

## Over Her Dead Body: Marianella Morena's Delmira Agustini in *No daré hijos, daré versos*

*No daré hijos, daré versos, de Marianella Morena, se estrenó en octubre 2014 en Montevideo durante el centenario de la muerte de Delmira Agustina perpetrada por su ex-marido Enrique Job Reyes; la obra también fue montada en España en 2016. Sobre el cuerpo fallecido de Agustini, Morena y su grupo de actores, La Morena, desarrollan múltiples hilos y significados en temporalidades y marcos de poder distintos, al tiempo que demuestran un acercamiento con teorías del afecto y actitudes hacia perspectivas sobre el cuerpo y la memoria a través del performance, espacio y trauma. Los actores y Morena crean un espacio teatral y poético para explorar y sobrepasar los límites binarios y así concluir el proyecto de la modernización en cuanto a la revolución sexual, y completan la historia de la "Mujer Nueva" – o, por lo menos, de la manera en que esta pertenece a la "Mujer Nueva" del Uruguay caracterizada por Agustini y su poesía.*

Palabras clave: Uruguay, trauma, Mujer Nueva, postdictadura, teatro, Delmira Agustini

*No daré hijos, daré versos, by Marianella Morena, debuted in October 2014 in Montevideo during the centennial year of Delmira Agustini's death at the hands of her ex-husband Enrique Job Reyes. It was also performed in Spain in 2016. Over Agustini's dead body, Morena and her acting group, La Morena, develop multiple strands of meaning in differing temporalities and frameworks of power as they demonstrate an engagement with affective currents and attitudes toward both views of the body and memory through performance, space, and trauma. In the play, they create theatrical and poetic space to explore and move beyond binaries to conclude modernization's project of sexual revolution and to finish the story of the New Woman—at least as it pertains to Uruguay's "New Woman" as characterized by Agustini and her poetry.*

Keywords: Uruguay, Trauma, New Woman, Post-dictatorship, Theater, Delmira Agustini

Marianella Morena is the author of more than 15 plays and the winner of prizes such as the Premio Molière and Premios dramaturgia del Centro Cultural de España. She has taught courses at the Escuela del Actor at the Escuela Multidisciplinaria de Arte Dramática Margarita Xirgu (EMAD), the Universidad de la República, IMM, Escuela Musical, as well as special workshops in both Uruguay and abroad. Morena is also the author of a column for the Uruguayan publication *Caras y caretas*. Her plays have been performed both inside of her native Uruguay as well as internationally.

In addition to her numerous contributions to artistic life in Montevideo,<sup>1</sup> Morena also created an acting company, La Morena, that typically works out of the ground floor of her apartment in the Ciudad Vieja of Montevideo. Morena is most comfortable collaborating with actors in a collective atmosphere, using the actors' talent and physicality to arrive at a final product that relies less on elaborate scenography and more on bodies and innovative ways of telling a story (or more often than not, stories in the plural). The actors work with little in terms of resources but make up for it with their preparation of acting and knowledge of theory. The company's members often shift depending on the plays and their other commitments.

Once workshopped, her plays are regularly performed in small independent theaters throughout Montevideo, but Morena has also staged several plays at the Teatro Solís, Montevideo's venerable theater in the Ciudad Vieja, originally built as an opera house flanking the Plaza de la Independencia in the middle of the nineteenth century. It has remained a mainstay for theater, dance, music, and other large-scale performances well into the twenty-first century.

Morena's repertoire is both local and global. She has worked with international figures such as controversial German playwright Volker Lösch (on the play *Antígona oriental* [2012]) and studied stage arts in Uruguay, Argentina, Poland, and France. She regularly travels to and stages plays at international festivals, and in 2013 she took both *Antígona oriental* and *Las Julietas* to Europe, touring in Spain and Germany. And while her plays are many times anchored in regional references to Uruguay (a few examples are: Florencio Sánchez in *Los últimos Sánchez* [2006], survivors/politicians of the dictatorship in Uruguay in *Antígona oriental* [2012], and Delmira Agustini in *No daré hijos, daré versos* [2014]), they are informed by theoretical concepts that reflect contemporary international discussions on theater and performance.<sup>2</sup>

Her play *No daré hijos, daré versos* is no exception to Morena's use of local/global constructs as it presents regional themes within a framework of theoretical markers that rely on cosmopolitan views of history and affect. The play debuted at the Teatro Solís in October 2014, during the centennial year of Uruguayan poet Delmira Agustini's death at the hands of her ex-husband Enrique Job Reyes.<sup>3</sup> *No daré hijos* was also performed

internationally in 2016 in several locations in Spain as well as in Miami, Florida.<sup>4</sup> In *No daré hijos*, the action begins with Agustini's death, yet this production is anything but a recreation of her murder. Instead, it is a complex look at intersecting discourses on her personal life, her sexual life, and her life as it has come to be known post-mortem. It is also an exploration of the politics, violence, trauma, and myths that surround her body and the body of her work. And, finally, it shows her poetry as an alternative procreative force, one that contrasts and co-exists with destruction engendered through violence. Over Delmira's dead body, Morena and La Morena develop multiple strands of meaning in differing temporalities and frameworks of power as they demonstrate an engagement with affective currents and attitudes toward both views of the body and memory through performance and space. I will argue that trauma plays a pivotal position as it is transacted in both the psychological sense – as an interaction imbued with multivalent meaning between individuals, because of their shifting relational roles – as well as in the more traditional sense of an economic exchange.

To understand both body and space, it is helpful to contextualize Agustini's life and death within the changes taking place in Uruguay at the time. Agustini's birth in 1886 coincided with the period of modernization that was ushered in by José Batlle y Ordóñez (Escaja 502) and the Generation of 900.<sup>5</sup> Uruguay sought to modernize following the European model through urbanization and the suppression of so-called rural barbarism (Escaja 502), replacing it with a framework for a new civilized nation. Part of this call to reform also included rhetoric for a "New Woman" to represent Uruguay's modern progressive and liberal agenda, and Batlle supported women's rights.<sup>6</sup> The image of this "New Woman," Tina Escaja reminds us, was supposed to de-link outdated notions of feminine fertility's connection to the abundance of the nation in rural settings through *reproduction* and replace it with a contemporary liberal concept of *production* in urban settings (502). The "motherland," in this sense, shifted to engender an industrialized sphere. In practice, however, the political rhetoric did not always invigorate social mores. Conservative social attitudes in Uruguay continued to be projected onto female bodies through both dress codes and sexual practices. Uruguayans persisted in esteeming corsets, with their exaggerated female forms of hips and bust, thus reinforcing a narrow view of sexuality through maternity, while at the same time repressing women's sexuality through strict codes of abstinence until marriage (Escaja 502). Complicating this scenario, was the fact that Uruguayan norms at the time shifted to preclude women from marrying at early ages, thereby keeping them from initiation into sexuality until advanced ages. In fact, the average age for eligible women to marry in Uruguay at the time was between 25 and 27 years – a stark contrast to the pre-Batlle years wherein the age averaged

between 18-20 years (Escaja 504). Thus, in this period, the political rhetoric of modernization rubbed against the practice of conservative bourgeoisie culture in Uruguay.<sup>7</sup> And, while politicians projected progressive political campaigns onto female bodies and the motherland, in everyday life women's bodies were constrained and suppressed both physically and socially in multiple ways. It is in this era of transition and upheaval that Agustini was born and began her work.<sup>8</sup>

This is, perhaps, why many observe her death as emblematic of the growing pains that Uruguay was undergoing as it moved into twentieth-century modernity. At the age of 27, in August 1913, Agustini wed her longtime suitor, Enrique Job Reyes, after a proper and chaste courtship. To the surprise of many, though, she promptly divorced him only months later, in November of that same year, being one of the first women to take advantage of the new divorce law that allowed women, for the first time, to initiate proceedings for the dissolution of a marriage.<sup>9</sup> She, however, would maintain a secret sexual relationship with Job Reyes in an apartment the two used as a rendezvous spot for their affair. The tumultuous relationship ended tragically on July 6, 1914, when the pair was found dead following the murder-suicide perpetrated by Job Reyes. At the time, the couple's death provoked an unprecedented scandal, with photos splashed across Uruguayan newspapers displaying Agustini's partially nude and wounded body surrounded by blood and Job Reyes' corpse lying beside her. The public fixated on the image of the scantily-clad body of a woman who defied traditional bourgeois practices and ended up murdered as a result of her exotic behavior. And this does not even take into account her erotic poetry. The sensationalized headlines and photos of her murder added to her reputation as a scandalous woman who penned erotic poetry.

Not only was Uruguay moving from antiquated to modern in terms of political transformations – so too was the literary scene being turned on its head. The decrepit modernist period associated with decadence and the end of the nineteenth century was supplanted by a defiant new generation of women who based their beliefs on the writings of John Stuart Mill and the fight for women's rights – ideas that began arriving from both Europe and the United States in Latin America. As Lorena Garrido points out, because of the large influx of immigrants “there was an influential anarchist movement in Argentina and Uruguay occurring at the time that motivated workers to fight more vehemently for their rights, with women also joining this social movement” (109). Writing, once reserved for the upper classes, now became a professional activity with participation from lower and middle classes during this period (Garrido 108). Therefore, in this context, as Garrido argues, “gender activism cannot be detached from the appearance of the new poetic voices” as well as women's “growing awareness about their situation of minority as women and as writers” (109). During this period,

literature offered a new frontier for women to explore their agency (or lack thereof).

While many maintain that Agustini's poetry is not revolutionary because it is still part of the *modernista* movement, they miss the nuance of her defiant and subversive behavior when it comes to content, even as she maintained the traditional formats and tropes of the era. Ignacio Ruiz Pérez calls the literary landscape at this time "un espacio conflictivo e inestable" (183) where traditional and modern impulses collided. Elizabeth Smith Rouselle, for her part, finds that Agustini responds specifically to Baudelaire's "inattention to the portrayal of the emerging New Woman in his poetry," and that she used her poetry to "dismantle the passive and malevolent woman of the decadent movement and of the Western tradition in general" (31).

Others, like Sarah T. Moody and Cathy Jrade, have also written about her subversive recasting of language in response to male modernist patriarchal images in poetry by those like Rubén Darío and others. Viewed in this way, Agustini's poetry transports the reader as if it were a vehicle for exploring new grounds, even while it maintained its old forms, both poetic and patriarchal. Moody argues that because *modernismo* fetishized the feminine image as "other," women writers were left with little place within the movement (59). Therefore, Moody finds Agustini's work unique in that she "usurps and then reworks a rhetorical system that ostensibly excludes her as a woman" (59).

Jrade's 2012 book on Agustini's sexual seduction and vampiric conquest reverberates equally as strongly with this message, suggesting we view Agustini's originality through her approach to reconfiguring the male language of literary paternity from a woman's standpoint (2). Using *modernismo's* main figure, Rubén Darío, Jrade argues that Agustini converts him into a foil (as both person and through his poetry) that she must seduce, conquer, and that she must breed with to produce a new race of poets (3). Jrade points out that in her poetry, Agustini grapples with her youthful timidity and expanding role as a new source of fruitful reproduction, while also struggling with sadomasochistic erotic entanglement that leads to injury – both inflicted and received (4).

Thus, in her real-life marriage with Job Reyes and in her poetic marriage to Darío, Agustini bucks and upholds tradition with its patrilineal implications of marital transaction and exchange while she becomes an independent contractor of sorts—on the one hand wielding her freedom and power, but on the other falling prey to the dangerous entrapments of societal pressures and frameworks that continue to shape gendered behaviors. Seen in this light, Agustini toys not only with relational roles but economic ones as well. In this argument, we can see the echo of Escaja's reminder that the liberal politics of the "New Woman" was to replace

agrarian rural reproduction with a contemporary liberal concept of production in urban settings in Uruguay. Agustini produced a literary product, not children. But, at the same time typical gendered roles reduced women's agency to the domestic sexual sphere, and she found herself constrained by the concept of marriage both in her life and on the page. Literary roles, too, left little room for women to operate with freedom within a structure that marginalized them as "other," even as new standards encouraged writers to professionalize and explore new political ideas.

Many, including Job Reyes, were shocked by Agustini's erotic writing and found it distasteful.<sup>10</sup> However, Garrido finds that eroticism allowed Agustini to express the anguish that women writers felt when they had to "place their true selves in conflict with the subjectivities given to them or expected by society" and that poetry is the "territory in which these worlds collide and converge" (110). Agustini's traces of the *modernista* style allow her to express new ideas and contrast them with outdated masculine ones within the same space. Instead of setting up a binary, her transformation of message within an existing format allows her message to resonate within, alongside, and concurrently with her foil(s), even if her ideas engender rupture and a clashing agenda.

Collision and convergence also mark the theatrical territory that Morena and her group explore in *No daré hijos*. The play is made up of three acts, but in no way is it a "well-made" play. In this sense, like Agustini's poetry, the play's form is traditional, but the content is not.<sup>11</sup> A note at the beginning of the published play states: "Acumulación poética en el actor / El actor trabaja una acumulación poética, / y cada personaje nuevo contiene al anterior" (Morena 14). This note suggests to the reader that poetic traces frame the play's action. In some sense, these traces allude to obvious metatheatrical references to both Agustini's life and poetry, and in other ways they prompt us to think about re-presentation and accumulation, in the way that Joseph Roach does when multiple actors step in and perform dead figures.<sup>12</sup> Or it might even remind us of deconstructivist semiotics and Derrida's famous "trace."<sup>13</sup> I will offer, however, that we should consider the poetic accumulation that begins Morena's play, as a way to mimic not only Agustini's subversive use of modernist poetry's form if not content, but also a way to think about Agustini's poetry as "matrixial borderspace" and the use of this affective concept as the structural format for La Morena's creation of *No daré hijos*.

I borrow the term matrixial borderspace from artist Bracha L. Ettinger's artwork and writing. She in turn, has based it on work done by Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham. Central to Ettinger's work are psychoanalytic theories by Freud and Lacan and the memory of trauma (Ettinger was influenced heavily by post-WWII trauma studies and memory). She states: "The idea of producing traces of memory of / in / for / with the other invites

a further elaboration of the uncanny aesthetic affect" (Ettinger 164.5). She builds her ideas for affective art through a concept she calls the transcriptum. And, because both Freud and Lacan saw repression and memory issues as stemming from separation and the traces of other's traumas (namely from the mother, and later, others), Ettinger scaffolds her theories about space, for the art event to take place in, not only on the history of memory and trauma in psychoanalytic theory, but on Torok and Abrahams' theory of the crypt where these traumas are transcribed in the psyche<sup>14</sup> (Ettinger 163-64). Through art, Ettinger insists, "we are called upon to think of the enigma of transsubjective memory and joint affectivity" (164.5).<sup>15</sup> The artist calls upon repressed traumas held in the crypt, although s/he may not have experienced them. Working through transcriptum and cross-inscriptions of their traces (evidenced in the artevent, artoperation or artprocedure), s/he reveals the world's hidden memory from its outside with-in-side (Ettinger 166.7). The artist is able to accomplish this because the transcriptum supplies the occasion for sharing and affectively-emotively recognizing an unrecognized Thing or Event (Ettinger 166.7). In this way, Ettinger's matrixial space shares much in common with concepts contained within post-memory studies. Critics like Marianne Hirsch maintain that post-memory is characterized by trauma that is passed down through generations and experienced as memory, even when those memories are not first-hand, but rather shared from generation to generation.<sup>16</sup>

Ettinger's transcriptum is housed in a matrixial space – a space that is not fixed in patriarchal definitions. In writing about Ettinger's art, Griselda Pollock explains that the Matrix is a space meant to move beyond phallic oppositions of masculine/feminine and to open a "different site of sexual difference that is not about a binary logic" (5). Instead, the Matrix should be seen as a "supplementary, shifting, retuning, concurrent paradigm where a web of meaning is woven by a process the artist-theorist names *metramorphosis*" (Pollock 5). For Pollock, the matrixial space suggested by Ettinger is part of a larger project that challenges the unfinished project of modernity through modernization/revolutionizing sexual difference (II). It does so by shifting, always "re-tuning relations of sexual and cultural particularity, and sociogeographical specificity" (II). In this way, the matrixial space offers new possibilities for change as well as access to historical trauma and its meaning.

I will suggest that Morena creates a transcriptum on stage and that her play reveals collective memories we inherit but cannot always access. The transcriptic, matrixial space also suggests the same sort of transactional exchanges that occur between humans with regard to their relational roles – ones that the Matrix regards as mutable and at times traumatic. In this way, I see a link between Morena's performative space (through

accumulation transacted across time periods and transformed through relational roles that displace, dislodge, and/or reposition) and Ettingers's matrixial borderspace.

Returning to the earlier stage direction, Morena's note for the poetic accumulation in the actor and a poetic accumulation in the characters, implores the reader to understand these traces and traumas. If we examine Morena's title, *No daré hijos, daré versos*, the reader and spectator are forced to reconsider not only the feminine space accorded to women and their function vis-à-vis re/production (in the home and in the nation) but also the creative space and the work produced by artists and poets – especially when that work is by women. The title purposefully employs language linked to procreation – the poet in this play does not bear children, but she does bear lines of verse. She does not procreate in the typical corporeal sense, but this theatrical poet does produce a body of work.

The real-life Agustini shares these same qualities. She did not procreate within the normally understood confines of patriarchy, but instead her physical sexual unions take place outside of marriage. Likewise, she had no children. In fact, a famous episode, referenced in Morena's play, between Agustini's mother and Job Reyes centers on precautions for birth control – an admonition from his mother-in-law that Job Reyes found deeply offensive.<sup>17</sup> Agustini's lines of verse are borne through a subversive conjoining of male dominated-linguistic and poetic forms with a female perspective on sparring with, seducing, and being seduced by an imaginary poetic lover/mentor (perhaps, Darío, as suggested by Jrade). The erotic union, although it might appear to be a predictable trope, morphs into a revolutionary model – Agustini is at once mother and anti-maternal, she is barren and productive, she reproduces the past and also breaks with it, she hurts and is hurt, she lives on (on the stage) and she dies. These contradictions and shifting roles highlight the difficulty of commemorating her death and ascribing it one single meaning.

The play, despite its classical form, also defies unities of place, time, and action. It is a matrixial space that resonates with affective gradients – ones that are not always stable, predictable, or linear. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg's *The Affect Theory Reader* (2010) reinforces many of Bracha's key philosophies:

affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds [...] visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally *other than* conscious knowing ... that can serve to drive us toward movement. (1).

They insist, as does Sara Ahmed, that there is a collision and convergence between the “stretchy processual” and the “sticky pragmatics” of right now



when it comes to affect (14).<sup>18</sup> They speak of haunting. This haunting happens in the sense that Marvin Carlson's stages are revisited time and again by actors and previous performances, but they are also haunted, as Grace M. Cho explains, through violence enacted at the social and/or familial levels that becomes distributed across bodies that are affectively connected to the women who suffered the traumas (24). Cho speaks specifically of transgenerational haunting in the context of the Korean diaspora and the women involved in sexual labor and marriage within U.S.-Korean relations, but her ideas about trauma share much in common with Hirsch's post-memory. For Cho, these bodies exhibit haunting, namely, "a constellation of affective bodies transmitting and receiving trauma," in what she calls a "Deleuzian concept of the body," because of its rhizomatic structure throughout the family (Cho 41). Unspeakable histories become "ghosts" searching for bodies through which to speak (Cho 40). In this way, trauma moves through generations. It is both historical and contemporary. It is never done, but rather always morphing.

Morena's play captures this "inbetween-ness" and "perpetual becoming" – an engendering of sorts – via the action in each of the three acts as she toys with the image and identity of the poet and the effects of trauma through different eras in time (Seigworth and Gregg 1, 3). In the first act, titled "La muerte hacia la vida," an obvious inversion of the normal order of life and death, the stage directions indicate that the couple lies bleeding to death within a room that is full of destroyed furniture – "no pueden identificarse ni tiempo, época, lugar, nada" – and that the actors costumes are mixed up according to gender as well as exhibit "rasgos antiguos y contemporáneos" (Morena 15). The directions also state that the "textos y relatos también están fragmentados" (Morena 15). The act begins with a song that references details of the murder-suicide, and thereafter, three couples enact dialogue. The directions explicitly state, "No están los textos repartidos. Cada actor es Marido y cada actriz es Delmira. Lo dirán al unísono y no. Se cruzan los diálogos, se superponen los parlamentos y se repiten ... Se cambian e intercambian las prendas, no se distingue visualmente el género, ni la época" (Morena 17).<sup>19</sup> At the end of the act, the *Sirvienta apuntadora* appears to establish some order. She redistributes clothing, stating, "Hay que ordenar / ir hacia el realismo," and finishes with "Una familia funciona con orden y el buen teatro también / Nada de fragmentos poéticos, cosas raras que nadie entiende" (Morena 30).

The first act is defined not only by physical trauma, but also by setting up a space that is fraught with the quality of being "inbetween" life and death, "inbetween" male and female, and "inbetween" time as the live actors speak lines for the dead and dying in clothes that cross both gender and time and social-artistic norms. The haunting is visually distributed across bodies on the stage, and the objects project this haunting as dysfunction when they

are reinscribed into new time periods. Both the bodies and objects carry the traces of the past, just as the Delmiras (note that Morena has chosen to represent both Delmira and her ex-husband in the plural) carry the many versions of history and trauma that are contained in memory.

If we take Peter Burke's statement that "Commemorations are supposed to be performances of consensus, an agreed interpretation of the past linked to shared views of the present" (108) as true, what are we to make of the commemoration of the centennial of Agustini's death in a play that is made up of conflicting, intersecting, and divergent time periods and perspectives on her death? The affective, specifically trauma, allows us to reveal the kinds of "cracks and fissures" that Burke suggests exist in communities – ones that bubble to surface when those societies try and tell a common story (108). In commemorating Agustini's death, Morena also implicitly invokes the nation and what that project of modernization has meant and continues to mean for Uruguayans – especially for women. Agustini's lines of verse, much like the theatrical lines spoken by actors from *La Morena*, fill an artistic space that can only be characterized as multivalent: a Matrix.

The second act "La familia: Hacia el realismo" has the *Sirvienta apuntadora* rearranging the room in a scene that echoes with traces of Triana's *La noche de los asesinos*: "Que el mantel vaya sobre la mesa, las flores en el jarrón, y el jarrón en el estante..." (Morena 31).<sup>20</sup> Here the action precedes the murder, taking place in the Agustini family home, but just as the stage directions indicate, there is no way to reconstruct the home perfectly because all of the props have already been damaged in the first act. Time is out of order here, as the family inherits its past before its present. Like Triana's siblings in their basement, this family, too, is unable to impose order in the home through material objects. They reflect the tumultuous political changes under Batlle, and the chaotic politics yet to come in the dictatorship from 1973-1985. The traces of trauma, even those that do not belong to all of them, invade the space. Graciela Sapriza's work on recuperating women's voices from the dictatorship period in Uruguay is helpful for understanding the tensions that result from collective and individual accounts of memory. Understanding this conflict is particularly important in the case of women because as Sapriza notes, "La memoria de las mujeres constituye un caso paradigmático. Olvidadas o silenciadas al reinicio de las democracias cono sureñas, lograron inscribir sus voces en ese campo de batalla" (278). For Sapriza, the notion of palimpsest most clearly represents the way in which women have had to write their accounts on, into, and over official history. Torture during the dictatorship, notes Sapriza, "puso de manifiesto, al extremo, la asimetría de poderes de varones y mujeres. Se planteó en crudo la relación entre poder, cuerpo, género femenino e ideología. ... [L]a masculinidad de los torturadores se afirmaba

en su poder absoluto de producir dolor y sufrimiento" (281). The return to democracy with plebiscites in 1989 and 2009 that repressed justice for those torturers further complicated Uruguay's coming to terms with its past.<sup>21</sup> Not only did coerced testimony from the dictatorship's political prisoners collide and complicate confessions given during human rights reports in the democratic period and force Uruguay to look deeper at its historical notions of truth, but it also revealed how the cultural legacy of patriarchal Hispanic tradition was in place during and even after the fascist dictatorship period had ended. In this way, Sapriza's Uruguayan palimpsest serves as a framework for understanding how both individual and collective memory were compromised as Uruguay moved from dictatorship into democracy. The chaotic image of the palimpsest captures these conflicting narratives, erasures, and revisions over time. Morena's theatrical family expresses a similar palimpsestic approach as they struggle to come to terms with memory and history.

The cultural freight of the period weighs upon the family as they explain to the audience the norms and practices of the period even though they often become confused. The father states: "¿cómo se realiza una reconstrucción? ... ¿Hay una arqueología de la memoria, un museo de la poesía, un teatro de lo perdido? Pero que mierda más académica, acá se trata de ordenar la familia que es pura anarquía" (Morena 35). This family becomes what Jacqueline Rose would call a "monstrous family of reluctant belonging," one that can be extrapolated to reveal haunting on a geopolitical scale (Rose 31). The process for revealing the Thing/Event that Ettinger highlights in her artobject/events/operations is palpable here as the family members/actors co/trans(in)scribe through co-poiesis bringing both their own knowledge and drawing on the knowledge of those that came before them.

The purposeful allusion to archaeology and museums by Morena begs the question of what this commemoration might mean in terms of the family and nation – what is it that is being (re)constructed here? By finishing this string of reconstruction with a "teatro de lo perdido" – a theater of what is lost – Morena suggests that this (re)enactment of the "story" of this family/nation is and perhaps was never attainable – like the theatrical production it is ephemeral and always lost despite its embodiment in a place and time, and by people and actors. The character of Delmira's mother insists they consult a family photo to see where everything is supposed to go, and adds "Esta chica que está encargada de ordenar el realismo del 900 tiene que traer los datos y pasar la letra en el momento adecuado, como corresponde a su rol," and if not she warns "... tendríamos un adelanto revolucionario, todavía no le corresponde levantarse contra los patrones ..." (35). Again, the photo like the archival venues mentioned above is supposed to freeze and preserve the moment of history, helping the family to

construct its narrative, but the family is unable to reconcile past with present, and the flow of time is rendered chaotic through the shifting transactional exchanges among family members as their roles change. We know as Benjamin and Barthes have already shown us, the photo-art object can never fully capture the aura or the moment.<sup>22</sup> Clearly the characters, embodied by contemporary actors, are confused by the intersecting time periods that break down linearity as they reconstruct the past with the baggage of knowledge of what has already come to pass – they are haunted by the disillusionment of the post-postmodern (as if “modernity” ever existed for everyone). Traumatic traces slip through the cracks and haunt this family’s story and the story of the nation. Neither archive nor repertoire, to use Diana Taylor’s well-known concepts, serve to explain the past adequately or tell the story of this family and nation.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, in commemorating Agustini’s death, Morena also implicitly invokes the nation and what that project of modernization has meant and continues to mean for Uruguayans – especially the “New Woman.” Jay Winter notes that after 1800 the nation-state as a general concept underwent an apotheosis through commemorative acts and events (centenaries, museums, and the like) to solidify memory and history (17). This is the type of social frame that Maurice Halbwachs suggests makes up collective memory and defines our sense of time and place.<sup>24</sup> And, others like Chris Lorenz reinforce this idea, arguing that modern academic time has been modeled around a secularized version of linear Christian time stripped of its end and instead replaced with a temporal flow toward progress (77). The Enlightenment and liberal economic ideals that characterized the independence movements and the economic and social theories about modernization that become popular in Latin America after 1800 are part and parcel of this notion of “progress.” Uruguay’s Generation of 900 and its call to the “New Woman” are a direct result of these ideals. Even Montevideo’s Teatro Solís is an element in the singular progressive narrative that grounded the newly formed “civilized” nation.

However, changes in the post-WWII era, both the growth in human rights laws as well as the collapse of the Soviet bloc, have called into the question the linearity of time, replacing it with the rise of gender, ethnic, religious, and class identity models and the decline of nation-state rhetoric, as well as Christian and Enlightenment era ideas about time (Lorenz 77-82). Uruguay’s own struggles with dictatorship and democracy stunted faith in linear progress after the economic collapse in 2002.

With the demise of traditional views of “the future” as linked to progress, presentism has taken hold. I argue that we can link this new concept of time and trauma, because if time is no longer linear and irreversible, it becomes instead constantly present. And this present is marked by disintegration and discontinuity (Lorenz 83-86), trapped by

continual haunting from the past.<sup>25</sup> As Lorenz argues, new anxieties over time and the status of the nation-state spawned both the spatial and temporal turns we see after the 1990s (92).

This ubiquitous haunting from the past is expressed in the last act of the play, titled “Lote Delmira: Hiperrealismo.” The final act breaks the fourth wall with actors using a testimonial style and talking to the audience, as indicated in the stage directions (Morena 57). The act unites stories from those that attended and bought items from a 2010 auction of Agustini’s things, including the revolver used in the murder-suicide, letters to her lover Manuel Ugarte, a diary, and a recording by the daughter of the woman who rented the room to Job Reyes.<sup>26</sup> The act ends with a song that is similar to the opening act. The auctioned objects are imbued with post-traumatic weight, and the testimonies that accompany them tie the visual to the verbal, match the “stretchy processual” to the “sticky pragmatics of right now” to help us see the theatrical space as a borderland or threshold that allows us to apprehend trauma and art through the Other.

Buying and selling artifacts from Agustini’s traumatic life/death are an obvious transactional exchange, but they also represent the ways in which trauma is inherited and winds its way through society. Returning to Cho’s use of transgenerational haunting to explain familial trauma, we might also see the ghosts of the past as the way in which generations “come to terms with an unacknowledged history of violence, whether that violence took place at the level of the social or the familial” (30). If this is a hyperrealist look at Agustini through objects that she came into contact with or even produced, and also a look at her through an art-object (Morena’s play) that ends with a testimonial-style act, the audience is left to ponder whether these objects/art-object (the play itself) are imbued with the “real” or if they are simply “simulacra,” like those Baudrillard, Jameson, Saussure, and other scholars discuss. The final act in the play begs the question of whether this theatrical representation and the multilayered representations enacted by the actors on stage break down and become meaningless as signifiers as they move away from their origin. Are they objects just like the objects that are bought and sold in the auction on stage, or do they represent ghosts that imbue the present with the continual haunting that Cho writes about?

In an economic exchange, capitalism divests an object of its original referent, and in the social exchange performance replicates behavior to the point of abstraction, so that the space between subject and object becomes unstable – increased, erased, etc. However, in the affective exchange, as Teresa Brennan maintains, the process does not create loss but rather relies on transmission. The “transmission of affect” Brennan explains “is a process that is social in origin but biological and physical in effect” (3).<sup>27</sup> In other words, for Brennan, affect can be transmitted and it does have scientific and measurable effects. If over Delmira’s dead body we are implored to take

another look – an affective one – at the project of modernity, at female spaces for creation, and at memory, what does her dead body (or bodies) tell us in this exchange? Removed from its origin, is this body – replicated on stage – meaningless, or does it stand for the very sort of presentism that Lorenz describes and Cho finds in haunting? Does it suggest we view her trauma through familial and social lenses as a commentary on the present? Do these testimonies make it more “real”?

The play seems to support a dynamic interaction between past and present. It displaces the “real” for the poetic. Instead of telling just one story about the past, it insists on multiple voices and defies a unified narrative about what happened or what it means many years later. In this way there is no one story about this community or this nation-state as seen through this commemorative play about Agustini, or even her symbolism and iconicity during and after the Battle years of modernization. Just before the final song that ends the play, the characters have the following lines:

Hemos tomado una decisión que quizá no guste a las Instituciones públicas del país: no pensemos entregar esta documentación oficialmente. Tenemos una postura frente a eso, y consideramos que este tipo de materiales necesita un lugar poético con dinámica propia, que resigne la obra y la ponga en diálogo con el hoy, invitando no solamente a conocerla, sino a reflexionar sobre el rol del arte. (Morena 64)

Supposed confessions of murder, additional secret love affairs, and the appearance of “final words from beyond the grave” are supplanted by the characters in the end as they refuse to recognize Agustini or her life in any official way as “truth.” This stance in the face of testimonies (testimony being a vexed concept of storytelling that is at once subjective and “real”) requires an affective approach toward memory and recounting of the past, and the poetic space that this play suggests mirrors the matrixial in that it acknowledges the past while it carries those traumas into the present. It moves the past beyond simple verification of history.<sup>28</sup> In this way, Morena puts into practice Winter’s claim that “[m]emory is history seen through affect”, and sets the “faculty” of memory up as a companion to the “discipline” of history (12). It also echoes with the same strategy that Agustini employed as she moved her erotic female-centered message through modernist poetry’s old patriarchal structural forms, but altered the content to reflect a new message.

Like the matrixial borderspace, this poetic space also seeks to move beyond the binary to expand modernization’s project of sexual revolution and to extend the story of the New Woman – at least as it pertains to Uruguay’s “New Woman” as characterized by Agustini. Morena’s characters go on to declare, “Una artista como ella no puede estar encapsulada en un sitio burocrático. No es poesía, es anti poesía. La forma institucional agrede

el germen revolucionario. La revolución primero estuvo en la poesía” (64). By once more inscribing Agustini’s procreative forces not onto a fetus but onto poetic verse, the characters’ lines at the end of the play insist on defining Agustini (at least in this play) as the New Woman – a revolutionary concept that exists apart from the physical body and outdated sexual practices, replacing it instead with productive forces that rest not on capitalist economies and linear time but rather on her body of work in a space that is a shifting and matrixial. Just as she presents maternal and anti-maternal notions in her own poetry, here, too, Morena’s Agustini(s) perform(s) similar contradictions through poetic and anti-poetic space. If Liberal capitalism moved us away from the uncivilized and into the modern era, it also, as semiotics might suggest, moved us away from the origin and the aura. Through the affect and performance, Morena restores those traces but asks us to consider those traumas that lie buried somewhere in the transcryptum through poetic utterances and spaces, and to try to understand how these transactional traumas are not diminished across generations and bodies, but rather how by performing them, we are allowed to acknowledge personal social memories and violence along with national constructions of memory that tend to gloss over such nuances.

*Texas A&M University*

#### NOTES

- 1 Morena helped develop various alternative locations for performances such as the Mincho Bar and the basement MVD Bookstore.
- 2 For more detailed information please see my previous work on Morena in “Alternative Cartographies: Marianella Morena’s Women’s Spaces and Journeys,” chapter two of *Theatrical Topographies: Spatial Crises in Uruguay after 2001/2002*. (Bucknell UP, 2017); and in the following articles: “To Kiss and Tell: Lust, Consumption, and Place in Morena’s *Don Juan: el lugar del beso*.” *Letras Femeninas* 37:1 (2011): 139-53; and “Tragedy and Trauma: *Antígona oriental* de Marianella Morena.” *South Central Review* 30:3 (Fall 2013): 125-42.
- 3 Actors for the debut performance included: Lucía Trentini, Agustín Urrutia, Mané Pérez, Laura Baez, Carlos Rompani, and Sebastián Serantes. Claudia Sánchez provided lighting, and music was coordinated by Lucía Trentini and Nicolás Rodríguez Mieres. Costumes and scenography were designed by Claudia Sánchez. Marianella Morena was responsible for text and directing.
- 4 Since 2016, Morena’s play continues to be performed in international theater festivals such as Buenos Aires, Caracas, and other locations.

- 5 The Generación de 900 unites writers who published roughly around the turn of the century – the 900 comes from the year 1900. They wrote about and debated topics and ideas that concerned modernization in Uruguay. Important figures included Horacio Quiroga, José Enrique Rodó, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Delmira Agustini, and Florencio Sánchez, among others. For more information see <https://uruguayeduca.anep.edu.uy/recursos-educativos/225>
- 6 Lorena Garrido states: “Batlle was vocally against the social role ascribed to women by the Catholic Church. He defended the emancipation of women, largely on the grounds that he saw them as having very little agency in the institution of matrimony, with women being widely coerced to marry the first suitor to propose” (109).
- 7 Hugo Achugar, writing in 1981, supports this view of a nineteenth-century Uruguay in transformation as conflict began to erupt between urban centers like Montevideo and rural territories: “se iniciaría a mediados del siglo XIX y duraría hasta el presente siglo bajo la forma más o menos permanente de un enfrentamiento entre el hispanismo criollista o tradicional por un lado, y el cosmopolitismo innovador, por otro” (9).
- 8 Although Verónica Giordano maintains that Agustini’s poetry is apolitical, she supports the notion that it is a product of a highly politicized environment: “Pero no cabe duda que las posiciones anticlericales del primer batllismo y sus ideas libertarias fueron un contexto propicio para la emergencia de una Delmira Agustini” (4).
- 9 Garrido also highlights how the political scene in Uruguay was central to Agustini’s formation: “The two models in conflict – the liberal Uruguay, with Latin America’s first divorce law of 1907, and the conservative Uruguay that censored and restrained women’s behavior – influenced the writing, decisions, and image of Delmira Agustini” (109).
- 10 Escaja supports this stating, “La excentricidad de Agustini escandaliza a Job Reyes, que sí ejerce su papel de estandarte de los valores tradicionales” (503). Escaja points to existing work by José Pedro Barrán y Benjamín Nahum as the basis for her conclusions and their reference to Agustini’s own revelations in letters she wrote condemning masculinist sexual repression of the time period (Escaja 503).
- 11 In other words, there are no strict unities of time, place, and action, nor is there a beginning-middle-ending structure to the action in Morena’s play as suggested in the Aristotelian Classical Greek sense or the Neoclassical French period.
- 12 See Roach’s *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
- 13 Derrida’s trace can be understood most simply by accepting every experience as one that contains two parts: the discrete event in the present



- as well as its repeatability (memory and anticipation). Thus, through repetition, we can understand the trace as what has happened and passed as well as what is to come and not yet in existence. This is a concept that Derrida developed over time as part of his theories on deconstruction.
- 14 Ettinger writes: “Thinking memory and art together involves articulating art with trauma and its foreclosure, around the impossibility of accessing a psychic Thing and psychic Event, encapsulated out-of-sight in a kind of outside that is captured inside—in an ‘extimate’ nonconscious space unreachable by memory” (163).
- 15 Ettinger further explains this by saying, “The *I*, the subject that carries the crypt of its others’ *non-I(s)* for/in place of them (in their place yet inside ‘me’ and for ‘them’) needs to build a bridge to trauma in the form a Thing or Event hidden behind an originary repression that an-other unknowingly ‘expresses’ through and with the *I*, but that is not part of the *I*’s individual history as a separate whole subject, and not even a product of an intersubjective relationship or of a symbiotic nondifferentiation. I need to recognize something for my *non-I(s)*, something that has never been cognized by them, nor yet by myself. *I* need to remember what *I* have never forgotten, and to find inside me traces of memory that *I* have never carried and have never lost” (164.5).
- 16 See Marianne Hirsch’s *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*.
- 17 In the second act, Padre tells Madre and Hijo: “Te podrías haber evitado el comentario desagradable sobre la maternidad y cómo cuidarse para no tener hijos” (Morena 49).
- 18 In “Happy Objects,” Sara Ahmed stresses: “Feelings can get stuck to certain bodies in the very way we describe spaces, situations, dramas. And bodies can get stuck depending on what feelings they get associated with” (39).
- 19 In the version performed at the 31<sup>st</sup> Festival of International Hispanic Theater in Miami in 2016, the play opened with the three couples lying tangled together in the same bed, a beginning that theater critic José Abreu Felipe called “un comienzo impactante” (“No daré hijos, daré versos’: provocadora, irreverente, controversial”).
- 20 In *La noche de los asesinos*, José Triana’s siblings try to insist on the same ordering of the family space:  
*Lalo*: Vuelve a poner el cenicero en su sitio.  
*Cuca*: El cenicero debe estar en la mesa y no en la silla  
 .....  
*Lalo*: ... En esta casa el cenicero debe estar encima de la silla y el florero en el suelo.  
 And in this opening scene, *Cuca* ends by saying, “El orden es el orden” (140). A similar scene opens Act 2 in the play. Many critics have argued that Triana

establishes a metaphor that is two-fold: 1.) the enclosed familial space in a basement stands for the island of Cuba in the Castro era; and 2.) the siblings' ritual play-acting of assassination of their parents can be understood as a rebellion against political authoritarianism.

- 21 For a more detailed explanation of the plebiscites, see my article, "Tragedy and Trauma: *Antígona oriental* de Marianella Morena." *South Central Review* 30.3 (Fall 2013): 125-42.
- 22 See Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" for a more detailed look at how the unique characteristics of a work (its aura) is destroyed through mechanical reproduction, and Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, first published in 1979, in which the author describes his inability to find his deceased mother's true and unique likeness in photographic images of her.
- 23 Taylor makes the distinction between embodied memory as seen through such things as gesture, dance, song, etc. and written forms of memory and objects collected in archives, and analyzes how these two forms of storing knowledge reveal different approaches to understanding history and cultural identity. Often Western European knowledge in the archive has been privileged over alternative perspectives. See *The Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2003.
- 24 Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) was a philosopher and sociologist trained in the French school of thought founded by Emile Durkheim. He was killed in a concentration camp during WWII. His volume *La Mémoire collective* was first published posthumously in French in 1950.
- 25 This reading is somewhat contradicted by Aleida Assmann's chapter "Reframing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past," where she maintains that "political memory is not fragmentary and diverse but emplotted into a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message" (71). Assmann differentiates between what she defines as individual and social memory and political and cultural memory—the former is embodied through humans and their interactions, while the latter is mediated and must be re-embodied to become memory. Assmann explains that bottom-up memory is studied by social psychologists and deals with how individuals perceive and remember events, whereas top-down political memory is investigated by political scientists and is used to discuss formations of national identity and political action (42).
- 26 The text states, "En junio de 2010, en una conocida casa de remates de la Ciudad Vieja, un rematador presenta el Lote Delmira. El hecho pasa completamente desapercibido. En ese momento Montevideo vive intensamente la final de la copa mundial del fútbol. / No sale en la prensa.

- Seis privilegiados adquieren algunos objetos ... El lote no se remata en su totalidad. A la fecha se desconoce qué pasó con el resto de las pertenencias que a nadie interesaron. / Los que participaron del remate nos dieron generosamente su testimonio" (Morena 57). Morena contrasts the lack of attention to the auction of one Uruguay's most important female literary icons with the country's obsession over the male-dominated sport of soccer.
- 27 Brennan complicates affect by the notion that "The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person but also come from without. They come via an interaction with other people and an environment. But they have a physiological impact. By the transmission of affect, I mean simply that the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another" (3). Brennan goes on to argue later in her book for a maternal connection that fosters the transmission of affect. She states: "The presence of living maternal attention enhances the cortical development of rats, as we have seen, and there is evidence that such attention has related impacts on human embryos. What stands in the way of taking such ideas further is not the accumulating scientific evidence supporting them. It is the philosophical prejudice against the notion of the maternal environment, or any environment, as constructing persons in this way" (91). Brennan's argument has important implications for the matrixial space I have argued for in Morena's play, as it suggests that not only her verses, but also the way in which she is engendered multiple times in the play, carry "affective transmission" that cannot be overlooked when discussing gender violence and gender equality when they are inserted into a modern context, multiple generations, and across audiences.
- 28 Jay Winter notes, "Performative utterances—like many memories—are beyond simple verification" (12).

#### WORKS CITED

- ABREU FELIPPE, JOSÉ. "No daré hijos, daré versos': provocadora, irreverente, controversial." *El Nuevo Herald*. 11 July 2016. Accessed 11 December 2018. Web.
- ACHUGAR, HUGO. "Modernización, europeización, cuestionamiento: El lirismo social en Uruguay entre 1895 y 1911." *Revista iberoamericana*. 47.114-15 (1981): 7-32.
- AHMED, SARA. "Happy Objects." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 29-51.
- ASSMANN, ALEIDA. "Re-framing Memory: Between Individual and Collective Forms of Constructing the Past." *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. 35-50.

- BARTHES, ROLAND. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Trans. Richard Howard. Reprint. New York: Hill and Wang, 2010.
- BENJAMIN, WALTER. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 217-51.
- BRENNAN, TERESA. *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2004.
- BURKE, PETER. "Co-memorations. Performing the Past." *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. 105-118.
- CHO, GRACE M. *Haunting: the Korean Diaspora. Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War*. Minneapolis: U Minnesota P, 2008.
- ESCAJA, TINA. "Delmira Agustini, ultimación de un proyecto decadente: El batllismo." *Hispania*. 89.3 (Sept. 2006): 501-08.
- ETTINGER, BRACHA. L. "Transcriptum: Memory Tracing In / For/ With the Other." *The Matrixial Borderspaces*. Ed. Brian Masumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. 164-72.
- GARRIDO, LORENA. "Latin American Poets and Their Strategies for Self-Definition at the Beginning of the Twentieth-Century." *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*. 62.2 (2015): 107-14.
- GIORDANO, VERÓNICA. "Vida, obra y muerte de Alfonsina Storni, Delmira Agustini y Ercilia Cobra. La construcción de los derechos civiles." *Cadernos Pagu* 32 (2009): 1-15.
- HALBWACHS, MAURICE. *La mémoire collective*. Ed. Jeanne Alexandre. Paris: Presses universitaires de France. 1950.
- HIRSCH, MARIANNE. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writings and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia UP, 2012.
- JRADE, CATHY L. *Delmira Agustini, Sexual Seduction, and Vampiric Conquest*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2012.
- LORENZ, CHRIS. "Unstuck in Time: Or: The Sudden Presence of the Past." *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. 67-102.
- MOODY, SARAH T. "Radical Metrics and Feminist Modernism: Agustini Rewrites Darío's *Prosas profanas*." *Chasqui* 43.1 (2014): 57-67.
- MORENA, MARIANELLA. *No daré hijos, daré versos. Trinidad Guevara. Yo soy Fedra*. Colección Textos Teatrales. No. 96. Bilbao: Artezblai, 2014.
- POLLOCK, GRISELDA. "Femininity: Aporia or Sexual Difference?" *The Matrixial Borderspaces*. Ed. Brian Masumi. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. 1-40.
- ROACH, JOSEPH. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia UP, 1996.
- ROSE, JACQUELINE. *States of Fantasy*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.
- RUIZ PÉREZ, IGNACIO. "Contra-escrituras: Delmira Agustini, Alfonsina Storni y la subversión del modernismo." *Revista Hispánica Moderna* 61.2 (2008): 183-96.
- SAPRIZA, GRACIELA. "Un palimpsesto de infinitas escrituras." *Revista Nomadías* 20 (2015): 273-92.

- SEIGWORTH, GREGORY J., AND MELISSA GREGG. "An Inventory of Shimmers." *The Affect Theory Reader*. Eds. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. 1-28.
- SMITH ROUSSELLE, ELIZABETH. "The (New) Decadent Woman: Delmira Agustini's *Tête-à-Tête* with Charles Baudelaire." *L'Érudit Franco-Espagnol* 6 (Fall 2006): 29-46.
- TAYLOR, DIANA. *The Archive and Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.
- TILMANS, KAREN, FRANK VAN VREE, AND JAY WINTER, EDS. *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2010.
- TRIANA, JOSÉ. *La noche de los asesinos. 9 dramaturgos hispanoamericanos: Antología del teatro hispanoamericano del siglo XX*. Eds. Frank Dauster, Leon Lyday, and George Woodyard. Ottawa: Girol Books, 1979. 137-201.
- WINTER, JAY. Introduction. "The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity." *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*. 11-23.