along the Patagonian coast, to be supported by a new fishing industry" (Rock 62). Patagonia was not high on the agenda for governments; Rock cites the encroachment of Chile into the region of Patagonia, despite the fact that Argentina as a nation-state was not really entering the area (154). Patagonia served economically as a reservation of sorts, in that undesirable or less profitable commodities could be pushed there (169). Even into the twentieth century, Patagonia occupied a place of importance for military and political purposes:

> [I]n 1985 Alfonsín introduced a new currency called the *Austral* [Southern] and in the following year presented the so-called "Patagonia project," which (unsuccessfully) proposed the building of a new capital in Viedma, a city at the southern edge of the province of Buenos Aires that had become important as a regional centre in the wake of the conquest of the desert. (Goebel 199)

Again, Patagonia is not only a supposed ideal or extra resource in waiting, but also an economic reality as a reserve. Even in this respect, if the littoral and pampas were associated with cows and higher profit margins, Patagonia and the remainder of the interior were associated with sheep and more hardscrabble earnings. Uriarte further supports our study of the economics of the desert in Patagonia:

> the consolidation of the state meant, right after the Conquest of the Desert, the definitive *ranchification* of Patagonia. The ranches brought new relationships of production. Now, thanks to the war, there would at last be land, work, and capital. The identification between state and ranch arose because the space-producing logic of the former became concrete in the latter: the ranch was the unit of capitalist production in Patagonia par excellence, marking the appropriation of territories by the state and the annihilation of the indigenous communities (and the "recycling" or the gaucho as a rural laborer). (165-66)

Not unlike the pampas and littoral, Patagonia was marked by a variety of threads of immigration, but at starkly lower levels than the rest of Argentina, due to settlement patterns that were resource-based. Economic possibility was rampant in this region: "South of the pampas colonists had been settled for some time in the well-irrigated Rio Negro valley, which had become a

prosperous fruit-growing area, marketing its products in the city of Buenos Aires. Also in the south there seemed a promising future for the territory of Chubut" (Rock 179).[7] Promises were short-lived, however, as the region trended toward small settlements with only a slight influx of populations that attempted to tame a wild land:

> [B]eyond these [and other] enclaves and the still-struggling Welsh colonies in Chubut, Patagonia had evolved little beyond the naturalists' paradise encountered by Charles Darwin during the voyage of the *Beagle* some eighty years earlier. The great arid and windswept plateau contained nothing but vast sheep ranches. The mammoth land concentration prevailing in Patagonia was due in part to the land having only one-tenth of the sheep-carrying capacity of that in the province of Buenos Aires, but it also resulted from the methods adopted in distributing the land after the 1879 campaign. . . . When the wool economy began to stagnate at the turn of the century, the arrival of sheep in Patagonia did little to develop the region. (Rock 179)

Again, this further underscores the notion that Patagonia was—and is—a land of promise, but not often realized. A recapitulation of this boom and bust will be seen with oil, as it holds the possibility of work for some who are willing to venture farther south.

Beyond internal economic implications, Patagonia as a geopolitical region was the physical rendering of psychological encounters. It was the area where notions of a nation-state encountered the Other, especially in terms of Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zones" as spaces where meaning is made (4). In fact, national policy even into the twentieth century faced head-on potential incursions from neighboring states, such as Chile, partly due to the sheer size of the region (Rock 179). This mirrors the path of Julia, the mother in *Lengua madre*, who escaped to the region as an outsider; however, this no-(wo)man's-land was practically full of nothing but outsiders, evidenced by the mere fraction of the population being native-born Argentines (see Rock 179). The towns of Trelew and Gaiman affirm this, both appearing in Andruetto, settled and named by Welsh immigrants in their native language.

[7] This is the region of Trelew where Julia flees in *Lengua madre*, which serves as inspiration for Andruetto, based on her own nascent professional career ("Interview" 67).

Escape into Patagonia provides a glimpse into Andruetto's alternative desert-space geopolitically. The south in general, and Patagonia in particular, is not just a literal dimension, but also a figurative location in the national psyche (again, in Cresswell's terms of place). Uriarte views Francisco Moreno's chronicles of Patagonia as a conflation of time and distance, not necessarily in a new creation but, rather, in a continuation of *civilización vs barbarie*, in which Moreno blends a journey of a few days as close to thousands of years in viewing the stone age (indigenous populations) and modern civilization (169). Thus, within the national psyche, there is the idea of Patagonia as a far-away location that offers, in a sense, an escape.

The flight from danger that Julia takes in *Lengua madre* at the onset of the Dirty War traces routes across regions within Argentine territory, in a hushed story later retold to her daughter Julieta:

> [L]e contó, fragmentos de la fuga desde Córdoba, un día de 1975, esquirlas de un tiempo de pavor y de escondites, episodios fragmentados en los que una mujer corre por el campo y escucha disparos, y se esconde en una casa y en la casa la cobijan, le dan pan, le dan sopa, agua limpia, un batón, unas chinelas . . . episodios en los que pasa de una casa a otra, desde Córdoba a Realicó, desde Realicó a Pringles, desde Pringles a . . . siempre corriendo, siempre a hurtadillas, hasta encontrar un sótano en Patagonia, un pozo oscuro donde permanecer por unos años. Su madre le ha hablado de eso alguna vez, no una vez sino varias veces, pero sólo ahora ella lo registra como un episodio de vida, percibe su espesor. (210)

Telling in this passage is the linear progression of locales until the second ellipsis, and it raises questions as to why these particular cities and locations would be included. First, Córdoba, the second oldest city in Argentina and home to the oldest university in the country, is a haven of activism and student populations, clearly placing Julia within the realm of her age and cultural expectations. Following that, however, we as readers can only guess why these cities are listed and not others—perhaps the limitations of space are related to memories and to how the act of fleeing into the unknown is uncharted in the mind. Realicó, the first actual place mentioned, is

considered the central point of Argentina (excluding Antarctic claims) and is found in the province of La Pampa, which would require crossing a boundary. Indeed, entering other jurisdictions would possibly entail the danger of checkpoints or of having a fugitive status, thus cementing it as a marker in the mind and as a transgression that makes one an outlaw. Following Realicó, Pringles is mentioned, presumptively Coronel Pringles, in the southern portion of the province of Buenos Aires. Beyond that, nothing solid is listed; in fact, I want to place special emphasis on the second set of ellipses in the passage above as it underscores the unknown, unrecalled details of fleeing. This seems to parallel classic, New World immigration stories of arriving by boat and having papers documented in the port of entry. Yet, later family history is merely conjecture from one town to another until the present day; it represents a family's story, as opposed to being an actual documented and archived history. Other conjectures that could explain Julia's escape route to Patagonia is the movement toward the coast and the main north-south highway from Buenos Aires into Patagonia proper, crossing the traditional boundary at Carmen de Patagones into Viedma and points south. It is possible that, like clandestine communication, she travels to the south hitchhiking with truck drivers.

In terms of distance, it stands out that Córdoba to Realicó equals nearly 430 km; Realicó to Pringles 477 km; and Pringles to Trelew 847 km, nearly the same distance of the other two legs. Perhaps other stops were not worthy of inclusion, or perhaps this is symbolic of the extra distance required to enter the unknown, that is, the territory farther south. Is there a possible connection here to the *conquista del desierto*, to actual routes taken by military expeditions, that would in a way serve as a parallel universe in which Julia, with her connections to alternative politics, unknowingly retraces the path of the *conquista*? Is this movement part of the recreation myth and story that Julieta up to this point has simply not pieced together—"pero sólo ahora ella

lo registra" (*Lengua madre* 210)? Furthermore, the outlaw element of this movement alludes to national myth and gaucho narratives, crossing boundaries and existing along the periphery. The lack of a clear location, in my opinion, only adds to the element of Julia as a fugitive with unknown whereabouts; this also seems to be an echo of *La mujer en cuestión*, literally questioning her location and her story.

The foray into Patagonia as described by Julia also matches the manner in which others describe the region, and an example from the frantic letter sent to Julia by her mother that we observed in Chapter 1, obviously recounting the turmoil of the Dirty War, instructs Julia to avoid returning home. The explicit geographical direction and notion of Patagonia as the beyond is exactly what I want to emphasize as her mothers implores her to continue "más al sur si querés" (*Lengua madre* 112). In this sense, geopolitically, Julia's case is internal exile, but practically, it might as well be another world. Thus, Julia cannot at once be "at home" with her family and, therefore, share in her *argentinidad*. That right is forfeited, not unlike for so many who experience exile; yet, geopolitically, she is still within the borders of her own country. Corrine Pubill and Francisco Brignole expand on the notion of *insilio* regarding Julia's sojourn into the desert (277). I do not wish to linger on *insilio* as a concept; instead, I want to focus on the location of *insilio* as it pertains to Patagonia proper.

Returning to the connection to the Dirty War, Julia's mother's plea, quoted above, that she stay in Trelew or venture even farther into Patagonia—further into the desert—to remain safe underscores the role of women who are removed or exiled from their domain; this is a violation of the sacred space for women that the dictatorship frequently employed (Bunster-Burrotto 300-07). Having to leave one's land is underlined by this removal from home: "una persona es despojada de todo: de su casa, de la familia, de los amigos, de lo que adquirió en toda una vida o

en varias generaciones, del idioma por sobre todo. De los hijos, en caso de que existan" (*Lengua madre* 67). The uprooting nature of exile cannot be clearer as a violation of nature and nurture, especially of the bonds within families. In this case, both familial branches are cut.

The continued theme of escaping deeper into Patagonia again appears with another direct reference to a different location that offers a vision of economic opportunity, coupled with the notion of the frontier. However, this case clearly manifests a certain horizon of possibility for the protagonists in *Lengua madre*, without necessarily referencing questions of safety. Unlike the previous allusion to Trelew as "más allá" in the sense of a precautionary measure, this newfound space offers opportunity with no explicit danger. Pippo's friend from Santa Cruz (the province immediately to the south of Chubut that is the last piece of the mainland before Tierra del Fuego) is described in gallant terms and praised for his manners and carriage beyond his years:

> El domingo trajo un amigo a casa, un chico de Santa Cruz, tiene diecisiete años pero la conversación de una persona grande y una hermosa educación. . . . Estuve conversando con el amigo de Pippo sobre posibilidades de trabajo en el sur, digo por si más adelante podés salir de ahí, los padres de este chico están en Pico Truncado, pero dice que hay más posibilidades en Comodoro Rivadavia. Dice que en Pico Truncado son todas empresas de YPF y que ocupan mucha gente, el padre es ingeniero en YPF (no es capo, es empleado). (115-16) [8]

Santa Cruz and its economic opportunity represents that dual south. Earlier, we hear Julia's mother imploring that she remain there or go into hiding even farther south; now, we see the interest of the economic boom occurring in the more austral territory. The description of Santa Cruz is verisimilar regarding oil production and other natural resources available in Patagonia for exploitation (Rock 179). Other textual references in *Lengua madre* include a letter from Julia's mother which reveals that the south equals possibility; even under duress, there is another space beyond the limit: "¿querés ir más al sur? encantada" (55). A resigned tone accompanies this

[8] YPF is the Argentine state petroleum company, a major employer in Santa Cruz province.

question, stating that “sos dueña de tu vida” and later, we see the other side of the coin: “¿querés volver? encantada” (55). A simple view notes that there are two options: return home or continue toward the frontier, into the desert. On a national level of the psyche, this echoes a quasi-Manifest Destiny of Argentine history (*la conquista del desierto*), not unlike the North American counterpart of the western expansion.

National Identity as Individual and Collective

Moving from a discussion of economic and geopolitical factors, our attention turns to implications for national identity, both at an individual and at a collective level. Already a theme in the nineteenth century, national identity arose from byproducts of the encounter among Spanish colonists, indigenous populations, and the waves of immigration from Europe and other points beyond the South American continent, often as a result of the nation-building era. By the turn of the twentieth century, Argentina offered the promise of halcyon days in the minds of Europeans, perhaps rivaling North America (Rock xxi-xxii); this was due to liberal (and sometimes racist) policies of immigration that were designed to attract them to Argentina. The economic history of the Argentine republic generally did include such a notion of prosperity, but this was clearly not the case for every person as, truth be told, Argentina’s social order could be split into two groups, “an indigenous mass close to subsistence and a small white ruling class” (xxv). The economic origins of gauchos and the *gente perdida*, along with the seemingly eternal conflict of Buenos Aires’ elites and the rest of the country, set the stage for the nineteenth-century struggle that attempted “to suppress the vagrant population” (38). This economic reality outside the sphere of the influence of elites in Buenos Aires stems from the stereotypical *vagos* who resided on the periphery and who eventually would become known as gauchos (48-49). Throughout the early nineteenth century, a large caste system was emerging: the whites or near-

whites in the cities held power and opportunity, while other classes were pigeonholed into clearly distinct groups (58-59). It was a case in which the proverbial "Other" was driven to the outside (142).

This movement along the periphery frequently occurs in Andruetto, and it matches Nancy Hanway's interpretation of *Martín Fierro* within Argentina's literary cannon: "[t]he body of the gaucho is therefore related intimately to the recodification and use of the pampas as nation-space—because it is linked to the loneliness and expanse of the desert as a place to flee, as an illegal space where the gaucho body is not subject to the emerging national law" (161). This "place to flee" is precisely what we see in *Lengua madre* as Julia escapes to the south.

The desert in Andruetto serves as a gendered space where history and national myth are on full display with respect to women. The violations in the desert—the disruption of the nuclear family, the desertion of others (no pun intended)—mirror many of the storylines and plot-driven themes in Andruetto that center on the home and familial relationships, particularly those between mothers and daughters. Abrupt breaches of that domestic space were hallmarks of the Dirty War. The disruption of the home, such as by being kidnapped from it, is a direct violation of the realm that was meant to belong to women and the family and to harbor stability in the eyes of the junta (Tabak 72). For María del Carmen Feijoo in "The Challenge of Constructing Civilian Peace: Women and Democracy in Argentina," women were victimized twice: economically for the limitations of the home and, later, through relegation to lower tiers of the economy when seeking opportunity outside the home (75).

If women were consigned to their domestic domain from time immemorial, the destruction of that zone and space by the military junta's henchmen was a double violation: they were removed from their homes and private spaces, similarly to how children were removed

from the wombs of those who were detained. As Edurne Portela states, referring to Partnoy, "the reenactments of the traumatic experience via the writing process create a window through which trauma makes itself readable" (55). Many critics have commented on the scene of childbirth and the missing babies taken from detention centers in Partnoy's works; most poignant are the words of Nora Strejilevich that recall Fernando Reati's comments on Argentina's lack of lineage and questioning of identity: "Nace un niño en cautiverio, se agotan las palabras ante lo que no tiene nombre. Nace un presente donde ningún ciudadano entre veinte y treinta años puede estar seguro de su identidad" (Strejilevich 85).

The gendered notion of the Dirty War explored by Diana Taylor is complemented by Fernando Reati's critical approach to patriarchy in Argentina, specifically in his article, "De padres muertos y enfermos: paternidades, genealogías y ausencias en la novela argentina de la posdictadura." Reati explores novels that contain dead or missing fathers and views them as the death of utopia and related to the death of the *patria*. Beyond a metaphorical death, the literal disappearances (and assumed deaths) of victims of state-sponsored terrorism have created for Reati a notion that Argentina must question its lineage for the better part of thirty years. While this certainly implies the notion of bastardization with a lack of male heredity, the real, documented problem is the absence of certainty regarding disappeared, pregnant women whose babies were stolen by the regime. This obstetric violence, while not particularly placed at the time of the *junta*, appears in *Los manchados* as a summary of the sexual exploitation that subjugated women faced:

> Fue un mismo día que nos presentamos las tres, yo misma, mi hermana Emérita y Nicolasa, en las casa de mister Lilican para ofrecernos en servicio y mismo ahí trabajamos un buen tiempo, pero como estaban el señor de la casa y también un joven de merecer, no sabría decirle si Nicolasa le tuvo el hijo para el joven o para el padre del joven o para alguno de los huéspedes, porque antes era así, niña Julieta, cuando se trabajaba en servicio tanto el dueño de casa como los señores que llegaban de visita

> podían hacer cualquier cosa con una, que yo también soy madre en soltera y eso era así en antes, en Esteco y en Tama y en cualquier parte de acá de estos pueblos. (79)

Furthermore, the desert underscores the lack of lineage, since they are all children of mothers without fathers: "en este desierto, el padre no es más que el nombre de un hombre" (*Los manchados* 88).

Whereas Argentina's national mythos can trace part of its economic roots to the desert of the pampa, in Andruetto there is another angle at play within these same spaces that involves the economic and sexual exploitation of women, with the end result being again marginalization. Argentine history also rises from women's roles in the desert, since it was a location for a violation of the norm by gauchos and *indios*. Thus, the lineage of these children in *Los manchados* is suspect, as they are automatically labeled as "other" within the construct of *argentinidad*. In a sense, it is not a barren desert, but a land of violation and rape harkening to the *conquista*. Additional textual evidence of this othering comes from the doctor, who believes that the Tameños are animals or a bad race (which brings Sarmiento's racist notions to mind) (82). It is easy to see in this the concept of *civilización vs barbarie*, but the question posed by Andruetto would be which is barbaric, and which is civilized; this is where an alternative appears. Pubill cites changes to legal codes in 1985 that broke the binary of two categories of children: legitimate and illegitimate. Combined with work from the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, among others, this offers a new method of testing and of legality that ends discrimination ("Estigmatizaciones" 180). Changes also are observed in Argentina's recent abolition of obstetric violence (Herrera Vacaflor 65).

Pubill further contends that this supposed bastardization of children was not necessarily a problem for the upper classes, also drawing our attention to Andruetto's association of the political with the marginalized, referring to the *mancha* as a visible rendering of what was

unspoken (181-82). Continuing this vein of dualities or contradictions, Pubill notes a dichotomy in *Los manchados*, as well as a third option:

> En cuanto al género, en *Los manchados* los personajes se podrían dividir en dos categorías. Por un lado, están los individuos que personifican la traición, la maldad y la violencia física, que son, en su mayoría, personajes masculinos. Por otro, están las víctimas femeninas de esta violencia tanto física como económica. En la novela, el personaje llamado el Manchado, por su falta de nombre concreto, ofrece un tropo retórico que alude a un todo. (173)

We see a reconstruction of national images in that the masculine and feminine are supplanted with alternatives that offer both/and responses (Brignole 267-69); it is no longer a simple dichotomy of *civilización* and *barbarie*, but perhaps of a civilized barbarity or a barbaric civilization. Pubill highlights an exchange in *Los manchados* that calls into question identities and discrimination based on heritage and class ("Estigmatizaciones" 178). Pubill also recalls the "cabecita negra" term with its origins in racism and classism during the early Peronista years that arose from internal migration from regions to the outskirts of Buenos Aires, exemplified in Emérita and Milagro from *Los manchados* ("Estigmatizaciones" 178-79) as well as by the protagonist in *El país de Juan*. Also, a marked paradigm shift of changing the view of mestizaje is fundamental in Andruetto ("Estigmatizaciones" 180). My view is that this happens only in the context of the desert via migration from the interior to the city, following the impact of economic policies.

In a larger context regarding the literary cannon, Pubill notes that Andruetto's texts differ from typical post-dictatorship writing, as the return to democracy has been accompanied by a mainly urban approach to literature (with few forays into the northwest) (169). I expand that take, in that Andruetto fills the niche of the non-urban with this sojourn into the desert that extends well beyond the northwest into the extreme south in Patagonia. In addition to these novels, migration and movement are both common themes in Andruetto's short stories, and the

spaces that are entered often reflect long-term, historical trends. The wayside periphery—the location of the national myth of the gaucho—is front and center in the short story "Los sueños de José." In it, a trip to a *curandero* involves traveling down a dirt road to another town, that is, entering the interior spaces and a void in order to be transformed by a spiritual healer (*La mujer vampiro* 28).

While one view of this alternative in Andruetto could be seen as the death of the *patria*, perhaps what Andruetto is creating is the birth of the matriarchy (or of the *madre patria*). Indeed, birth has long been a sticking point in Argentina, especially as the potential lack of security and faith in one's own identity echoes the calls of the female icons of resistance during the Dirty War. By protesting disappearances and other grievances in person and in public, they symbolically "appeared" as they literally filled plazas and raised their voices in protest to previously sanctioned silence. In Diana Taylor's terms, "loved ones are reproduced and their bodies return to existence" (85). This is precisely the crux of women's writing in Argentina: like the Madres de Plaza de Mayo demanding to know the whereabouts of their children, breaking the junta's imposed silence and despite even some of the *madres*' own disappearances, women are the conduits through which *desaparecidos* have voices and demands can be made. In a certain way, their demands cause their loved ones to reappear or to be reborn. This is especially noticeable in Andruetto's novels, including *La mujer en cuestión*, *Lengua madre*, and *Los manchados*, as all call into question the birth of babies and subsequent lineage via Julieta, whose own story reappears. The "reappearances" caused by the protests led by women are not unlike the rebirth that we observe in the desert, including Julieta's actual birth in the basement in Trelew (*Los manchados* 28, 31). Also poignant here is the textual nature of the letters in Andruetto, that the voices of people from the past return and are present when one reads the

letters (especially in the case of Julieta who desires to reunite with her family who have now passed on).

Personal identity and national identity are intertwined in Andruetto. Her technique for achieving this mixes the personal story with actual place names and locations that exist in present-day Argentina, with the strongest example being that of the southern desert in Patagonia in *Lengua madre*. During Julieta's visit to Chubut in *Lengua madre*, she ventures to Rawson and Playa Unión, cities on the Atlantic coast of Patagonia, renowned for their isolation. Julieta's contemplation near the sea delivers a dual understanding of escaping the family (and the self) in order to find the self (paradoxically), and that her identity as an Argentine is compromised, since she knows more about herself than about her origins:

> Sabe que eso tuvo su costo: la relación con el país y con su familia es ambivalente. Por haber vivido veinte años sin casi moverse de Aldao, la sensación de pertenencia está clavada al suelo de un *paisaje triste*, a la melancolía pobre de su provincia, porque, a excepción de Trelew y sus alrededores, al resto del país solo lo conoce—como si tratara de China o de Japón—por los libros. (*Lengua madre* 65; my emphasis)

The phrase "paisaje triste" could not describe any region better than Patagonia, the location of Trelew, Rawson, and Playa Unión. The mention of China and Japan—arguably the other side of the world, both literally and culturally—underscore the vast distances of Patagonia within Argentina through the process of "othering" the region. By acknowledging that she knows only these few places, she admits that her authenticity as an Argentine, or rather, that her knowledge of "Argentina" as a solid entity is limited. Few places in Argentina are as isolated as these cities, and, indeed, they do fall beyond the original "frontier" at the Río Colorado, in place at the time of the *conquista del desierto*.

In this example, as in other parts of Andruetto, we see the interior of Patagonia, which itself is considered the interior (or otherness) of Argentina. Telling here is that a woman is

provided space through writing, that her only agency is through the imaginary and the exotic. In this case, for an Argentine, the exotic is the domestic, a merger of the two ideas into one interstitial space in the desert. More will be discussed in Chapter 3 regarding this thread of simultaneous being and un-being, the uprootedness that the desert imposes. Shortly, we will also see other exotic locations in Andruetto that call into question the interior of her homeland, as well as the act of violating norms. The entire country of Argentina can be viewed as an ocean and the few places the protagonist has been are mere islands, marked not necessarily by name, but by purpose and epoch:

> Casi no conocía mi país cuando me fui, dice a quien quiera oírla. Tampoco ahora lo conoce demasiado, no ha estado en otros lugares más que en Córdoba, donde estudió, en Trelew, adonde fue a visitar a su madre en algunas ocasiones, y en Buenos Aires unas pocas veces, siempre de paso. Sin embargo, eso que no conoce ha seguido viviendo en ella, hizo en ella su casa, más allá de lo que cree o piensa. (*Lengua madre* 62)

Part of the use of the desert in general and of Patagonia in particular is this unknown component, that is, the general beyond of "más allá," attributed to the entire region. Patagonia has always conjured an unknown, especially during the early years of the republic; Patagonia and the south have been mysterious, remaining unexplored (in Western terms) even into the twentieth century (Rock 4).

***Argentinidad* in Global and Gendered Terms**

The geopolitical desert in Andruetto is not limited to Argentine territory. In fact, connections to other places around the world aid in reconstructing them. In *Lengua madre*, the desert figures as a symbolic place in Julieta's mind as she reads Lessing. Particularly noteworthy in a conversation she has with Lessing in this novel: "Le contó de Persia y de Rhodesia, de su vida ahí y de cómo llegó a Inglaterra con el manuscrito de su primera novela bajo el brazo: *The Grass is Singing*" (50). Readers quickly can see that the independent existence of these two

specific locations, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe and Zambia) and Persia (now Iran), is problematic, due to their colonial history as exotic locations that have been exploited. Also noteworthy is that their past is most certainly associated both with desert spaces (in the case of Persia) and the interior (with Rhodesia). There are political differences between the use of “Persia” or “Iran,” as well as implications for the diasporic community since the 1979 revolution. The symbolism is not merely a coincidence with Lessing’s biography: these now outdated, geopolitical labels reside in the ineffable, in the unreachable realm of the past, similarly to Julieta’s mother and her life in hiding in the basement in Trelew. Memory and the past are journeys into the desert, similar to a sojourn into Persia or Rhodesia; the only tangible souvenir is the written word (the novel manuscript for Lessing and the letters for Julieta). Much like the imagined childhood of Julieta, her imaginary relationship with her mother in Trelew, and an Argentina that no longer exists following the dictatorship, literature and human identity intertwine. This is not the only example of places or locations that change or that are an impossibility to locate—in *Los manchados*, we see the case of Aicuña, “un pueblo perdido en los mapas” (173).

Similar to descriptions of the home as an oasis in the desert, as discussed in Chapter 1, the location in the interior—in the countryside—begins as an Eden-like home:

> se crió en Aldao con sus abuelos, en una casa al borde del campo en la que se vivía de un modo sencillo, sin demasiado dinero. Los primeros años los pasó en ese sitio en la llanura, próximo a un Asilo de Alienados, hasta que asfixiada por la vida austera de su familia y por la mediocridad del pueblo, se fue a la ciudad. (*Lengua madre* 59)

Three things stand out in the quoted passage: first, Julieta’s early years of life are described in an almost pastoral manner, in that they lived “sencillo, sin demasiado dinero,” a supposed bucolic life in the countryside. Second, the “Asilo de Alienados” provides a double meaning. Literally, it is an “insane asylum”; figuratively, it is also an enclosed space meant for those who are isolated or alienated. Ironically, asylum is given to those without space, in that the vulnerable members of

society who have been alienated are rounded up and confined in one particular place. Third, the city acts as a magnet that pulls and reinforces Claudia García's notions of movement—that in Andruetto, we see pendular, linear, and circular variations of migration into and within Argentina (149). This movement further underlines the idea of the desert. As Adam and Eve are expelled from the garden, and not unlike the Jews wandering forty years in the desert, Julieta "desde entonces ha saltado de un sitio a otro buscando aquel lugar de infancia y aquel tiempo perdido" (59). She wanders in the desert, searching for that which has been lost, not unlike her own mother's sojourn from Córdoba toward Patagonia.

Similar to immigrants moving toward the future and possibilities, Julieta reverses the past and returns to the city: "Tal vez por eso, porque se ha criado en un pueblo, es que soporta mal las grandes ciudades como Berlín o Buenos Aires, y quizás también sea por *la melancolía que le provoca la llanura, que se ha refugiado en libros*" (*Lengua madre* 59; my emphasis). While settlement of the wild lands would have been de rigueur in nineteenth-century Argentina—when movement from cities into supposedly uncivilized areas occurred in a much more colonial manner—Julieta represents the twentieth-century movement to the city from the hinterland. Through this pattern, Andruetto offers a dual view of nation-building, that is, where two Argentinas come together in Julieta: the *campo* and the city.

Julieta's life and relationships with other expats in Munich highlight where she has come from and what she has become: "Necesitó estar lejos, extrañarlo todo, para sentirse como en su casa y al mismo tiempo no puede decir que Munich sea su casa, ni que Baviera sea su patria. Así es como ella se convirtió en una mujer ambulante, sin territorio, sin patria, sin padre" (*Lengua madre* 60). Origins mean something; Julieta defines herself and what she has become by the town where she was raised:

> El pueblo donde se crió no fue, ni mucho menos, el territorio de un idilio. La pequeña ciudad en la que fue al colegio, en la que hizo amigos que ya ha olvidado, en la que tuvo su primer amor, podría considerarse un modelo de chatura, con el Asilo y los empleados del Estado, como si se tratara de cuarteles y de militares de bajo rango. La pequeña Aldao, con sus casas chatas y sus bares, con su afición por el juego, su inercia, su aburrimiento inmenso . . . está en el fondo de todo lo que ella es, de todo lo que no quisiera ser. (62-63)

Here, Julia represents a contradiction. Unlike previous generations, she is not completely enthralled with her hometown as an idyllic place, as *nostos*. However, she acknowledges that it defines her, while still being detestable. As the embodiment of late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century Argentina, Julieta is at once aware of her origins, yet she is also embarrassed by them. Not unlike oblivion and amnesty following the Dirty War, she parlays a lack of interest in the civilization of her hamlet into yearning for the apparent chaos and ironic barbarism of the city. While she does distance herself from her past, she cannot ignore it: “Ella no puede decir: la guerra, el exilio, la muerte, no tienen nada que ver conmigo” (63). In other words, her rejection of the nineteenth-century model of Argentina creates a new space, a new hybrid that emerges as a combination of the past, present, and future. For Emilia Perassi, this crisis manifests itself in familial relationships and emigration (of Julieta’s mother in *Lengua madre* and of her father in *Los manchados*), as well as in political indifference (Perassi 112, 113). In particular, we will note in Chapter 3 that this mesh of past, present, and future muddles any notion of a singular understanding of the nation-state, together with individual identity.

In addition to geopolitical and topographical notions of the countryside that play into the creation of identity, the physical land itself figures into the construction of identity:

> Le han quedado en la boca, en las palabras, muchos rastros de la tierra donde se crió, donde están unidas las tres para siempre.
> Abuela, madre, hija.
> Las tres. (*Lengua madre* 61)

While we will focus on time in the third chapter—how the past, present, and future merge—here we see that all three are simultaneously in the same place, with emphasis on the space and agency created for these women within their familial relationships. Furthermore, origins that arise particularly from the land, with all the implications thereof, mean something:

> Ama y odia este país ahora que hace años que vive en otra y habla a diario en otra lengua, ahora que hace tiempo que investiga en una tercera lengua la escritura de Lessing, pero sabe que está hecha de esta tierra y de estas palabras, de cada palabra que ha oído, como está hecho de arcilla un cacharro, aunque viva en Munich, investigue en inglés y hable todo el tiempo en alemán. (61)

This love-hate relationship represents a complicated, yet seemingly simplistic dichotomy of the country, harkening back to the contradiction of civilization vs. barbarism. For example, in the following passage, civilized agriculture and its orderly, small towns drastically contrast with wild, windswept deserts:

> Si volviera a su pueblo en la llanura y viera otra vez los silos, la sede del Club Atlético . . . si pasara por la ruta y viera, una vez más, hacia la izquierda el cementerio donde están los restos de sus abuelos y después, a la derecha, una vez más la portada del Asilo, la invadirían los recuerdos más remotos, la vida de cuando era chica, la vida de una chica que espera a su madre. (53-54)

As noted in Chapter 1, contrasts between patriarchal constructions of the nation-state and feminine ideals are evident in such opposites; organized agriculture, cemeteries (religion), and athletic clubs are compared to the time-crunch of past/present and the flood of memories, particularly those associated with the search for her mother.

Gender does not escape an explanation or discussion when it comes to the desert and Argentina. For Julieta, the comparison of her two grandparents (the image of the grandfather fixed at a desk, yet that of her grandmother as fluid in the fields) raises a drastic question: is Andruetto creating an image of men as static while women are dynamic? Or is this a projection of Julieta's desire to draw closer to her mother who is no longer there? I posit that the male

view—in particular, of Argentina and Argentine history—is fixed: it is a pre-determined, patriarchal view, one that will come into focus in Chapter 3 regarding Kristeva's notions of time. Andruetto, however, is creating a feminine (feminist?) view that is negotiable and offers alternatives; thus, she presents the vision of the grandmother as a child and as an adult. Pubill notes that these are the voices of women who challenge masculine views ("Estigmatizaciones" 175). Locations further underscore the civilization vs. barbarism trope: the grandfather at his desk—representing order, business, and seriousness—with the grandmother frolicking in the fields—young and unruly, not unlike the gaucho. Still, if any theme persists throughout Andruetto, it is the life-giving mother figure and matriarch, instead of the patriarch. Which is really "civilized," and which is "barbaric"? Brignole notes this trend in literature from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in that, typically, masculinities are allowed the freedom to explore, while femininities are relegated to the domestic realm (267-68). Brignole further contends that Andruetto offers a new vision of motherhood that decries human rights abuses, particular to families during the military dictatorship (269). My view is that this process of becoming something new is occurring in the desert, as the location itself is the crucible of change for relationships that heretofore had not followed the norms of Argentine nationalistic paradigms, turning gendered notions of identity on their heads.

Andruetto's novels are not the only examples of geopolitical deserts. Her short stories also provide references to historical locations in desert environments. As we saw in Chapter 1, the desert is a central space in "Olor a nardos" from *El anillo encantado*. There are references to the East, including the Ottoman Empire, Zagros (in Persia), and Baghdad (45-51), all reminding readers of the conversation between Lessing and Julieta in *Lengua madre* (86). "Olor a nardos" also contains an echo of the "más allá" motif, as well as the promise of riches found in the desert

that functions as a land of untold possibility (*Huellas en la arena* 46). In "Olor a nardos," the primary storyline revolves around a woman who has been imprisoned during the reign of Otmán I, during the invasion of Mongols from Turquestán (45-51). Clearly, we read the desert here as an actual place in the interior of the vast Asian continent. Halima epitomizes the damsel in distress, placed in a tall tower "más allá de las tierras verdes" (50). Halima, at once the embodiment of female beauty, matches the descriptions of landscapes in the desert from the first chapter of this study with "la piel suave. Y el pelo negro. Y olía a nardos" (45). Not unlike the victims of state-sponsored violence that we see in other works by Andruetto, such as Julia in *Lengua madre*, Halima finds solace in her space as a woman, albeit inside the literary cliché of a locked tower. Still, this does serve a purpose to connect her to the other women in Andruetto; while she is marginalized as collateral damage from Otmán's invasion (*Huellas* 45), she serves as an object of desire and motivation for the "barbero" (48-51). While her imprisonment in a tower both marginalizes her and prevents her from having agency, the space itself acts as a time capsule of preservation, just as deserts effectively preserve artefacts, in an archeological sense. The imprisonment of Halima conserves the idea of her beauty as a desirable goal for suitors, but not her aging body. At the end of the story, readers learn that the rescuer surely must have died somewhere during this quixotic quest, and all of Halima's beauty has faded except for one astonishing thing: "el perfume aquel de nardos" (51). Drawing parallels to *Lengua madre*, one can see that unlike exile or *insilio* that offers a possible return, Halima has disappeared, and her body is not on display. Still, as we will see in Chapter 3, other indicators (in this case, the sense of smell) provide clarity and measurements that help determine one's whereabouts, providing certainty in a realm of near constant uncertainty.

In *Stefano*, more connections to the geopolitical desert can be found. In the first chapter, there is the voyage to America from Italy, with a fire and a shipwreck. We see that Montenieves is a place of salvation that happens to be in the interior (39). The shipwreck takes the life of Gina, whereas a new partner (Lina) is found in the heartland. Particular references include Gaiman, the small community founded by Welsh immigrants in Chubut (84), within driving distance of Trelew (the site of Julia's basement and hiding in *Lengua madre*). All of these examples of migration echo García's ideas about different types of movement (pendular, linear, and circular) found throughout *Stefano* (151). I connect these to the Argentine trope of the desert, of going into the interior for knowledge and self-actualization, parallel to that of Martín Fierro. Another connection to immigration is found in cultural products, such as music, songs, and instruments (García 153). Furthermore, García highlights the interactions of various ethnic groups from a cosmopolitan variety of national origins that Andruetto uses to create a national map (154). Through this process, Andruetto imagines "la nueva sociedad: la posibilidad social, y no solo personal, de construir una identidad nacional inclusiva" (156). For Perassi, *Stefano* is about migration and, in particular, uprootedness (122-23). García views *Stefano* and *Veladuras* as also connected to indigenous origins and the economic tension that I have already highlighted: "Así las novelas arrojan luz sobre el acceso desigual a la tierra por parte de los inmigrantes, la diferenciación de clase social entre los mismos, la explotación y discriminación del indígena en las ciudades, la vitalidad de las culturas autóctonas del noroeste y a la función cultural integradora de la música, entre otras problemáticas" (146).

Desert locations are front and center in *Veladuras*, since it takes place in the Northwest of Argentina with its clear location of the Quebrada and its indigenous elements (11, 18). Sardi cites the latter, due to the use of words and phrases by the narrative voice (99-100), which I will

further mention in Chapter 3. García mentions the woes of indigenous populations and the exploitation they face in domestic work (159-60). All of these connections echo the actualities of economic development and the ultimate outcomes that we observed from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century policies. García calls our attention to Andruetto's penchant for using interior locations—and not Buenos Aires—as the focus of her works: "Por un lado, a diferencia de los escritores nómades que gravitan hacia las capitales europeas o los centros urbanos del norte, Andruetto escoge el interior de una provincia argentina como lugar de enunciación, escribiendo desde una pequeña granja familiar a 40 kilómetros de la ciudad de Córdoba" (149). However, this contrasts with Julieta in *Lengua madre*, whose graduate studies take her to Munich via other metropolises (including Buenos Aires) on her way to the desert south. This also conflicts with *El país de Juan*, in which movement is from the countryside to the city (17-18). I do agree with García that Andruetto places extra emphasis on the interior of Argentina, but it is not total—there is a combination, a third space that bridges the city and the country (as we will see in Chapter 3). Julia is in that third space in *Lengua madre*, simultaneously belonging to both, yet not exclusively to either. Through *Stefano* and *Veladuras*, Andruetto offers a new consciousness of migration.

García notes this combination of nineteenth- and twentieth-century migrations within Argentina that underscore the traditional view of the duality of Buenos Aires versus the interior, which creates a new mixture:

> A contracorriente de otras tendencias en la literatura latinoamericana actual, que celebran el nomadismo y la globalización hacienda de los grandes centros urbanos europeos o norteamericanos su lugar de enunciación y escenario narrativo, Andruetto explora la repercusión de los procesos transnacionales del siglo XX en el ámbito nacional de la Argentina. Así eludiendo la centralidad de Buenos Aires, fragua una geografía de la patria inmigrante que simultáneamente articula un recorte del espacio transnacional, marcado por los movimientos migratorios internacionales (desde Europa y entre los

> países limítrofes) así como por las migraciones domésticas hacia los núcleos urbanos, y se inscribe dentro del ámbito de la region. (163)

This new nexus happens in the desert and the interior of Argentina in what Pratt has termed "contact zones" (4).

Economic development appears in *La niña, el corazón y la casa*, matching Rock's descriptions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century economic policies and outcomes. In particular, the countryside is a story of an eventual monopoly, but some families seem to have an oasis, including the grandmother's relatives (18). There is also a direct reference to the railroad industry, especially to a now nearly defunct line that hardly runs to Cineville (29). Similar to that, in *El país de Juan*, the city and the countryside are juxtaposed, showcasing different visions of life: the countryside is rough and full of poverty, while the city seems to offer more economic opportunity for the protagonists as a place of dreams, while they travel through the desert (14-18). However, many of these immigrants soon become *cartoneros*, impoverished city dwellers who make their lives by rummaging through trash for objects to recycle (20-21). Just as we have seen throughout Andruetto, these marginalized characters leave the city, return to the North, and survive in exile in the interior (54). This coming and going of protagonists matches the repetition of economic cycles of boom and bust observed in Argentine history.

In chapter one, we noticed the importance of movement, or crossing borders, in "Todo movimiento es cacería," the first story of Andruetto's collection, *Cacería*. I underscored that this movement proceeds into the interior where women become empowered, and it also is relevant to this chapter with respect to border crossing in present-day geopolitical and cultural terms. Crossing into another realm is not merely a literal jump, but also a figurative notion, especially traversing the boundaries of what is acceptable in culture, as Arán highlights in the grotesque, large bodies of the protagonists (79). This would be a violation of sorts, not unlike the gaucho

bodies in the heartland and the desert that disregarded the cultural norms of their times. Candela Marini cites these movements into a variety of geographic locations as a combination of the past and present, yet there is an uncontrollable difficulty for those protagonists (221). I will not disagree with this interpretation of the specific geographic locations, but I view them less as a breakdown of time and more akin to a breakdown in space, since borders are erased and place is no longer restricted to one single locale. In some sense, this is globalization in a post-dictatorship world, but with Andruetto, it is a return to a national purpose: these movements across international borders in "Todo movimiento es cacería" are, again, the impulse for knowledge on an individual basis that makes all things possible, not unlike García's view of *Veladuras* as a transnational Argentina (163).

Aspects of Argentine history that serve as a backdrop in Andruetto are boom and bust, coupled with revolution and coup, as well as the Dirty War. With the desert, the oases of the interior, as well as the geopolitical and economic underpinnings of the texts, we will now see a new option emerge that I call "a queering of the desert" in Chapter 3; it allows for a different perspective and restructuring of the gaucho narrative—Andruetto's protagonists will become a new *cautiva*.

Chapter 3: A Queer Time and Place: The Feminine Desert in Andruetto

Sometimes, distances are not literal or linear, as in the Spanish *allá* or *allí*. As we continue exploring the desert in Andruetto, we see this concept fully, especially in ambiguous measurements and imprecise locations where meaning seems to be negotiable. These alternative time markers are a type of queering of space. Indeed, the desert in Andruetto is a queer space outside the bounds of patriarchal heteronormativity: it is sexualized and gendered, but not sensual. By reading the desert and protagonists as queer, especially Julia and Julieta in *Lengua madre*, we find an alternative to Argentine literature and its official history: the desert in Andruetto offers a new *cautiva*, reworking indirectly Echeverría's poem, by reconstituting time and space in protagonists who seemingly spiral close to repeating history as women who have been taken captive, yet are unable to return home once they are free. I will rely heavily on Susana Rotker's analysis in *Cautivas: olvidos y memoria en la Argentina* as Andruetto's protagonists parallel these literary and historical Argentine figures. Gendered notions of the Dirty War and of the military junta's rule are a recapitulation of the *cautiva* tradition, similar to Rotker's understanding of the origins of the *cautiva* myth in Lucía Miranda (147). In particular, the *cautiva* was related to a militaristic or macho desire to control and dominate, populate, and rule, as will be discussed later. Thus, a white woman who lives with *indios* is a violation of supposed norms or a national-origin mythos (151). The nuclear family, with the feminine homemaker at its center, was to be the guardian of Argentine nationalism and the *patria*. Any

deviation from that cultural norm would be considered a violation akin to the lawlessness of the gauchos, and Rotker highlights that this view may be akin to that of a sex worker (156-57).

However, the queering of the desert in Andruetto does not arise from the standpoint of sexuality or performative gender, but from the perspective of othering, as well as from conceptions of bodies being in between, as they occupy marginalized spaces beyond the scope of cultural norms. I rely here on Sara Ahmed's notions of space and orientation (3-8) as well as Ahmed's understanding of temporality. The latter "reminds us that orientations are effects of what we tend toward, where the 'toward' marks a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present" (20). I also apply "Women's Time" by Julia Kristeva, particularly "cyclical and monumental" temporalities that spring from "female subjectivity" and which clash with more direct and linear notions of time (16-17). To borrow from mathematics, I view these temporalities as asymptotic, in that they are functions that approach a certain line, but never touch. These notions of "almost" appear in the language that Andruetto uses, specifically in conversations among women, that provide an ambiguity of temporal and spatial locations.

Women in the Desert

As seen in chapters one and two, the location of many protagonists, their actions, and plot development in Andruetto are found at the margins. We continue to look into this marginalization with respect to women in the desert. Also, derivatives of the mother figure often appear in Andruetto's corpus and titles, such as in *La mujer en cuestión* or *Lengua madre*. In fact, Andruetto is all about women: as mothers, daughters, and as Argentines that are an alternative to the über-macho junta. The protagonist's compatriots and friends in *La mujer en cuestión* find themselves on the periphery. Petrona P. de Petronovich is described precisely in those terms: "La señora de Petronovich vive, en la actualidad, en las afueras de un pueblo,

prácticamente en el campo, retirada de todo, como la misma Eva, a unas pocas cuadras de distancia una de otra, y ambas se ven casi a diario, aun cuando esta última conserve respecto de aquélla algunas reservas" (54). Note the specific explanation that she lives "en las afueras de un pueblo" and that is "prácticamente en el campo." This places Petrona at the same entrapped and marginalized existence as numerous characters in Andruetto, mentioned in the previous chapters with respect to the crossroads and the countryside. Furthermore, "retirada de todo" is another marker of Eva (the protagonist, whose name we will not learn in the novel for a number of pages), and countless other victims of atrocities during the Dirty War: withdrawn from daily life—from fear of kidnapping or political fallout—or simply living in a culture of silence due to political instability.

In *Los manchados*, we see nearly the same description of another woman and her dwelling place: "La madre de su papá todavía vive, niña Julieta, es la mujer de esa casa llena de perros que está subiendo el cerro, como quien va para la mina abandonada . . ." (63). Two distinct things are noteworthy here: first, she lives on the periphery on the way to the mines, the site of many of the atrocities and violations that have occurred in the town of Tama. Second, the brief comment that she resides in a house full of dogs reveals an othering; she is doubly marginalized as a woman on the sidelines and due to her lack of agency. Further commentary on the situation in Tama reveals that the educated elite who have grown beyond their humble origins do not view Tama in a positive light: "Ese Doctor, viejo conocedor de leyes, que desde hacía años cuidaba los intereses de la compañía inglesa y ya casi nada recordaba de sus orígenes, creía que los tameños eran mala raza, animales que no sabían trabajar, y que de haber hecho como ellos, nunca hubiera llegado a nada" (*Los manchados* 82). The doctor seems to parallel Julieta in her search for her family's origins, in that he hardly can remember his beginnings. This

also replicates the questions of identity and of memory in Andruetto, for one must wonder what happens when the memories of one generation are lost and not passed on to the next. Furthermore, if the doctor is incapable of remembering his own story, how would he be able to offer reliable testimony regarding the town of Tama and the supposedly cursed inhabitants? This also parallels *La mujer en cuestión* and the narrative voice/informant whose story, as well as the interviews conducted, are not necessarily trustworthy.

While Andruetto's universe tends to focus on women, marginalization in *La mujer en cuestión* also happens to men. The widower of Eva's aunt, who resided in Israel, is described in guarded detail (to protect his privacy and security). Again, he lives on the outskirts and is isolated: "Dicho testigo es un anciano, ingeniero agrónomo para más datos, que se encuentra recluido en un pequeño campo de las Sierras Chicas, en un sitio que por preservar su intimidad (N. del I.: él lo ha pedido expresamente) no se nombrará, y allí vive desde que enviudó" (66-67). The location of the Sierras Chicas is telling. They are close to Córdoba, yet available for residents as an escape, which are also described in Andruetto's "Sobre estas historias." While not remote in the grand scheme of Argentine geography, the Sierras Chicas are clearly marked for their otherness: they are not flat plains that extend nearly endlessly toward the horizon and the Atlantic. They are intimate and enclosed, a cool oasis of sorts amid the semi-arid pampas.

The need to safeguard names and locations continues as a theme throughout Andruetto. This echoes the national dis-ease of silence, as it takes its toll not only on what cannot be said about whom, but also about where people are. Safeguarding family requires the creation of new spaces, naming not the known, but the ineffable:

> Estuvo por aquí Raimondi para preguntar si tenías algún libro de Valle Inclán. Olfateé que quería averiguar algo (ya sabés cómo soy, tengo un sexto sentido) y así fue nomás porque dio vueltas y vueltas hasta que me preguntó dónde vivías, pero quedate tranquila, que le dije la dirección pero le di el nombre de otro pueblo: Tudor, que es el que me salió

> porque justo había escuchado esa palabra en la radio. Él dijo "qué raro, nunca oí ese pueblo", me dijo también (no sé si para hacerse el agrandado o de bronca) que tiene cualquier cantidad de horas de clase y que rechazó un montón. (*Lengua madre* 34)

While the desert can represent a land of danger or the unknown, Julia's mother clearly states the contrary, that the desert is the safest place, as its nothingness underlines that it is an "other" space, and not the dangerous space where the family is located: "*A mí la distancia no me importa, porque están las cartas que nos comunican en una forma total y ¿para qué más? Vos sabés cuál es nuestro punto de vista (el de tu padre y el mío), ya te lo he dicho otras veces, nosotros pensamos que allá estás más segura y que también es más seguro para todos*" (*Lengua madre* 136). In this case, the desert has become its own oasis, not unlike our previous point of *insilio* or internal exile, in which people were forced to flee political violence without crossing international boundaries, as discussed in prior chapters. As in many other places in Andruetto, it is writing that makes this communication possible; that writing traverses not only time, but also a nearly infinite space that separates the two parties, paradoxically joined in this type of communication. Since letters were also censored during the Dirty War, one questions whether writing supplants more revolutionary and dangerous activities using technology, such as the telephone, to communicate, due to compromised wires. Any communication proves to be risky during the Dirty War. Andruetto provides details from her own personal history, documented in an interview with Pubill, about receiving letters during the *dictadura* that were practically smuggled by truck drivers (precisely how they are described in *Lengua madre*). Letters would not be sent via the mail as they often would arrive with changes penned by someone else or from fictitious addressees, signs of intrusion into private spaces, a tactic often employed by the military junta ("Interview" 69).

Andruetto follows a familiar vein in Latin American prose in that women are often relegated to certain spaces. The image of the female during the dictatorship chronicles this notion of feminizing the so-called "subversives" in her works, indirectly along the lines of Debra Castillo's analysis of the "*loca*" in *Talking Back: Toward a Latin American Feminist Literary Criticism*. For Castillo, all the connotations of "*loca*" must be considered, due to their different spaces of origin: for example, women crossing boundaries from the traditional realm within the home to the public space of political discourse in the streets usually reserved for men, such as during the demonstrations in the Playa de Mayo. Citing Castro-Klarén's "la loca criolla en el ático," Castillo extends this stance to the junta's view of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, and she also tackles notions of space in Latin American women's writing, a key element of Argentine life, as well as of its literature (6-9).

Dichotomies and juxtapositions, like those analyzed in *Talking Back*, also remind readers of the *puta-virgen* narrative of *marianismo* that place women in restrictive roles (see Evelyn P. Stevens's definition in "Marianismo: The Other Face of Machismo" 91). They have relevance here for the way in which Argentina's military junta viewed women as saints within the sacred space of the home, or as defiant, subversive sinners outside of it, as the root cause of political or economic turmoil. In this case, either side of the *puta-virgen* construction was damning to women, since it did not allow for agency, complications, or any deviation from the norm. This also recalls our discussion of a new mestiza according to Anzaldúa, with particular emphasis on border crossing and the revision of the "*virgen/puta* (whore) dichotomy" (31).

The queering of space in Andruetto also applies to the naming of individuals, not unlike the political repression and instability of the junta. The prime example is *La mujer en cuestión*, as the actual name of the protagonist does not appear until after her physical description from the

supposed report that attempts to ascertain her whereabouts and the veracity of her story (16). Instead of using a direct point of departure that provides her legal name, the novel begins with her physical description that sounds like a police report: “Mide un metro con setenta y cinco, una altura superior a la media de las mujeres argentinas de su tiempo. Pesa actualmente ochenta kilos, unos cinco por encima de su peso ideal” (15). Furthermore, the actual naming of the woman in question is after her hair color is discussed; perhaps this is also a reference to police tactics or *machista* interrogation methods in which a woman is not viewed as a person, but rather, as a body meant for view and consumption by men. Still, Andruetto’s technique of introducing the woman in question in a non-linear form underscores the notions of the lack of identity of the *desaparecidos*, those missing and unidentified during the military junta, playing into the notion of a bastardized nation unsure of its identity. It is not a biography; it is a report based on the best information available from testimony, as there is no first-hand account given to the reader from the perspective of the protagonist.

Relying on the testimony of others to stitch together a purported truth (like Penelope’s weaving) is mirrored in other areas of Andruetto, namely in the letters that Julieta reads in *Lengua madre*. As readers, we are treated to the letters FROM family who are writing TO Julia and not Julia’s response to their letters. Almost like a puzzle meant to be crafted by readers, the letters offer some insight into characters’ lives and minds, but there is the limitation of a first-person narrative flowing only in one direction, as if we were hearing only one part of a telephone call. In *La mujer en cuestión*, the testimonies—and rumors—from witnesses call into question her behavior as a woman and a citizen. This is a direct result of her supposed political involvement, whether true or not, that has been assumed by others. The following description indicates her entrapment in her house and her reclusion, due to abuse from others:

> la hostilidad circundante, la maldad de cierta gente, las burlas recibidas en "los años más duros que le tocó vivir" . . . cuando se fue, "recién salida del infierno" al pueblo de donde eran sus padres, tiempos en los que "apenas si salía de su casa" para comprar las cosas más indispensables y "(los muchachos) le gritaban loca de mierda o comunista", dicho esto como el más cruel de los insultos, así como otras locuciones, todas igualmente ofensivas. (*La mujer en cuestión* 34)

Examples of such a national mindset during the Dirty War are explained in ¡*Nunca más*! This also recalls Andruetto's short story, "Cuernos sobre una chiva", in which the mother is trapped in her house, imprisoned similarly to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, in which the protagonist experiences a mental breakdown.

Although the protagonists are entrapped, their confinement does provide some space for them, albeit small. A slight freedom is found in a protected, designated space, and in activities culturally associated with women and the home, which appear as markers of a supposed space. This is seen in the following commentary from the narrative voice in the novel that highlights an interview with the supposed protagonist of the novel (the actual *mujer en cuestión*, Eva): "En la segunda entrevista que se le realizara, manifiesta '. . . usted me pregunta cómo estoy ahora, qué sé yo . . . me hace bien tejer al crochet, eso me distrae, hace que se me pasen las horas, los días . . . también tengo buenos momentos con Pacha, con Lila, con muy pocos más . . . '" (*La mujer en cuestión* 113). Note the use of "crocheting," which is reminiscent of the eternal literary technique of spinning (or weaving) a tale, associated with Penelope in its classic Greek origin and Scheherazade from the Middle Eastern *One Thousand and One Nights*. Furthermore, the nature of the interrogation in the interview leaves doubt that the space is actually safe. While granting some room to talk about her past experiences, she still peppers her speech with hesitation and evasion of naming too many names. In some ways, she does resemble a mad woman (or Castro-Klarén's "*loca*") in that she has been released from detention and—like victims of political violence—often has trouble distinguishing the past and the present, in a sort

of eternal flashback of a traumatic event or series of episodes. On a similar note, the space where we see Julia in *Lengua madre* is an inversion of the "mad woman in the attic" by being, instead, the mad woman in the basement. No stretch of the imagination is required to substitute "distraught" or "traumatized" for "mad" or "*loca*," since Julia suffers as a victim of state-sanctioned violence.

Just as these spaces offer a duality of experiences for women—marginalization, yet also agency—, the desert as a setting in Andruetto is both harsh and welcoming and provides a multitude of experiences. It offers a clear juxtaposition of nature and humans, that is, the natural world vs. the artificial. Claudia García notes an overwhelmingly sensory experience in the *noroeste* of Argentina, compared to the boring areas of Córdoba (157). The same contrast is on display in *El país de Juan* with the bucolic characteristics of the countryside and the difficult life of *cartoneros* in the city.

Returning to theories of human geography, we see in Cresswell an explanation of what Andruetto's characters are doing and how Andruetto problematizes women, otherness, and spaces. These cultural "transgressions"—including Julia traveling clandestinely across provincial borders to flee potential detention before the Dirty War and the women whose bodies move beyond cultural norms in "Todo movimiento es cacería"—involve spaces that are traversed (and violated):

> [P]eople, things and practices were often strongly linked to particular places and . . . when this link was broken—when people acted "out of place"–they were deemed to have committed a "transgression." . . . [P]eople and practices were considered . . . to have transgressed the supposedly common-sense link between place and the things that go on in it. The purpose of this work was to show how place does not have meanings that are natural and obvious but ones that are created by some people with more power than others to define what is and is not appropriate. (Cresswell 27)

Throughout the run-up to the Dirty War, during the *dictadura*, and after the return to democracy, cultural norms offer insight into power structures within Argentina; the deviation from strict codes of the nuclear family would undermine the junta's hegemony. In Cresswell's terms, it does not really matter that protagonists are inhabiting the desert, but instead, it is noteworthy that they are inhabiting a forbidden zone. In Julia's case, she flees under the cover of darkness to avoid potential, unmerited suspicion and detention, whereas the corpulent bodies of the women in "Todo movimiento es cacería" move beyond standards of beauty with ulterior motives in mind, mainly the exploitation of men who themselves would seek to exploit women.

The possibility of the desert in general and of Patagonia in particular in some ways provides a space for women, as evidenced throughout *Lengua madre*, in letters that Julia receives from her family: "Yo no quería ir pero si no voy tu papá se enoja así que fui, hablamos de chinchillas y por supuesto *de un viaje al sur*, para verte […] A propósito de casita, está quedando hermosa, más de lo que creíamos, *en la cocina vamos a poner azulejos decorados en celeste y piletas de acero inoxidable, ¡un sueño!*" (18; my emphasis). The combination of everyday life ("chinchillas") with the desire to visit Julia ("un viaje al sur") underscore my point that the interior desert, especially Patagonia, fills the consciousness of the reader as a desirable location. Julia's mother continues this differentiation of space and place by describing a nearly perfect interior of a house after remodeling, emphasized above and in the following: "Separamos la galería en dos, y queda una partecita en la que hemos puesto una mesa con sillas, donde te estoy escribiendo, vieras qué hermoso, pondré algunas plantas, . . . así luce mejor" (19). This beautiful description serves as the space for women not only to exist, but also to practice their agency (writing, communication), which is significant considering the hallmarks of the time that corresponds to the Dirty War.

Women Responding to the Dirty War

Through an historical lens, Argentina's Dirty War from 1976 to 1983 and the subsequent fallout reveal the challenges in responding to trauma, loss, exile, and return in Andruetto. Looking at women's actions and writings from this era does not imply an essentialist position on my part or Andruetto's. Rather, women have responded in a different manner to that of male writers—especially in consciously gendered ways—due to their female subjugation or placement as Other in the historical context of the patriarchal Dirty War. The nuances of language, naming, and response in the face of terror is a literary practice aimed at recovering the humanity of individuals, as well as that of a nation, as is seen in Andruetto. This underscores the notion of limitations placed on women in Argentine society during the regime of the junta. Women did enter the labor market, but it resulted in only a slight impact for women's economic place in society. Rock cites labor statistics from the mid-twentieth century, that women in the workplace rose from 20% in 1960 to 25% in 1970, generally in domestics or in "middle-class service occupations—banking, insurance, commerce, public administration, and the vocational professions" (332). During the military dictatorship of the 1970s and 80s, as Fanny Tabak notes, women were deemed responsible by the junta as the first line of establishing order in society (72). For María del Carmen Feijoo in "The Challenge of Constructing Civilian Peace: Women and Democracy in Argentina," women were doubly victimized: economically for the limitations of the home and later through relegation to lower tiers of the economy when seeking opportunity outside the home (75).

Returning to *La mujer en cuestión*, the report recalls police descriptions of a crime scene, physical details, and later a supposed identity, like the discovery of a homicide victim or of a missing person. These queerings of identity for females are not matched when it comes to men.

Unlike the woman in question of the eponymous novel, men in Andruetto often do not lack agency or verified whereabouts. The case of Ernesto Soteras, for example, clearly identities a person, an event, and a death:

> [I]magínese, éramos veinte millones de desgraciados, y para peor por ese tiempo se nos murió nuestro amigo . . . ", en clara referencia a la muerte de Ernesto Soteras, compañero de estudios de la protagonista de este informe y amigo de ambas, sucedida en noviembre de 1978 (N. del I.: según el diario La Voz del Interior del 3/11/78, Ernesto Soteras murió en un enfrentamiento con las fuerzas de seguridad), en una situación oscura que no es del todo ajena a Eva. (23)

The death of a man is added with a date and with a source; Eva's whereabouts are merely speculation, as is their relationship. It is not certain whether she was a subversive or was involved in the case of Ernesto Soteras, again removing closure. The metafictional narrator later shines light on the lack of certainty regarding the woman in question:

> Este informante entiende que nunca se podrá saber de un modo cabal si se trata de una víctima reiterada de la maledicencia, si hizo las cosas que algunos testigos le adjudican por ingenuidad, arrebato o desconocimiento, o si por el contrario respondió siempre a cuestiones precisas que su entorno calla o desconoce y era tan consciente de lo que hacía y de lo que buscaba que se dio el lujo de pasar por quien no sabe ni comprende nada. (115)

A passage later in the novel clarifies the crux of these works of literature by Andruetto when viewed from an historical and national perspective. As *La mujer en cuestión* appears in the format of a report from a hired investigator, it is difficult—perhaps impossible—for the writer of the *informe* to determine a singular, verifiable identity when Eva has multiple, supposed identities:

> Quien esto escribe, carece de una imagen completa y veraz de todo lo concerniente a la vida de Eva, pese a que no ha ahorrado esfuerzos para conseguir la mayor información sobre ella, de la manera más objetiva, a efectos de redactar un informe ajustado a la realidad, lo que es decir a las necesidades del mandante (aun cuando quien redacta este informe no sepa hasta qué punto los asuntos de la mujer en cuestión son ya de conocimiento del mismo), y dibujar un perfil cercano a la verdad, pues el problema principal es saber quién es, quién fue y cómo fue esta mujer en las diversas etapas de su vida. (31)

Again, this tripartite description of supposed states of being ("quién es, quién fue y cómo fue") underscores the unknowable in time and space, as well as the interstitial in relation to being a woman who is also suspected of being a "subversive."

The passage continues, however, with the notion that hers are not singular identities but, rather, collective ones, not unlike the testimonial genre throughout Latin America where a communal voice replaces that of a particular individual:

> En relación a lo arriba expresado, el mayor inconveniente que a este informante se le presenta es el reconocimiento de que una persona es en realidad muchas, de modo que, a medida que se avanza en la investigación, sus características se amplían, derivan en incidentes menores, se contradicen unos aspectos con otros, y el sujeto en cuestión es visto por distintos testigos como si se tratara de sujetos diversos con vidas diferentes al extremo, de modo que podría llegar a parecer que no estamos hablando de una sino de muchas personas. (*La mujer en cuestión* 31)

This multi-faceted point of view reminds readers of Julieta's mother in *Lengua madre* and suggests Emilia Perassi's interpretation that Andruetto is not offering a clear-cut biography of protagonists but, rather, a convoluted one. Regarding Julieta, Perassi states that her life story is a "relato indirecto, pues; nunca autorrepresentación sino heterorrepresentación: representación a través de las palabras del otro" (117). The "testigos" referred to in the passage are the people from Eva's life who are interviewed; in a thread similar to protests organized by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, the act of invoking and naming the disappeared causes them to reappear, and the essence or being of the protagonist is conjured by others.

Physical descriptions in *La mujer en cuestión* are, perhaps, the most telling about her personhood, age, and identity. The protagonist's hair dyes—and thus, the changing of her projected physical appearance—allow readers to infer multiple identities at once, dwelling in the same complicated person. They also play into the notion I am underlining as a marker, an indicator of one's identity and one's age without being a mathematical or culturally determined

element—in other words, the hair color is a queer notion that blends and bends her identity. Furthermore, verb tenses ("es, o ha sido") indicate a fluid state of being that reminds one of "female subjectivity" with respect to time in Kristeva, particularly the "monumental temporality" that is "infinite like imaginary space" ("Women's Time" 16). They contrast with other constructs of time that are "linear" and connected to the "logical and ontological values of any given civilization" (17). One may be or may have been or may not necessarily be present, based on descriptions:

> El cabello es, o ha sido, porque ahora se lo tiñe, castaño, más exactamente caoba, con apenas una inclinación al colorado, "sólo una idea de rojizo en el castaño, sobre todo cuando se pone al sol", según Alicia Finchelman (soltera, nacida como ella en 1952) que la conoce desde la infancia pues vivían en la misma cuadra. "De chica fue, podría decirse, pelirroja", agrega la misma Alicia, y ésa parece ser la razón por la que todas las testigos mujeres dicen cada vez que cambió el color de su cabello (Note del Informante: según se ha podido comprobar lo tuvo negro, castaño claro, caoba y rubio ceniza), éste terminó variando al colorado. Hay quienes aseguran que a los veintiocho años habrían comenzado a salirle algunas canas; quien más insiste en esto es Guillermo Rodríguez (nacido en 1948, ex marido). . . . (*La mujer en cuestión* 15-16)

Again, this is not merely a linguistic exercise looking at tenses and time-markers, but it is telling to note the structure of this passage. Hypothetical descriptions ("habrían comenzado"), present indicative versus present perfect (thus, indicating some supposed change: "es, o ha sido"), and a further return to the norm (as in every attempt at dying her hair—with no mention of fashion, politics, or safety as a motivation—only to result in an eventual regression to her natural color) all underscore the supposed nature of these claims. According to the narrative voice of the investigator, they are presumptions and not facts.

From the information in the above passage, it can clearly be ascertained that months would pass between visits or encounters, undermining the credibility of any supposed witnesses whom the investigator would interview. This, again, is an echo of the culture of questioning, passing, and outing during the Dirty War in Argentina. Further indicators of assumed or

perceived identity follow in a consensus of what her true physical appearance revealed: “De cualquier modo, todos coinciden en que siempre tuvo una cabeza de rulos apretados, como si se tratara de una africana, pero de piel blanca y ojos verdes; aunque muchas judías, y éste es el caso, judía por parte de madre, tienen el pelo de esta manera” (16). In this passage, her otherness is on display, an immediate signifier that she is, indeed, not 100% from the white majority. This ties into the “white-washing” of Argentine history that has ignored, if not deliberately hidden, ancestry that does not correspond to the racist, political desires of an immigrant, northern European population, originating mostly from the era of Sarmiento. This is not a unique incident in which Andruetto tilts toward inclusive histories that acknowledge indigenous and other roots in Argentina (Sardi 99-100).

A Queer Time and Place

Queering of time persists as a theme in Andruetto as precise moments and distances are relative or measured with alternative definitions. In *La mujer en cuestión*, the family lineage of the protagonist, Eva, includes her aunt: “Esther Freiburg, a la que ya se ha hecho referencia, quien, cuando Eva era chica, se fue a vivir a Israel y allí residió hasta su muerte), única hermana de su madre, alejada de su vida tempranamente por razones geográficas, pero a quien, sea como fuere, Eva siguió queriendo a la distancia” (38). This is not unlike the memorable scene in *Lengua madre* in which Julieta remembers a movie in which a Cuban mother and daughter grapple with the difficulties of intercontinental distance and understanding:

> ¡Hija! ¿Dónde estás? ¿Aquí?, pregunta emocionada la madre.
> ¿Dónde voy a estar, mamá? ¡Estoy aquí!, dice la hija.
> ¿Aquí? ¡Aquí! ¡Gracias a la Virgen de Copacabana, ya estás aquí! ¡Julio, Nancy, nuestra Mirita está aquí!
> ¡No, mamá! ¡No estoy ahí!, ¡estoy aquí, aquí te digo, en España!
> ¿En España estás?, se escucha casi sobre los créditos la pregunta ya sin respuesta de la madre. (176)

Emilia Deffis also cites this passage, but emphasizes that these deictics (here, there, etc.) are noteworthy for their playful poetic and musical qualities (238). I contend, however, that these differences in language are not merely playful or poetic, but rather, they are intentionally underlining the otherness and incongruence of time and space—and this is not the only instance in which Andruetto plays with notions of verb tenses.

Pampa Olga Arán calls our attention to the lack of future tense in Andruetto's short story "Los rastros de lo que era" from *Cacería* (85). Slight alterations of spelling—which do allow history to rhyme if not repeat itself—appear in *La niña, el corazón y la casa* in the child Tina, whose name is a derivative of her grandmother Ernestina (Sardi 105-06). Sardi contends that this is a signal in which someone absent reappears (the grandmother alongside the child). I argue that this also is a link to the military junta and the calls for justice and cries of *presente*, in which the act of invoking *desaparecidos* makes them, in fact, reappear. More obvious to readers is Julieta's name as a derivative of her mother's. Furthermore, she appears as a spitting image of her mother at her grandmother's funeral, a case in which language, again, appears to be playful, but underlines the infinite and continual time of Kristeva: "¿La hija de Julia?, preguntó una mujer en el velorio de su abuela. / Sí, dijo ella, la hija. / ¡Sos igual a tu madre! Los mismos gestos, la misma voz, un calco . . . " (172-73).

Interstitial physical and chronological locations link the case of Eva in *La mujer en cuestión* with Dirty War narratives, due to the uncertainties that are underlined, not necessarily by unreliable testimony, but by the very nature of suppositions and the lack of a body of evidence. This is a prime example of the problematic nature of cases of *desaparecidos* that are hallmarks of the Dirty War, as *¡Nunca más!* also attests about that historical period. Of note, the supposition that Eva had a child takes center stage:

> También cabe la posibilidad de que el hijo de marras haya nacido en el centro clandestino de detención en el que estaba retenida Eva, o en alguna maternidad pública, privada o clandestina a donde ésta podría haber sido llevada, información que se infiere de indirectas lanzadas por su amiga Pacha, quien como ya se ha dicho también estuvo en Campo de la Ribera, o por la propia Eva, pues no se ha podido acceder a otros testimonios sobre este punto. (*La mujer en cuestión* 40) [9]

Again, language plays an extra role in underlining the impossibilities or the unlikelihood of events occurring: "podría haber sido llevada" and "no se ha podido acceder a otros testimonios." These assertions continue the thread of uncertainty at both a denotative and connotative level, the former alluding to the actual meanings, while the latter reminds readers of the nature of the Dirty War in Argentina, of rumors upon rumors and the culture of uncertainty (continuing still as a fall-out to the Dirty War). According to Pubill, *La mujer en cuestión* offers a noteworthy take on testimonial writing:

> Whether it be from afar, or up close, those who have heard about her repeat what they have heard, thereby echoing rumors of rumors and creating more rumors ad infinitum. The end result is that the woman in question becomes doubly erased in the text. In this way, the testimonial condition is erased since she does not participate from a position of solidarity. She is not in charge of her representation and moreover is silenced by rumors. ("Rumors" 132)

This is not unlike Luisa Valenzuela's "Cuarta versión," with the problematic nature of the text due to its form; it leads readers to wonder what, exactly, can be deduced from the non-linear storyline and from the set-up of a narrator as primary investigator and interpreter (since these lines are blurred).

Similar techniques appear in *Lengua madre* with the epistolary nature of the text: there is a series of letters that are not in any chronological order and do not necessarily have definitive recipients. This requires readers (both readers of the novel and the protagonist who reads the letters) to piece together meaning. It is not a direct "from on high" dictation from the author or

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[9] Campo de la Ribera was a clandestine detention center in the city of Córdoba (*Espacio para la memoria: Campo de la Ribera*).

the writer of the letter to the reader. This omnipresent, yet "missing" narrative voice asks us to consider these texts within the confines of exile and separation, in that roles, locations, and voices are not clear. Furthermore, the missing/present nature of the text corresponds to *insilio*, an often-ignored component of exile narrative, in both *La mujer en cuestión* and *Lengua madre*, as an interior form of exile, which is a useful notion that completely accompanies our idea of the disruption of a house or the interior space. As Julia goes into hiding in *Lengua madre*, readers recall that the location of her hiding spot is a basement in Trelew in Patagonia, a notion that echoes *insilio*, as well as the terror *(re)aparecidos* faced when leaving the detention centers and prisons, namely the fear of being reinterrogated or disappeared again, let alone the potential post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental health problems that inhumane torture and unjustifiable incarceration could cause. These examples of the function of time in Andruetto tend toward Julia Kristeva's version of time as monumental and not linear, especially following a traumatic incident in which there is a breakdown in temporality (15-17). Karina Elizabeth Vázquez highlights photos included with the original text in *Lengua madre* that allow readers to visualize mother and daughter "en un mismo plano espacio-temporal que no pudo haber tenido lugar" (262). This is significant in the sense that an impossibility for the protagonist is presented as if it were evidence. Unlike conjecture or suppositions from testimony, rumor, or whispers of events, Julieta can see a factual representation of herself with her mother, despite the letters that dictate otherwise.

While specific dates from the Gregorian calendar are not offered, other markers fill in to provide the memory and history for protagonists, similarly to Kristeva. A passage regarding Aldo and Eva from *La mujer en cuestión*, for example, describes them in terms of pre-detention and post-detention, as if it were BCE and CE:

> “Aldo era una buena persona, sí”, dice la misma Lila en otra oportunidad, pero “ella siempre fue la fuerte, me refiero a los primeros tiempos, antes de que pasara lo que pasó, era una mujer de armas llevar, él estudiaba, sí, militaba y todo lo que usted quiera pero, perdóneme que lo diga de esta manera, la que dejaba los bofes era ella y a pesar de todo era alegre, un cascabel . . . era así, usted ni se imagina cómo era, fue así hasta que la chuparon, después, cuando salió, todo fue diferente, se volvió miedosa, insegura hasta un punto increíble, y también . . . cómo le diría . . . desconfiada, y silenciosa, creo que después de todo eso que le pasó, ya no le importó nada. . . .” (102)

This also echoes what we previously discussed in Chapter 1 regarding the town of Tama in *Los manchados* and the destructive natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, and swarms of locusts) that tend to divide epochs without the use of calendar years.

In the short story “Cuernos sobre una chiva” (from *Cacería*), the protagonist changes her name following her move to the city from the wilderness (13). This is not unlike the demarcation between incarceration and release in that change occurs without Western time markers that would indicate the beginning of an era that, in essence, delineates when one crosses from the wilderness to the city or vice versa. Even when specific dates are provided, doubt and non-marked time comes into play. Near the end of *La mujer en cuestión*, the informant does confirm the birth of Eva’s son: “En efecto, Eva Mondino tuvo un hijo (N. del I.: este informante asume el riesgo de considerar que sí lo tuvo, ya que a su juicio son suficientes los testimonios al respecto) y ese hijo, siempre siguiendo la misma hipótesis, vino al mundo la noche del 29 de octubre de 1976, cuatro días después de haber sido ella detenida” (111). In contrast to this, with the date corresponding to late spring in the Southern Hemisphere, the text affirms Eva’s description of the night as “una noche fría, la más fría y oscura del mundo” (112). This is climatically absurd, an impossibility anywhere in Argentina that the coldest night of the year (or ever) would occur mid-way through the spring. It is further evidence of a non-linear time in the consciousness of the protagonist, which is both a hallmark of Andruetto and a marker of those imprisoned and tortured, for whom time often functions distinctly, especially with respect to memory. There also

is the possibility that imprisonment arrests time in the sense that the location of detention is cold, dark, and dank, despite the season outside the prison walls. In this way, it becomes a cave, or a basement as seen in *Lengua madre*, which nearly acts as refrigeration, suspending bodies in a state of preservation.

Not only does the representation of time differ above, but the words used to describe time and entrapment are also different. Words and language in general have the power to shape much of our world. For Rosario Castellanos, language is a weapon for control, noted from the time of the Conquest, and must therefore be appropriated between equals to maintain freedom (Browdy de Hernández 74-77). The interviews conducted in *La mujer en cuestión*, despite being at the hand of a hired investigator, still retain the elements of interrogation in which there is a greater and a lesser, similar to the types of questionings one would encounter during the Dirty War. Where there is no equality, there is no freedom to assume the veracity of that which is said. Spitta echoes this notion of language as the tool of empire in "Transculturation and the Ambiguity of Signs" (*Between Two Waters* 13-15). The power of language to enforce cultural hegemony and the subsequent breakdown of communication because of torture are turned on their heads when language is fractured intentionally and coupled with silence, to be used as a weapon against that hegemony. This discrepancy of time is further noted in an interview in which enclosure seems to slow time to a pleasantness, yet a simple request triggers an unpleasant memory that underlines the differences between freedom and incarceration:

> En la segunda entrevista que se le realizara, manifiesta ". . . usted me pregunta cómo estoy ahora, qué sé yo . . . me hace bien tejer al crochet, eso me distrae, hace que se me pasen las horas, los días . . . también tengo buenos momentos con Pacha, con Lila, con muy pocos más . . . antes, cuando estaba con Aldo, era feliz porque éramos, jóvenes, porque teníamos proyectos, porque estábamos haciendo nuestra casa, porque creíamos que había un mundo mejor . . . pero todo eso se fue, reventó como un globo . . . después vino lo que vino y tuvimos que pasar lo que no está escrito . . . y seguir viviendo." ". . . Sin ir más lejos, usted me pide ahora un vaso de agua . . . en La Ribera hubo momentos

> en los que yo hubiera dado cualquier cosa a cambio de un vaso de agua . . . la gente no tiene idea de lo que puede valer un poco de agua limpia cuando se vive como un animal, ni de lo que significa estando adentro una noticia de afuera, ni de la alegría que uno puede sentir cuando consigue darle una pitada a un cigarrillo. . . .” (113)

Also of note in this passage is the hint at what is not found in the text, that is, “lo que no está escrito.” This calls attention to Wolfgang Iser’s notion of interpretive “gaps” in the text and how they influence the reading thereof (285-86). The process of filling in lacunae could arise from various sources, but it is particularly germane to Dirty War narratives in regard to unspeakable acts of horror that often go unmentioned, whether as a response to trauma, turning a blind eye to atrocity, or the fear of retribution from authority. This also matches Andruetto’s own words regarding the method of sending letters clandestinely, avoiding the dangers of explicitly writing things that could fall into the wrong hands (“Interview” 69).

The thread of loosely constructed time is presented not only in Andruetto’s novels, but also in her short stories. In the tale, “De luz y de sombra,” from *El anillo encantado* (38-41), we see a story of time and place obscured by darkness and the lack of vision, ultimately with the unknown preventing the reunion of lovers. The playfulness of time begins with the palimpsest-like repetition of each line as the beginning of the next paragraph: “Había una vez una ciudad. / Una ciudad antigua y luminosa, poblada de torres y campanarios. / En aquella ciudad antigua y luminosa poblada de torres y campanarios, había una plaza. Una plaza verde salpicada de heliotropos y jazmines” (37). The pattern continues with further introductions of “un banco traspasando de sol” and later with birds arriving, followed by a man seated in the plaza waiting (37-38). The man remains until darkness falls, but his lover fails to arrive. The message he leaves her is filled with the tell-tale markers of a timeline not visible and that has not come to pass, especially in the mixed verb tenses: “creí que llegarías con la luz” and “[t]e hubiera amado hasta el último fulgor” (40). As readers, we instantly are drawn to the realm of the “could have been”

or “what might have been.” Furthermore, the short story ends with the revelation that his lover was seated on another bench in the plaza, but due to the darkness, she was not visible: “Como era de noche y el hombre estaba ciego de tristeza, no pudo ver que ella lo esperaba en otro banco de la plaza” (40). Thus, the impossibility of his words “te hubiera amado” ring hollow in that she ironically was in that precise location and space. At once, the linguistic markers indicate an impossibility, while we the readers know that, indeed, that future relationship was nearly possible.

Another short story from the same collection offers a similar take on alternative time. The primary storyline of “Olor a nardos,” from *El anillo encantado*, revolves around a woman who has been imprisoned (45-51). Halima epitomizes the damsel in distress confined to a tall tower, at once a common trope as the epitome of female beauty, and it matches the descriptions of landscapes in the desert from the first chapter with references to her skin, hair, and the aroma of “nardos” (45). Halima finds solace in her space as a woman, albeit in a literary cliché of a locked tower, which servres as a time capsule, with unexpected results that her body withers away while the only remaining sign is “el perfume aquel de nardos” (51). In a way, the imprisonment of Halima preserves the idea of her beauty, as it is a desirable goal for her potential male rescuer. This is not unlike interior exile or *insilio* as the notion that return is possible, that hope remains for that which was taken or lost. At the end, however, as in some cases of exile, there is no return, despite the remains of clear markers indicating what was there (in this case, *el olor de nardos*). We see in this section of Andruetto another capacity taking hold of the senses. This flowery perfume is the marker of Halima, and it does not matter in what shape or form her body may be, because her essence is part of this pleasant scent that identifies her. Smell, the sense most associated with memory, provides a confirmation for the hero that he is on the right track.

In the process, it erases time partially, since there is also the somber realization of the true situation. Just like exile or *insilio* with its lack of certainty, the perpetual image of the trapped Halima remains both a fixed and unattainable goal. Again, implying the entrapped female in a space where madness coalesces, I highlight the parallel between “el olor de nardos” and the final stages of the protagonist in Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*, who remarks, “But there is something else about that paper—the smell!” (30).

Time is not the only alternative realm in Andruetto; space also looms large as a paradox. The interior spaces in *Lengua madre* literally place protagonists in another space and in another dimension that simultaneously confines and defines them. Unlike the limitless possibilities above ground, the basement where Julia hides throughout pregnancy evokes a sense of marginalization along a different axis. The interior presents difficulties, not solely on a personal level, but also on a logistical one. Life in the hidden interior spaces appears as a constant reminder of the separation and the limits placed upon Julia and her location in hiding in Patagonia: when her mother asks whether she has seen a new film, her letter moves from freedom (movement beyond) to confinement: “Anoche Pippo fue al cine a ver ‘Infierno en la torre’, le gustó mucho ¿ahí hay cine? ¿podés ir? ¿o tenés que quedarte nomás adentro de la casa? Si es así, contame qué hacés, qué costumbres tiene esa gente (¿podés estar con ellos, o tenés que quedarte siempre abajo?) y cómo pasás el tiempo, ¿tenés algún libro?” (*Lengua madre* 20). She is asking whether this desert (Patagonia) contains an oasis.

The desert in Andruetto places protagonists in a literal, interstitial space as well as a figurative space that marks identity. Multiple works in this chapter follow in the vein of Fernando Reati’s *Nombrar lo innombrable* and its critical analysis surrounding the ineffable, particularly as sexual violations and missing family connections are hallmarks of the desert.

They further the notion that Argentina is a country in search of lineage and identity, due to disappearances and the fall-out from the Dirty War. Throughout Andruetto, the cases of missing children function not only in character development and plotlines, but also for larger constructs of Argentine identity. At a visceral level, Eva in *La mujer en cuestión* offers glimpses into those spaces where women are marginalized partly because of a disruption, that is, her role as a woman and that which would define her in certain cultural terms, as a mother, is compromised. As the investigator reveals in the report, "De todo lo que le ha sucedido a Eva en la vida, y no parece que le hayan sucedido pocas cosas, lo que más dolor le provoca es—según los numerosos testimonios recabados—haber tenido un hijo y no saber dónde está, ni tampoco si está vivo o muerto" (73). Throughout *La mujer en cuestión*, the questions of lineage do not hold weight for just the child, but also for the mother: Eva's identity and role as a parent is put under a microscope by the inquiry to which she is subjected.

This search for certainty and a tainted lineage, as the title implies, continues in *Los manchados*. In her quest to learn more about her own family, young Julieta is told about the plight of women who were exploited in the economic system as domestic workers. They were often raped, and the knowledge of parental identity of their children was often a mystery (*Los manchados* 79). The sexual violation of poor women in exchange for desperately needed work reveals that the desert in Andruetto is not necessarily a barren land, given the births that began there, but a fertile land due to rape. The narrative voice in *Los manchados*, in a nearly Borgesian turn of self-referentiality, claims to have written *Tama* for the following purpose: "No por otra razón escribí *Tama*, de modo que más que contar mi historia, lo que cuento allí es la historia de este pueblo nuestro y la de todas esas madres que tuve sin saber cuál era en verdad la mía . . . "

(*Los manchados* 87). A revelation of the region's doubtful lineage continues, citing the *mancha* alluded to in the title of the novel:

> Lo que sucede es que, como le decía, soy hija natural de una Linares, bisnieta de Martirio Linares, hija de madre soltera en esta tierra donde son madres solteras todas, todos hijos e hijas sin padre conocido, porque aquí, en este desierto, el padre no es más que el nombre de un hombre. . . . Un nombre que nuestra madre nos trasmite, *Sos hija del hijo de fulano o de mengano*, nos dicen, y después ya nada. . . . Nada de nada, ni una presencia de hombre, nada . . . , y hay que aprender a vivir con esa mancha. (88)

This recalls the collective nature of identity in Andruetto cited by critics, that women are not functioning as individuals, but rather in solidarity.

Space is also visible in Julieta's memories of her grandparents, and again, we see a juxtaposition of location and time with Argentina:

> Recuerda a su abuelo trabajando ante un escritorio—y no puede ahora ni pudo nunca imaginarlo niño; tiende a pensar que ha sido siempre un hombre grande y un poco triste, un hombre ya completo en la memoria, como lo veía entonces. En cambio a su abuela sí puede imaginarla corriendo por el campo, pequeña y descalza. Ella cree que su abuela sí pudo haber sido niña alguna vez. Por las noches, se acostaban las dos en la cama grande y su abuela le leía cuentos que ella escuchaba como encantada. Cuentos que terminaban siempre con una princesita que se encuentra con su madre. (*Lengua madre* 51-52)

Spaces inhabited by women in Andruetto are flexible, allowing for transition and change. No more solid case can be found than Julieta's contrasting visions of her grandparents. It is telling that the grandparents cannot be imagined in another era in the same way: she pictures her grandfather at the desk, a masculine location associated with work. Her grandmother, on the other hand, appears mutable and adaptable, simultaneously in the country as a little girl and later as a grown woman. It is clear that her grandmother's stories are fairy tales of a little girl finding her mother, something that could change (the incessant search for her mother's life and history), as opposed to her father, who will always remain distant. In this sense, Julieta is searching for her maternal roots and connections, her own motherland, and not for the paternal lineage one would seek when thinking about the *patria*.

The search for lineage also evinces disjointed time and uncertainty. The testimony regarding Eva's supposed son in *La mujer en cuestión* raises several concerns, including the calculation of how long she may or may not have been living in a certain location (especially regarding her legal rights to a common law marriage). The contradiction posed by time markers versus identity cannot be starker; patriarchal guidelines imposed by Western cultures leave no other choice but denial of parental certainty:

> De modo que si este hijo en efecto nació, como muchos testigos sostienen, y si, para ser más precisos, nació antes de los cinco meses de convivencia, Eva no pudo haber reunido los requisitos necesarios para acreditar su concubinato y hasta es posible que, aun pudiendo hacerlo, hubiera rechazado el plano, en aquellas condiciones y en aquella época (N. del I.: téngase en cuenta que se está hablando del año 1976 y de su situación de concubinato con una persona desaparecida), ese derecho, de modo que nadie habría considerado al recién nacido sino como un hijo de soltera de Eva. (40)

Figuring large in this passage is that her relationship was with someone who was disappeared, leaving behind an entanglement of uncertainty of identity, rights, and connections.

Another example of the marginalization of women comes from patriarchal notions that their identities are intertwined with those of men. The supposed protagonist of *La mujer en cuestión* does not present a verified, legal marriage: "En otro orden de cosas, hay que decir que Eva quedó embarazada y luego se 'casó' (N. del I.: se ha puesto esta palabra entre comillas, dado que, aunque ella lo llama con orgullo 'mi primer marido', no se casó nunca con Aldo Banegas, nacido el 22 de octubre de 1951, simplemente convivió con él)" (*La mujer en cuestión* 19). Readers will see a connection to Valenzuela's "Cambio de armas" in which the protagonist Laura is supposedly married to Roque, her captor. Returning to Eva's situation, the actual dates of her pregnancy fall under question and, again, clear time markers are replaced with other referents that indicate when something happened:

> Cabe señalar que los testimonios difieren aquí más que en otros asuntos y que hay quienes dicen que Eva quedó embarazada en el mes de noviembre, quienes piensan que la

> concepción habría tenido lugar en enero, quienes dicen estar seguros de que ese hijo murió al nacer, quienes creen que no existió tal embarazo e incluso quienes sostienen que el mismo es posterior en años. Sin embargo, una carta de Aldo Banegas, fechada el 26 de febrero de 1975, la única que ella recibió mientras él estaba cumpliendo la conscripción, dice entre otras cosas, "¿ya te diste cuenta de que también será de Libra?", de lo que debería deducirse, dado que el signo de Libra se extiende desde el 22 de setiembre al 21 de octubre, que la preñez de Eva tuvo lugar en el mes de enero. (19-20)

This deduction typifies Andruetto's use of other signs and symbols to convey meaning, in this case the Zodiac to assign the passage of time, instead of the Gregorian calendar. Women's bodies—gestation, birth—are the instruments for keeping time, instead of a male (who is mentioned as performing compulsory military service, a time that would be recorded) or a masculine and codified calendar, in line with Kristeva's view of women's time as both the "cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature," as well as that of a "monumental temporality" that is more in line with the ephemeral and the "imaginary" ("Women's Time" 16). Furthermore, the act of writing is the only means by which these markers are visible. In keeping with the theme of *desaparecidos*, it is quite informative for the reader to note that Eva's baby was considered by some to have been a myth, or that the baby was stolen upon birth (a common practice of obstetric violence perpetrated by the military during the Dirty War).

The separation of children from their mothers—either by outright kidnapping or of stolen babies from detention centers—marks an uncertainty that not only paints the children as perceived "bastards," but it also "bastardizes" the very notion of lineage and parenthood. In *La mujer en cuestión*, for example, the question of whether Eva had a child is the most painful experience in her life: "De todo lo que le ha sucedido a Eva en la vida, y no parece que le hayan sucedido pocas cosas, lo que más dolor le provoca es—según los numerosos testimonios recabados—haber tenido un hijo y no saber dónde está, ni tampoco si está vivo o muerto" (73).

The last few words are key here: “no saber dónde está” is a marker of the present and her lack of knowledge of the baby’s whereabouts. “Ni tampoco si está vivo o muerto” is a more hypothetical assertion that immediately negates the certainty of his survival and/or of her being sure of either. It is not unlike the lack of bodies in the Dirty War that prohibit closure for grieving families as well as justice, in that not being able to produce a cadaver meant there was no definitive evidence that the disappearance and subsequent murder of a loved one had been committed by the authorities who had detained them. The experience of having a child, according to Eva, highlights this uncertainty in that some moments are clear, while others are cloudy in her recollection: “Dice en una primera entrevista, rompiendo en llanto: ‘A veces me parece que son alucinaciones, pero a la vez estoy segura de que todo eso pasó’” (73). Again, there exists a traumatic contradiction of memories, acknowledged by the protagonist as an oscillation between hallucinations and certainty. Furthermore, Eva posits that this space is unmarked, or rather, that there is no certainty of time during her incarceration:

> Luego de unos minutos, ya más tranquila, agrega que después de aquellos episodios la trasladaron a otro sitio y que es en ese otro sitio donde nació su hijo, que sabe muy bien que algunas personas que “se ensañan” contra ella “dicen cualquier barbaridad”, que no comprende cómo hay quienes pueden pensar que ella no tuvo ese hijo, “sí que lo tuve, y es hijo de Aldo,” y que por más que estuvo en “un lugar oscuro donde se le mezclan a uno los días y las noches” y que en ese lugar vivió “sin almanaque, ni reloj, ni luz del sol”, ella sabe que “era un varón, porque lo tuve un momento sobre mi cuerpo, hasta que le cortaron el cordón y se lo llevaron . . . ”, “. . . yo sabía que eso iba a pasar, que me lo sacarían . . . lo escuché llorar, estoy segura de eso, pero ellos me dijeron que había nacido muerto y ya no supe más.” (73-74)

The contradiction between what one experiences and what one is told about that experience could not be starker; it echoes accounts of torture during the Dirty War in which brainwashing and gaslighting were commonplace. Time does not cross the detention center’s walls. Eva’s description of the space (“un lugar oscuro donde se le mezclan a uno los días y las noches” and being there “sin almanaque, ni reloj, ni luz del sol”) highlights this common thread in

Andruetto's work of a non-linear system of time in which one cannot even observe celestial indicators to deduce meaning in patriarchal Western terms, but which are more in line with those of Kristeva. Here, the female body serves as a time machine, giving credence to her presence and the birth of her child, since she felt the baby in her body and upon her body. This is not a unique example of the female body, pregnancy, and measurement of being or duration in Kristeva's terms of women's cyclical or monumental time.

Certain spaces in Andruetto carry with them the hallmarks of other Argentine women's writing, especially references to places that match the womb. In *La mujer en cuestión*, the supposed birthing site of Eva's child is in a detention center (73-74). Further descriptions of these detention facilities include tight quarters that nearly match bodies in their imposed intimacy: "También dice recordar otro episodio con un detenido de apellido Kosarinsky, que 'tuvo un ataque de epilepsia y me vomitó una espuma caliente sobre las piernas'" (76). Other horrors of the entrapment continue: "Y agrega después que tampoco se ha olvidado del 'olor que había en la celda, un olor penetrante, porque teníamos que hacer todo ahí adentro, imagínese usted . . . éramos veinticinco en esa cueva . . . ¿se da una idea?, lo que hacen veinticinco personas metido en un tacho que no tenía ni siquiera una tapa" (76). Further, Eva has described the night of her detention in that they placed her in "un lugar oscuro y húmedo" (91). Readers easily are reminded of the often-sexual nature of violence against women and/or the womb: "una espuma caliente sobre las piernas", "un olor penetrante", "en esa cueva", "un lugar oscuro y húmedo"—all of these correspond to the feminization of detention and torture, in particular to aforementioned techniques used by the military to equate gender and humiliation, in addition to physical horrors.

Diana Taylor notes in *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's Dirty War* that the military coup to overthrow Isabel Perón was a display of male power meant to underline the supposed powerlessness of women (59-62). Certain techniques of training Argentine soldiers included dehumanizing elements that emasculated and intentionally feminized male victims at the same time, such as forcing soldiers to train naked to underscore the maleness of their bodies, as well as demanding training in hard rain to instill the sense that they were not human, or rather, that they were "survivors" (73-74). Taylor's research reveals a deliberate framing of maleness as not feminine, that is, women were the "Other," and torture was meant to be inflicted upon the victim in a misogynistic way. Ximena Bunster-Burrotto notes that in "the Southern Cone, where a military government or succession of military governments have been entrenched for decades, women are *systematically identified*—with names, address, and family composition—as 'enemies' of the government" (297-98). Techniques of torture involving the body were "consciously designed to violate her sense of herself, her female human dignity" (298). Furthermore, intimidation, midnight intrusions into the home, and other actions of the military junta were meant to operate within the cultural confines of womanhood, that is, in order to serve as violations of sacred cultural spaces (300-07). The sexual torture of men operated within the realm of their loss of potency, whereas the sexual torture of women was about abuse to their bodies and to their anatomy (306-07). Again, this continues the vein of spaces for women explored in Andruetto, the literal spaces of confinement (detention centers, the basement), sexually connected spaces (women's bodies and sexual violence at a literal and figurative level), and the double marginalization in that women are expected to continue to stay in their place (that is, have children) in society during incarceration and/or rape.

The allowance of space for the "Other" in Andruetto seems to match trends from the late-twentieth century in Argentine literature. Fernando Reati's analysis of the Argentine novel shows that authors move away from tradition and conformity toward a more postmodern notion of doubt, of multiple truths instead of "the" truth, and of questioning over certainty (*Nombrar* 55). Those notions, clearly, were considered taboo during the dictatorship as deviations from official positions; they were dangerous not only for individuals, but were also perceived by the junta as threatening acts of resistance. Thus, part of *El proceso* was to feminize any resistance, to crush it inside the confines of patriarchy. For Taylor, this feminization also parlays into a bigger issue of supporting *la Patria* and, ironically, feminizing the concept with its linguistic connotations and connections to patriarchy.

Marilyn French, in *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals*, views this deliberate feminization as a process of "purification" or as a means to root out the "Other" or the "feminine" (352-53). The Dirty War was a gendered construct that affected not only an entire nation but, above all, women. Thus, Argentine women's writings can be viewed as an understandable product of and resistance to the historical context of the military junta. Andruetto is offering an alternative, and that process begins in the desert. This is clearly stated as a question of who has ownership of knowledge, who gets to tell the stories and uncover the truth, thus challenging official accounts of history to arrive at "herstory." In *Los manchados* Julieta is told just that:

> quisiera comentarle que estamos armando un instituto para revisar la historia de esta región. . . . Es pequeño, sin demasiadas pretensiones y funciona aquí mismo, en el Archivo . . . [;] para revisar los documentos, los estudiamos uno por uno. . . .; por el momento se trata de un interés casi diría personal de unos pocos tameños, el señor Milicay y este servidor. Hace ya muchos años, cuando se fueron los militares y se hizo cargo del archivo el licenciado Herrera, vino por aquí gente de la universidad, a investigar; querían, como suele decirse vulgarmente, conocer el revés de la tortilla, pero pronto eso se acabó y ya no hubo dinero para estudiar estos parajes. . . . Conocer lo

> sucedido, lo sabrá usted, es siempre un puro enredo . . . , porque ¿sabe qué pasa?, a nuestra historia la han contado los asesinos de nuestros abuelos. La contaron a su manera y conveniencia, por cierto, aunque en las coplas y las chayas nosotros siempre supimos quién era quién. . . . (*Los manchados* 58-59)

This passage alludes to the *noroeste* region in the *chaya* music, and it also underlines the role of local culture in creating identity, especially those cultures that have been marginalized or erased from "official" stories.

A New *Cautiva*

Critics have noted that Andruetto merges national myth with national memory; in fact, Andruetto says, "Lo verdadero y lo ficcional se funden y se confunden en los procesos de creación de una obra. Una novela es una mentira que construimos para decir una verdad que todavía no conocemos, una verdad más verdadera que la verdad" ("Interview" 63). I want to take that a step further by proposing to read Julia in *Lengua madre* as the retelling of the *cautiva*. First, there is the violation of norms and supposed sacred spaces in the interior, such as the domestic spaces that the junta paradoxically regarded as sacred, yet that they violated as their modus operandi (Tabak 72). Second, living in the desert is dangerous because the transgression compromises the nation-building process; it was the unmaking of the home (as with said violations of supposed sacred spaces during the *dictadura*):

> La cohabitación de las blancas con el indio amenazaba la integridad de las tradiciones y de la identidad, en el sentido de que el indio, como todo enemigo durante el siglo XIX, representaba justamente lo no domesticado. La cautiva, entonces—y su cuerpo como metáfora del espacio social—, era expresión de un sistema significante y fundador, espacio de tensiones tan profundas, que se constituyeron en uno de los tabúes del relato nacional. (Rotker 55)

In Julia, we see the parallels with "La cautiva" in that she enters her new community in Trelew and remains there, not unlike a victim of Stockholm Syndrome that pushes the boundaries of what was acceptable, thus, resulting in a violation of cultural norms (*Lengua madre* 182, 189).

Rotker contends that in the *cautiva* tradition, the native occupied a space desired by the whites, and that results in an Othering of the natives: “El indio habitaba vastos territorios que el blanco deseaba ocupar, el indio era una amenaza para la estabilidad de las poblaciones fronterizas, el indio encarnaba todos los males que el letrado repudiaba” (51). Following the *cautiva* vein of disappearing into the desert, we see a connection to Dirty War literature and a constant theme in Argentine national identity in that Julia is a different sort of *desaparecida*, something that, for Rotker, has happened multiple times in Argentina, not merely during the 1970s: “La costumbre de ‘desaparecer’ franjas sociales que no corresponden con la imagen que la nación quiere tener de sí, remite también a los miles que desaparecieron un siglo después durante la llamada guerra sucia de la última dictadura militar” (Rotker 54). Brignole comments on this (277), but for our own study here, the emphasis is on the *location* of the disappearance into the desert and its significance.

We see Julia in the basement in Trelew as a contradiction; clearly, by giving birth, she pushes forth a new generation that is emerging from the basement, a swallowing up of the earth of sorts. Stuck in the Patagonian desert in Chubut, Julia is captive in isolation, not unlike the *cautivas* of the nineteenth century. She transcends the *cautiva* as a concept by blurring the lines of what was deemed to be proper in those “contact zones” in Mary Louise Pratt’s terminology. It further demonstrates a boundary that is not demarcated but, rather, gray (Rotker 56-57). Pratt reads the *cautiva* from North American literature as a way to express the dangers of the borderlands and the frontier, as a call to return to civilization, that is, “el orden social europeo y colonial” (Rotker 78-79). However, this is not the case in Argentina: “Esta afirmación, pese a su sensatez, no es aplicable al caso argentino donde se prefirió optar por el silencio, la mitigación y

el olvido antes de poner a prueba el orden social que se quería establecer; incluso las pocas ficciones conocidas sobre cautivas nunca tienen un final feliz" (Rotker 78-79).

National myth continues to resonate in Andruetto, particularly with respect to the *cautiva*. Returning to Julia, who chooses not to go back home (or, rather, who cannot go back), we must view her disappearance as an erasure of sorts, as a myth in the origin story that has been neglected. Rotker explains:

> Escaso poder político, género femenino y no urbano. Hay algo en la historia de estas mujeres que no corresponde a la imagen que los letrados tenían de sí y del país. Se salen del marco de visión de Próspero en la pampa: dentro del espectro de relaciones colonizador/colonizado (¿civilización/barbarie?) no tienen lugar. Son invisibles para la palabra fundadora de tradiciones nacionales. (80)

Andruetto, unlike many of her Latin American peers, does not tend to offer an urban setting but, rather, a rural one (García 149). There also are movements across intranational borders, that is, barriers within the nation-space. Invoking the desert in the great Romantic tradition, the narrative voice of "La cautiva" challenges humanity to consider the vast difficulties of the desert: "¿Qué humana planta orgullosa / se atreve a hollar el desierto cuando todo en él reposa?" (Echeverría 37). The desert immediately offers an alternative in the sense that it is the place where the *indio* speaks (38-39). Ancestral homelands in Andruetto (in particular, the pampa) are not completely populated lands or areas within the confines of the culture proper; they are still on the margins, portrayed by Echeverría as "la pampa desierta" (41). While there may be a temptation to equate the Argentine desert with its North American western frontier counterpart, Fernando Operé contrasts them instead:

> En la mítica articulación de la frontera de Frederick Turner el énfasis reside en los individuos y su capacidad para superar obstáculos físicos y vencer las fuerzas negativas que impidan su paso. Es decir, la fuente original del mito de la frontera norteamericana reside en la caracterización de sus hombres. En el caso de la Argentina, el hombre de la frontera es un gaucho desplumado y paupérrimo que, aún en la poetización de José Hernández en *Martín Fierro*, es incapaz de vencer la presión deshumanizadora de la

> frontera violentamente expresada en las secuencias en que Fierro decide huir al interior y buscar refugio en los toldos. (n. p.)

The crux of the desert as a queer place in Andruetto reaches its zenith when we consider all of these elements together (the protagonists, historical context, alternative elements, gender, and language) and form a new version of an old image: the *cautiva*. Rotker offers a view of the colonial borderland conflicts that match internal struggles during the military junta. First, the *cautiva* tradition clearly rises from the desert and operates in a false dichotomy of nineteenth-century Argentina (visible in the civilization vs. barbarism continuum) (23). Rotker's view of the *cautiva*, that she has crossed to "el otro lado," reveals a sinful border violation (27). She draws a parallel between the Madres de Plaza de Mayo and the *cautiva* that becomes a scary image of solidarity for the patriarchy (31-32). Operé also views the violations of the border in terms of gender:

> Lo que se produce en *La cautiva* no es exclusivamente la feminización de Brian, sino una masculinización o barbarización de María, como ya hemos indicado. Al cruzar la frontera, María queda ubicada en un espacio donde desaparecen las reglas de la civilización y en cuyas soledades se produce la ruptura liberalizadora que le permite integrarse a otros mundos, al masculino, al indígena, e incluso al natural, en una simbiosis integradora. Si en la sociedad patriarcal a la que María pertenece, el espacio de la acción (abierto) corresponde al hombre, y a la mujer el del hogar (cerrado), en el desierto estos límites se borran temporalmente. En el nuevo espacio, María puede matar a otro ser humano, realizar hazañas no propias de su sexo, como cargar al esposo a la espalda y emprender la huida en la amenazadora pampa, enfrentase al fuego y a las fieras que la acechan, y tomar la iniciativa en acciones que desbordan las barreras de su caracterización. (n. p.)

Corresponding to Operé's view of gender, Andruetto offers the notion of the collective seen in Perassi (117) and García (156), in that a cause or struggle—and that of identity—is no longer individualized but, rather, coalesces into a unification of multitudes.

Further evidence already stated in Brignole and Pubill regarding Julia's *insilio* as a forced, interior exile matches the *gaucho neto*; she is another victim of the *conquista del desierto*

due to loss of habitat, not in an environmental sense, but in a political one, that the borderlands as refuge are no more (Rotker 62). In fact, Rotker's understanding of the nineteenth-century context of captives has an uncanny resemblance to the journeys and sufferings of the protagonists and political prisoners in Andruetto:

> En general, convivir con la ausencia de un pariente secuestrado que no se sabe si vive aún, si sufre o si yace en alguna tumba anónima perdida en el desierto, es un proceso doloroso, un proceso que conlleva duelos, fantasías, culpas. La desaparición no es fácil de elaborar, puesto que no se conoce realmente el destino del secuestrado, no se sabe hasta cuándo hay que buscarlo o si hay que hacer el duelo y despedirse. Y, ¿cómo despedirse si la persona puede regresar? El cautiverio modifica muchas más vidas que la de la víctima en sí: a la larga, equivale a la muerte del cautivo aunque sea en el ámbito simbólico. (76-77)

Additional connections to Andruetto cannot be more obvious than the disposition of historical records to include certain physical characteristics that mark human beings. *Cautivas* were often described as having a "lunar" or other type of physical trait on their face, and this corresponds to the eponymous *mancha* in Andruetto's *Los manchados* (Rotker 82). Pubill remarks on the literal connection between Andruetto's family lineage and the *lunar*, and she shows how these stigmas move from the biological to the ideological level as a challenge of power, declaring that Andruetto's works draw attention to those on the "margin of society" ("Estigmatizaciones" 166-68; my translation).

Just as Pubill focuses on the marginalized, the *cautivas* never have a voice, exactly like the protagonist in *La mujer en cuestión* who is spoken about, but never speaks (Rotker 83). This silence stems from the missing protagonist, whether through exile/*insilio*, political imprisonment, or being disappeared. *Cautiva* origins, again, place blame at the sins in the desert committed by the power structure: "El problema de las cautivas se resuelve: no porque se las recupere y salve, sino porque se ha eliminado tanto la frontera como el registro de la existencia de estas mujeres. La cautiva ya no está en ninguna parte. La cautiva ya no es nadie" (Rotker 106). In Andruetto,

this is Julia, who struggles even after the return of democracy with Alfonsín in the 90s, unable to return to her home and to her family, stuck in Trelew, Patagonia.

The parallels between Andruetto and Echeverría's *cautiva* are not simply bound to their location in the Argentine desert. Their different protagonists are in consonance in the sense that the old has become new again and is reconstituted as a repetition of national literary myth. Julia and Nicolás from *Lengua madre* and *Los manchados* mirror María and Brián from Echeverría's "La cautiva." María enters the desert attempting to fight for her life and the life of Brián, while Julia enters the desert in order to escape and potentially spare her own life (via *insilio*). This is an impossibility for Nicolás and Brián: the former goes into exile in Europe, whereas the latter is limited due to his visibility, compared to María's ability to sneak around at night and kill the *indio* (50-51). Even Echeverría's clarion call of "¿Quién . . . se atreve a hollar el desierto?" (37) places our protagonists in a national space that reconstructs identity, but differently than in Adruetto from the nineteenth-century's nation-building efforts. Brián's question of "adónde, adónde iremos?" (57) again showcases the desert as the location of salvation and escape, as María proclaims:

> Sí, el anchuroso desierto
> más de un abrigo encubierto
> ofrece, y la densa niebla,
> que el cielo y la tierra puebla,
> nuestra fuga ocultará. (57)

Other points of interest that deserve our attention are the parallels of this pattern of desert and escape between María in "La cautiva" and the Difunta Correa, a popularized saint with shrines, offerings, and sites of devotion throughout Argentina. Although not officially canonized by the Catholic church, Deolinda Correa is revered by many in the working class, especially in the northwest (Chertudi and Newbery 219-20). The Difunta Correa appears in a letter in *Lengua*

madre: "Aunque tu padre dice que son estupideces, le dije a Pippo que si va a la Difunta Correa, rece por vos, por todos nosotros, no se olviden de rezar. A ver si salimos adelante" (35). Based on the legend of a woman whose husband is conscripted into the civil war, she sets out into the desert to be reunited with him after he falls ill. However, the harsh conditions, especially the lack of water, result in her demise. According to the various legends, she is found deceased a day later, yet with her infant still alive and attached to her breast (Chertudi and Newberry 67-70). Even more curious for our study is that one of the earliest printed manuscripts calling attention to the saint begins by noting that she was baptized in the church in Tama in La Rioja (67). It is uncertain whether this is an uncanny coincidence or a deliberate choice, but it seems that the maternal origins of Julia and Julieta in Andruetto stem from Tama, the same home as the Difunta Correa, while Julieta's paternal side is from the same town as Manuel Puig (*Lengua madre* 147). Again, this holds implications for Julieta's *argentinidad* in that she has genuine Argentine and literary roots on both sides of the family.

Other parallels include the second generation (Julieta in Andruetto and the ghost of María's child in Echeverría), two spirits that become separated from their parents (the latter as an apparition, the former as an orphan). They were not capable of reuniting with their nuclear family, due to the family's position outside of acceptable bounds: in the case of María and Brián, this is due to the complications of the situation for the *cautiva*; for Julia and Nicolás, the political realm of the junta, respectively, keeps the family separated perpetually because of *insilio* and exile.

CONCLUSION

History and literature are nothing more than storytelling, and we as human beings create our own worlds based on constructions of the past here in the present. María Teresa Andruetto offers an example of a literature centered around a recent and a mythical past, one that simultaneously allows for doubt, while searching for certainty, and a brand of storytelling that moves from singular to many through families and generations in Argentina. The epistolary nature of many of her texts—either as fragments of letters, vignettes, or metafictional reports told by an investigative narrator—invites us as readers to participate in the process of meaning-making.

When I first read Andruetto, I quickly saw Argentina everywhere, not merely the location of her novels, but the entire country encapsulated in her tomes, from colonial times to the present-day reconciliation of prior decades of economic and political turmoil. Upon reading all of her works, the outstanding elements to me were the desert, the oases, the unstructured time, and the palimpsest-like composition of her novels, short stories, and juvenile books. From the onset of this study, I have attempted to elaborate on what I first observed by providing analysis of the spaces, places, and time in Andruetto.

In the first chapter of this study, I set the framework for analyzing the desert in María Teresa Andruetto's corpus by establishing parameters, namely the definitions of the *desierto* (Echeverría), "place" (Cresswell), and the "abject" (Kristeva). I showed how Andruetto's desert starts from an outside-in approach, that is, there exists a simultaneous paradox of harsh beauty

both beyond the home and inside as an oasis, since the desert is both a threat and a refuge, life-taking, yet also life-giving. This duality exists on a micro-level for individuals within their communities and on a macro-level as the nexus of Buenos Aires versus the rest of the Argentine republic. Protagonists match their environments, not in a manner akin to environmental determinism, but in an almost anthropomorphized method that seems to flow as an offshoot from Echeverría's Romantic style, especially in terms of the invocation of the *desierto* (33). Cultural norms and even bodies figure into this dichotomy of that which is permissible in Argentine society and that which is a violation—or taboo in Kristeva's terms. Finally, movement (in both a literal and figurative sense) matters in Andruetto; whether it is due to migration, escape into political exile or *insilio*, or crossing boundaries with ulterior motives that contradict hegemony, comings and goings are both a national mythos, as well as a cultural reality in Argentina. The desert offers salvation; as characters seek refuge or self-actualization, heading into the interior provides opportunity for multiple outcomes, but with special emphasis on finding oneself and one's roots. In sum, the desert provides an interpersonal, intrapersonal, and intertextual investigation and creation of meaning.

The second chapter laid forth the figurative side of the desert in Andruetto, again per Cresswell's notions of "place," with an emphasis on concepts of power, especially geopolitics. The economic and cultural development of Argentina, from the colonial days as part of the Spanish crown to the rise of nationalism in the early-twentieth century, plays a role in the lives of the protagonists in Andruetto. She does not only consider the impact of the Dirty War on contemporary times, but also looks at historical antecedents that paved the way. Andruetto seems to write not a revisionist history, but an alternative one, especially given her own words that she was not searching for "*una* memoria, *una* verdad" but, rather, "muchas respuestas posibles"

("Interview" 64). Within the notion of *argentinidad*, we saw that Andruetto includes multiple points of view as sources, whether they are indigenous voices and elements from the Northwest or characteristic of the pampas that lean toward a marginalized, gaucho-like reality; it is not based on Buenos Aires or on littoral élites. Individual history—the lives of the protagonists—are on parallel with that of the country, especially with the lack of certainty of lineage via obstetric violence, *desaparecidos*, and *insilio* as all three areas raise questions and doubts. While the first chapter looked at individual protagonists within their environments, this chapter tended toward main characters within their communities. The geopolitical Argentine desert—from its exploitative, colonial origins, through the racist policies of Sarmiento (and the *conquista del desierto*), and finally into uneven economic development that left a constant yearning for opportunities and unfulfilled promises—leaves a mark in Andruetto as a starting point for understanding. The desert allows for diving deep into the creation of the national mythos and seeing a new possibility in the women present in her novels. Julieta, as demonstrated in this chapter, seems to embody this new *argentinidad* in *Lengua madre* and *Los manchados*, in that she encompasses a multi-provincial and multi-national space. She also represents a new Argentina in which women begin to piece together their own stories in a deliberate way, especially compared to the silent generations of her predecessors, for whom violence and trauma were unspeakable horrors. Julieta breaks down barriers and enters a realm of possibilities.

The final chapter of this dissertation offers a view of the previous two sections as a combination of multiples or a synergy of literal, figurative, historical, and atemporal meaning. I started by explaining my use of "queer" to describe the disparate time experienced by protagonists in Andruetto, not as a construct related to sexuality, but one geared toward a different orientation in the sense of dis-oriented time. I leaned heavily on Kristeva's "Women's

Time," as well as on many notions of the "*loca*" and its weighted meaning for Latin American women's writing to set the stage for seeing this queer space as a break from the *patria* and from historical hegemony. The collapse of linear or Western time is connected to prison narratives, to accused subversives who did return from detention, for whom ongoing trauma blurs the lines between horrors experienced in the past and the present. As Andruetto herself states, "Lo verdadero y lo ficcional se funden y se confunden en los procesos de creación de una obra. Una novela es una mentira que construimos para decir una verdad que todavía no conocemos, una verdad más verdadera que la verdad" ("Interview" 63). The linguistic markings of past, present, and future draw our attention to the "could-have-beens" or the things that are impossibilities, whether direct statements from characters or inferences from the letters that we readers piece together, constructing our own understanding of the novels along the lines of Iser's notions of the "gaps" within the text (285-86). The queering of the desert allows us to layer the past onto the present. In doing so, we revisit Echeverría's "La cautiva" and see Julia as a continuation of that literary tradition, but in a new vein: like María, she takes agency, albeit within confining and limited situations. Just as María ventures into the desert to save her family, Julia begins her sojourn into Patagonia to protect her unborn child (which is also a recapitulation of the women in *Los manchados* who wander into the desert to protect their own children). Women cross borders and engage in dangerous behavior that disrespects supposed tradition and usurps authority, challenging the junta and *his*tory so that it becomes *her*story in an inclusive manner. In Andruetto, women are no longer kept in the attic, but now occupy the library, writing and recreating the past and the present. These clarion calls of resistance echo the movements of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo in demanding to know the whereabouts of their children. Julieta, by taking an active part in piecing together the archive of her family's history, embodies these calls

for justice and naming victims, allowing her deceased mother (who, for a long time, may as well have been a *desaparecida*) to reappear and to be *presente*.

What this project has contributed to the understanding of Argentine literature stems from the multidisciplinary approach that considers the economic, historical, and geographic contexts of Andruetto's corpus through the prism of literary studies. I have added to previous criticism by diving deep into the textual locations—the general and specific deserts (especially Patagonia)—that needed attention, as they had previously been unexplored. Furthermore, I have outlined an analysis of Andruetto in terms of a new *cautiva*, a simultaneous recapitulation of women within a nation-state mythos that offers an alternative formation of history.

Where this research is taking me as a scholar is toward another deep look at the desert as an archive of sorts—with particular emphasis on the inspiration of art from life. The verisimilar locations and historical events that serve as impetus for the creation of literature, particularly Andruetto's own life story and movement through Chubut (Ferrero 54), are attractive to me both as an individual and as a scholar. Further exploration into historical memory, personal memory, and public displays of memory may be future steps for this research as the next chapter—including Andruetto's future works that have yet to be written.

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