

Fall 2016

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Recommended Citation

Méndez, Mariela. "Só para mulheres' (Just for women): Alfonsina Storni's and Clarice Lispector's Transgression of the Women's Page." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 35, no. 2 (2016): 413-437.

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“Só para mulheres” (Just for women): Alfonsina Storni’s and Clarice Lispector’s Transgression of the Women’s Page

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ABSTRACT: *This article considers the contributions of Argentinean poet Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938) and Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) to the women’s column of newspapers and journals in their respective countries. The women’s column or page was a section entirely dedicated to women’s concerns, addressed specifically to a female readership, and generally authored by a woman or a female persona. As such, it operated under specific parameters of form and content. This article argues that both writers’ transgression of this discursive space can be seen as resignifying gender meanings and potentially transforming readers’ perception of female subjectivity. Analyzing selected pieces from the various columns authored overtly or covertly by Storni and Lispector, the article draws on Judith Butler’s reflections on the performativity of gender and Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas on double-voiced discourse to focus on the “acting out” of gender as a means of subverting the presuppositions underlying the rigidly codified space of the women’s page. This article explores a corpus that has gone largely unnoticed until recently and generates new understandings of both women’s works.*

Alfonsina Storni (1892-1938) enjoys a worldwide reputation as one of Argentina’s leading poets, and—alongside Gabriela Mistral (Chile) and Juana de Ibarbourou (Uruguay)—as one of the foremothers of Latin American women’s poetry.¹ Clarice Lispector (1920-1977) has been internationally praised, together with João Guimarães Rosa, as the best Brazilian fiction writer of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, the press contributions of both writers have only recently caught the attention of scholars and critics of their work, in part perhaps because they both approached the journalistic medium stealthily, as it were. The relationship of these icons of South American literature with the press was always somewhat marked by secrecy, insofar as their more or less covert participation—under pseudonyms or otherwise—seemed to be informed by the desire to be sheltered from the censoring gaze of the audience and critics. At the same time, while hiding their true identities, Storni and Lispector staged a discursive performance whereby they showed gender to be contingent and constructed. Both writers undermined the precepts of the women’s page to challenge the ideal of femininity permeating this rigidly codified space.²

This project undertakes an examination of their discursive and rhetorical gestures with a view to understanding how the performance of gender in their contributions to the press carried with it the potential to transform the way their female readership understood and perceived itself.

Early criticism of Storni tended to equate her life with her writing, thus emphasizing the thematic content of her poetry. Rachel Phillips gives some critical consideration to a tension between rigidity and freedom in Storni's earlier versus later poetry in *Alfonsina Storni: From Poetess to Poet* (1975), which as the title suggests, traces Storni's aesthetic development as a poet while still incorporating previous critical studies to contextualize the poet's life and work.³ However, a major point of transition came with Janice Geasler Titiev's cluster of articles on Storni's poetry, which were an obvious departure from the biographical approach and inaugurated a new approach that would reappear in some form or another in the most widely recognized critical work on the writer.⁴ Focusing on the formal aspects of Storni's poetry, Titiev explores the tension between the rigidity of expression and form in Storni's earlier books and the preference for creative freedom and experimentation progressively shaping her last three books of poetry. Titiev's main contribution is recognizing within Storni's evolution a transformation of the lyrical subject from an object passively observed by others to an active observer.

Gwen Kirkpatrick takes a similar perspective in her 1990s essays, which were groundbreaking for their attention to Storni's journalistic output.⁵ My analysis of Storni's journalism is indebted to Kirkpatrick's understanding of the active sense of agency underlying Storni's last books of poetry, where "the doleful yo [I] of the earlier poems . . . moves from the position of the body observed, shifting to watch from the sidelines with a sharp eye."⁶ My study analyzes the figure of the active observer in Storni's role as an urban chronicler who observes and records the city while also carrying out a transformation of the discursive space of the women's page. As such, my emphasis on the discursive and rhetorical maneuvers whereby the poet/chronicler manages to transgress a highly conservative space of enunciation aligns with Francine Masiello's exploration of Storni's peculiar use of language in her poetic and dramatic production in *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina* (1992).⁷ My study, however, focuses strictly on Storni's journalism, absent from Masiello's text and largely understudied, to argue—by way of Judith Butler's theories on the performativity of gender—for the transgressive potential of her journalistic pieces.

Even though this project is indebted to the pioneering works just mentioned, it converses more directly with recent studies of Storni's work by fellow Argentineans Alicia N. Salomone and Tania Diz. Salomone's *Alfonsina Storni: Mujeres, modernidad y literatura* (2006; Alfonsina Storni:

Women, modernity, and literature) and Diz's *Alfonsina periodista: Ironía y sexualidad en la prensa Argentina (1915-1925)* (2006; *Alfonsina as journalist: Irony and sexuality in the Argentine press [1915-1925]*) examine previously unexplored aspects of Storni's poetry, prose, and contributions to the press in relation to other women's pages of the period and as such provide a broad framework within which to situate my own project.⁸ This article adds to the discussion initiated in these recent studies by introducing and elaborating upon the idea of gender's performativity at the center of Storni's transgressive journalism. Vicky Unruh's perceptive examination of Storni's public performance as a writer—mostly through poetry declamations and theater productions—alongside her use of performance as a means of cognitive inquiry in her own writing adds to the discussion outlined throughout these pages. Even though an investigation into Storni's "art of living," to borrow Unruh's description, is outside the scope of this article, my exploration of Storni's reappropriation of the women's page complements Unruh's analysis in *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America: Intervening Acts* (2006) of the writer's reappropriation of cultural scripts in her plays and experimental farces.⁹ In a sense, my understanding of Storni's gesture as one of "negotiation" with the conventions of the women's page is in harmony with Unruh's interpretation of performance activity as providing women writers like Storni with "a far richer repertoire and a more malleable site for negotiating their art of living as intellectuals than did reigning models of women's writing, embodied for example in the *poetisa*" (p. 16). In her book *Urban Chroniclers in Modern Latin America: The Shared Intimacy of Everyday Life* (2011), Viviane Mahieux makes a similar claim when she states that Storni and Mexican film critic Cube Bonifant—as opposed to the male chroniclers included in her study—"used the chronicle's rhetorical flexibility to critique and challenge the limitations imposed on them as women journalists."¹⁰ My emphasis here on the discursive and rhetorical performativity inherent in Storni's columns further complicates Mahieux's investigation of the writer's difficulty negotiating "the pressures associated with writing for the press" and of her creation of a unique style and voice that straddles the popular and the avant-garde (p. 131).

In comparison to the critical work on Storni's journalism, the scarcity of scholarship on Lispector's contributions to women's pages is disconcerting but understandable considering that these publications did not come to light until 2006. In that year, a selection of Lispector's pieces was published by Brazilian literary scholar and journalist Aparecida Maria Nunes and was followed by a second collection in 2008.¹¹ Even though Lispector's *crônicas* (chronicles) for *Jornal do Brasil* (Newspaper of Brazil) had been circulating in collections for a while, Nunes was the first to research and publish Lispector's contributions to the women's pages of three Brazilian newspapers—*Comício* (Assembly), *Correio da Manhã* (Morning mail), and *Diário*

da Noite (Night newspaper).¹² Her book *Clarice Lispector jornalista: Páginas femininas e outras páginas* (2006; Clarice Lispector as journalist: Feminine pages and other pages) therefore constitutes the only critical study of this unexamined corpus published so far and, for this reason, frequently appears as backdrop to my analysis.¹³ Although my study draws from Nunes's comprehensive introduction to the newspapers in which Lispector published as well as from Nunes's insightful rendering of the differences between Lispector's columns in each of the papers, the focus is instead on an analysis of the dialogic, parodic, and performative aspects of these columns to reveal their revolutionary singularity.

This article fills critical gaps surrounding Storni's and Lispector's contributions to the women's page in two ways. First, it uncovers revealing continuities that can help us better grasp the import and impact of Lispector's and Storni's transgressive reappropriations of one of the most heavily codified discursive spaces. The temporal and geographical distance between the two writers makes this transgression all the more pertinent in that it points to similar social and historical conditions to and against which their columns were responding and reacting. Second, by the same token, this study hopes to provide a template for the examination of journalistic contributions by other Latin American women writers whose literary careers in the first half of the twentieth century ran parallel to their participation in the press. The fact that women writers would pick the journalistic genre, which was traditionally dominated by men, to advance either directly or indirectly a feminist agenda seems, at the very least, worth attention.¹⁴

In other words, even though there is no evidence suggesting that either of these writers influenced the other, their columns deserve to be read comparatively so as to enable the possibility of theorizing the problematic relationship of women to writing in general and to journalism in particular. The tensions riddling Storni's and Lispector's decision to write women's pages speak to the inferior quality characteristically associated with journalistic writing. In an attempt to explain the tendency of modern volumes of collected chronicles to value literary merit at the expense of journalistic origin, Mahieux argues that it originates in "the inferior place in the cultural hierarchy that Spanish American *modernistas* [modernists] assigned to the chronicle and that continued well into the twentieth century" (p. 187, n. 8). Notwithstanding the different trajectory of the genre in Brazil, Mahieux concludes that even there "the genre . . . occupied a similarly low place in the literary hierarchy" (p. 17).¹⁵ The authorial anxiety characterizing writing by women is consequently all the more significant in the case of journalism, where famous women writers might have felt that hard won literary prestige could be jeopardized.¹⁶ However, if one agrees with Mahieux that "the discursive fluidity of the genre . . . paved the way for the self-fashioning of the contemporary chronicler as a mobile subject"—

a subject inhabiting the public urban space as a connoisseur and commentator on social events—it is also possible to interpret Lispector's and Storni's anxiety as stemming from this public notoriety, so to speak (p. 4).¹⁷ Mahieux suggests this source of anxiety in highlighting similarities between Storni and Bonifant: "addressing a heterogeneous public as women writers was considered both a transgression of journalistic hierarchies and a sign of dubious morality" (p. 10). Hence, a comparison that teases out the parallels between Storni's and Lispector's subtle disturbance of the precepts of the women's page can also broaden our understanding of the challenges facing women writers in Latin America.¹⁸

The dialogue set up here between the columns authored overtly or covertly by Lispector and Storni is echoed as well in the dialogue that the two writers foster with their female readers. This dialogue in turn reverberates with borrowed words from other publications, other columns, other writers. The different levels of dialogism at work in the pieces analyzed throughout this article will be considered through the lens of Mikhail Bakhtin's theorizations on "double-voiced discourse," especially in his book *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984).¹⁹ Lispector and Storni both relied on the underlying gender assumptions informing columns authored by women at the time they were writing. However, they interrogate these assumptions through the use of irony as well as by emphasizing the staging of gender-coded attributes and behaviors in the columns they produced. Butler's reflections on the performativity of gender consequently lie at the center of the analysis, as the women portrayed in the columns try on various masks and costumes in their attempts to fulfill a so-called ideal of femininity. Likewise, Lispector and Storni tried on different voices/identities as they took over the women's page, hesitantly at first, and branded it with a discourse and a style straddling the purely literary and the strictly journalistic. Therefore, my attention throughout this article will be principally focused on the acting out of gender staged by Lispector and Storni in their columns as they engage other(s') words to subvert their original, intended meaning.

Private Intentions and Public Incursions

From the beginning, Storni's and Lispector's forays into writing were marked by a certain air of clandestinity. Even though Lispector was daring enough to attempt the publication of her writings from an early age, she also dreaded rejection. At nine years of age, Lispector decided to write her first play after having attended a theatrical performance, but according to an interview, she hid it and eventually destroyed it when her family moved away: "Lo escondí detrás de un estante porque tenía vergüenza de escribir" (I hid it behind a shelf because I was ashamed of writing).²⁰ Two decades

earlier and further south, Storni had reacted similarly after experiencing her mother's rejection. Having shown her mother her first poem, the twelve-year-old received "unos coscorrones frenéticos" (furious knocks on the head) aimed at teaching her that "la vida es dulce" (life is sweet).²¹ Storni ends her evocation of the painful incident by recalling: "Desde entonces los bolsillos de mi delantal, los corpiños de mis enaguas, están llenos de papeluchos borroneados que se me van muriendo como migas de pan" (2:1077; Since then, the pockets of my apron, the brassieres of my petticoat, are full of little smudged scraps of paper that are dying on me like breadcrumbs).

Even as adult women who had earned a certain literary fame and recognition, both women still tried to "hide" (behind) their writing, betraying their uncertainty and/or insecurity about the journalistic medium. Nunes reminds us that Lispector, for instance, never felt completely at ease with her involvement with newspapers on account of her alleged inability to write "crônicas" (pp. 23, 92). Diz makes a similar argument in *Alfonsina periodista* when she points out that Storni never introduced herself as a journalist nor was she mentioned as one by intellectuals or critics at the time (p. 16). Writing for the press provided both women with an income that their literary careers could not afford them, an income much needed since both struggled to support their children. The fact that they had to rely substantially on the money they were paid as journalists might explain their sustained participation in the press throughout their entire writing careers. As early as 1910 and years before the publication of her first book of poetry, Storni's name appeared regularly in the Argentinean press attached to various genres—poems, epigrams, chronicles, travel diaries, interviews, essays, opinion pieces—the bulk of which were published in the literary journal *La Nota* (The note) or the newspaper *La Nación* (The nation). Lispector, as Nunes indicates, published her first story "Triunfo" (Triumph) in the magazine *Pan* in 1940, three years before the publication of her first novel, and afterwards, she maintained a steady relationship with the journalistic medium as chronicler, short story writer, translator, interviewer, and columnist (pp. 23-24).

Lispector's career in the press ran parallel to her literary one.²² In 1952, she was the "Tereza Quadros" who was signing the section "Entre mulheres" (Between women) of the tabloid *Comício*. Based on evidence found in Lispector's personal archive, Nunes infers that Lispector was also, from August 1959 to February 1961, the "Helen Palmer" behind "Correio feminino: Feira de utilidades" (Ladies' mail: Fair of useful things) in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*. For part of this time, from April 1960 until March 1961, Lispector also agreed to ghostwrite for actress and fashion model Ilka Soares for the column "Só para mulheres" (Just for women) of the tabloid *Diário da Noite*. According to Nunes, Lispector's reasons for refusing to sign

with her own name included fear that the lighter and less polished nature of the journalistic medium could compromise her reputation and alienate or even confuse faithful readers of her novels and stories (pp. 112-13).²³

In writing for the women's pages, Lispector had to comply with the precepts informing the genre, which was structured, according to Dulcília Schroeder Buitoni, around the triad of fashion, house, and heart.²⁴ In the form of recipes, tips, and secrets for housewives to achieve the ideal of beauty, intelligence, and elegance, which guarantee a happy married life, the women's section adopted a persuasive language based on the intimacy of a dialogue between friends. This intimacy made Lispector somewhat uneasy, as she suggested in an interview for the magazine *Minas Gerais* in 1968: "no jornal nunca se pode esquecer o leitor, ao passo que no livro a gente fala com liberdade, sem compromisso imediato com ninguém" (in a newspaper you can never forget the reader, while in a book one speaks with freedom, without any immediate commitment to anyone).²⁵ Despite the differences between the various publications where Lispector crafted the women's section, she always found the discursive space challenging.

Lispector's decision to take on the women's page in *Comício* marked a new phase in the writer's already existing relationship with the press. Despite being a forerunner to the alternative press in Brazil, *Comício* only lasted four months. The tabloid was created expressly to oppose the government of Getúlio Vargas, who was elected by popular vote in 1950 after functioning as a dictator from 1930 to 1945. In "Entre mulheres," Lispector addressed consumer housewives in a didactic and maternal tone, providing recipes and advice about the house, the upbringing of children, fashion, health, and beauty. She also included short narratives interspersed with pictures of young ladies wearing the latest designs to which she added explanations and comments. While "Entre mulheres" was an entire page, "Correio feminino" in *Correio da Manhã* took up at most two columns on page five of the morning paper. Unlike *Comício*, *Correio da Manhã* enjoyed a long, prestigious run from 1901 to 1974 and was therefore witness to the political upheavals of the country before it disappeared during the years of the military dictatorship, when censorship by the government was rampant.²⁶ Under the sponsorship of the cosmetic firm Pond's, the column "Correio feminino" afforded Lispector less creative freedom. Without mentioning specific products or resorting to overt advertising techniques, "Correio feminino" aimed to persuade the reader subliminally to identify with and consume Pond's products.

As in the case of *Comício*, her column in *Correio da Manhã* answered to the three thematic threads governing the women's press—fashion, sentimental life, and home-making. Conversely, "Só para mulheres" focused almost exclusively on fashion and female beauty, in large part because the column's title was accompanied by the name and the picture of the

famous star Ilka Soares, who embodied the ideals of beauty, elegance, and charm to which female readers aspired.²⁷ *Diário da Noite* used celebrities like Soares to try to recover its market and lost prestige during a severe crisis that eventually ended the paper's publication. The early 1960s were a time of profound social transformations. Juscelino Kubitschek's presidency concluded with the looming menace of political and economic chaos after the euphoria of modernization culminated with the inauguration of Brasília as the country's new capital in 1960. In that same year, Alberto Dines took over the declining publication and transformed it, paraphrasing his words, into a tabloid in the style of the English *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror*, characterized by short, lively texts and colloquial language.²⁸ Dines was responsible on two occasions for persuading Lispector to write for the press to overcome her financial difficulties; he convinced her to ghost write for Soares for *Diário da Noite* and, years later, to join the *Jornal do Brasil* to write her famous chronicles from 1967 to 1973.

Like Lispector, Storni used "proxies" in her contributions to the women's columns of both *La Nota* and *La Nación*. Her most prominent pseudonym was used in the pages of *La Nación*, where she wrote the section "Bocetos Femeninos" (Feminine sketches) from 11 April 1920 to 31 July 1921. Storni almost systematically signed her contributions with the enigmatic name of Tao Lao. Storni scholars have long speculated about this persona: a supposed elderly widower who, having married three times, felt entitled to speak authoritatively about women. I find Salomone's interpretation of Storni's rhetorical gesture to be the most convincing, namely, that "en ese gesto hay presente una cierta política de la escritura, que se vincula con la necesidad de hablar desde una distancia estratégica, es decir, ocultando el propio rostro" (there is in that gesture a certain politics of writing, which is linked to the need to speak from a strategic distance, that is, hiding one's own face).²⁹ It is also possible to speculate that Storni may have been afraid of jeopardizing her popularity among a middle-class female audience that voraciously read her so-called romantic poetry. In any case, both of these explanations can apply as well to the journal *La Nota*, where from March of 1919 to March of 1920 Storni published a column that was alternately called "Cosas femeninas" (Feminine things), "Páginas femeninas" (Feminine pages), "Feminidades" (Femininities), and "Vida femenina" (Feminine life). *La Nota* was a literary magazine appearing weekly between 1915 and 1921, founded by Emir Emín Arslán, Lebanese Consul in Argentina, to support the Allied Forces during World War I. As such, the tone of this "revista semi-intelectual, escrita entre amigos" (semi-intellectual magazine written among friends), as Diz describes it, was considerably more liberal and progressive than other publications of the time (p. 101). Even though Storni signed her pieces for this more pluralistic publication

with her own name, she also adopted a double-voiced discourse, using fictional names like Lita, Mercedes, or Alicia to lend a voice to the writer's scathing criticism of social institutions and customs.

A product of the modernization sweeping Buenos Aires in the early decades of the twentieth century, Storni took the social, political, and economic changes in stride and became a keen observer of the fluctuating metropolis.³⁰ Nevertheless, her arrival in Buenos Aires as a single mother struggling simultaneously to write and support herself and her son made her entrance into literary circles difficult. Ironically, a book she claimed was "tan malo como inocente" (as bad as it was innocent)—*La inquietud del rosal* (The restlessness of the rosebush) published in 1916—first made the writer known within this male intellectual milieu.³¹ In the next few years, Storni gradually gained more recognition with the publication of *El dulce daño* (1918; The sweet harm), *Irremediablemente* (1919; Irremediably), and *Langüidez* (1920; Langor), alongside prestigious literary awards won both locally and nationally. Simultaneously, she participated in literary endeavors like the creation of the Sociedad Argentina de Escritores (SADE; Argentinean society of writers) and was involved with several landmark events and activities in the battle for women's civil, legal, and political rights. It is therefore significant that Storni agreed to take on the section "Feminidades," fully aware of the ideal of femininity perpetuated within such a discursive space. In fact, Storni's sense of irony is apparent in the first piece she wrote for the section—a fictitious dialogue with *La Nota's* editor. Having recalled the names of other similar columns of the period—"Charlas femeninas" (Feminine chats), "Conversación entre ellas" (Conversation between women), "La señora Misterio" (The mystery lady)—Storni makes a point of stating firmly that she only likes cooking on rainy days when she feels like preparing exquisite dishes for her fiancé.³² Storni acknowledges the columns' prescribed themes of fashion, homemaking, and sentimental life, but she also expresses disbelief that she is asked to write in one of these spaces, given that she rarely cooks and, even when feeling so inclined, does so only to please her fiancé. The sarcasm in this statement is evident, as Storni, having reluctantly accepted the offer to write the column, moves on in this same piece to write about Julieta Lanteri's candidacy for the Partido Feminista Nacional (National feminist party), thus signaling her refusal to confine her column to pre-assigned parameters.³³ Storni is subversive throughout all of her contributions, as she harshly criticizes young women whose only preoccupation is, precisely, to please their fiancés.

In *Alfonsina periodista*, Diz points to two main threads running through "feminine articles" in early twentieth-century Argentinean magazines: the body as central to the formation of female subjectivities—a body predicated on health, beauty, and social etiquette—and a gallery of feminine

types introduced with the aim of endorsing certain female subjectivities while admonishing others (pp. 31-32). I would add that these two threads intersect with each other inextricably, making it almost impossible to consider one without the other. The female subjectivities portrayed in the articles are perceived as beautiful, healthy, and sociable bodies circulating through newly inaugurated urban spaces. The series on feminine types that Storni produced for the newspaper *La Nación* speaks most persuasively of how these two threads are indissociable. *La Nación* represented a great leap forward for the writer in terms of the size of her readership; it is to this day one of the papers with the largest circulation in Argentina. At the same time, it is also a conservative newspaper. *La Nación's* conservatism, coupled with the fact that Storni's column had to share two pages of a Sunday section with other texts like social announcements, fashion updates, and food recipes, gave the writer much less freedom than she enjoyed in *La Nota*.

Modeling Identity, Performing Gender

Lispector and Storni put on masks to write women's columns, acting out the roles they were asked to perform; this performativity is replicated in the female characters inhabiting their writing. The women parading through their discursive spaces are modeling gender, literally and figuratively wearing it as a costume that helps perpetuate the illusion of an essence, the appearance of substance. Lispector frequently cut out pictures of fashion models from foreign magazines, which she then interspersed with her texts in the columns "Entre mulheres" and "Só para mulheres." Strategically placed, the women in the pictures look either towards the texts inside the column or straight ahead at the reader in front of them, and they are accompanied in most cases by Lispector's own commentaries describing details that might be hard for the reader to see.³⁴ Thus, these models reinforce visually the ideals of beauty, elegance, and femininity upon which the column is built and seem to be instrumental in conveying a unique, unified, coherent, and stable notion of female subjectivity. This notion initially seems reinforced by the recurrence in some of Lispector's pages of the verb "to be" to the detriment of verbs of action—"[uma mulher] é companheira do homem e não é sua escrava . . . é mãe e educadora e não boneca mimada" ([a woman] is man's companion and not his slave . . . is mother and educator and not a spoiled doll)³⁵—a characteristic attributed to women's journalism in general by Buitoni in her exhaustive study *Mulher de papel: A representação da mulher pela imprensa feminina brasileira* (1981; Paper woman: The representation of women in the Brazilian feminine press).³⁶

In the endless repetition of codified behaviors can be seen a slight and unsettling "discontinuity," a "failure to repeat," borrowing Butler's words.³⁷

For Butler, the possibility of transformation lies precisely in this staging of femininity: “If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the spatial metaphor of a ‘ground’ will be displaced and revealed as a stylized configuration” (p. 179). The more Lispector tries to assert the existence of a unique and unalterable “feminine essence”—even explicitly through the use of titles like “Sempre mulher através dos tempos” (1960; Always a woman across time)—the more she appears to expose its fictional foundation, its “temporal and contingent groundlessness,” as Butler would say (p. 179). Lispector’s column ostensibly appeals to some kind of invisible essence, a recognizable and relatable interiority that promises to unlock the secrets of ideal womanhood. A closer look reveals that this interiority is, however, “an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse,” “the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core” (p. 173). Butler outlines the process whereby the illusion of this core is fabricated: “the essence or identity that [acts] otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (p. 173). Throughout the repetition of acts, gestures, and behaviors in the columns, the imitative and contingent nature of gender is unveiled, and interior female essence is perceived as mere fabrication.

Against and alongside the frequent occurrence of passive verbs, there appears throughout Lispector’s columns an incessant flow of recipes destined not only to instruct housewives on the art of making exquisite dishes but also to provide them with the necessary techniques or strategies to find good prospective husbands, to become perfect hostesses, and to appear young, healthy, and beautiful at all times, among other things. These pieces of advice are structured around a series of actions to be followed in a specific order to create a satisfactory outcome. Therefore, it is possible to argue that the idea of performance is one of the defining characteristics of the advice provided in these columns; one needs to perform the same actions in the exact same way for prescribed behavior to have its desired result. For instance, in an untitled 1960 text from the “Nossa conversa” (Our conversation) section of *Diário da Noite*, Lispector, writing as Soares, painstakingly describes the sequence of motions to be followed to enhance the appearance of one’s legs.³⁸ Having argued that the secret of beautiful legs lies in the pose, the narrator minutely and almost obsessively specifies how exactly the reader should stand, sit down, and even walk:

3-Ao caminhar, os dedos devem apontar para a frente.

4-Ao caminhar, mova os pés ao longo de duas linhas paralelas imaginárias, com um pequeno espaço entre ambas.

5-E, ainda ao caminhar, limite seu passo ao comprimento de seu pé.³⁹

(3-While walking, toes have to point to the front.

4-While walking, move your feet alongside two imaginary parallel lines, with

very little space between them.

5-Still while walking, limit your step to the length of your foot.)

Such strict adherence to a specific manner of walking, composed as it is of fixed and rigid actions, underlines the artificiality of the prescribed behavior itself, its hollowness, its groundlessness. The ideal of femininity perpetuated through the stylized repetition of this series of actions is consequently vulnerable to disruption. The possibility of “a de-formity” in the sequence, a deviance or interruption of the pre-established order, could expose “the arbitrary relation between such acts”—the steps composing the act of walking—and show “the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction” (Butler, p. 179). Significantly, this scenario is enacted by many of the female protagonists in Lispector’s fiction, where an unexpected and seemingly unimportant event interrupts the protagonist’s routine and reveals the artificiality and fragility of her life, throwing her into a process of self-discovery.⁴⁰

The quasi-histrionic aspect of gender alluded to by Butler also underlies Storni’s portrayal of “la chica-loro” (the parrot girl) in her piece “Tipos femeninos callejeros” (1919; *Feminine street types*).⁴¹ Everything the parrot girl does is prompted by the overarching motive of finding a good husband. This motive takes her to the most ridiculous extremes in her eagerness to emulate the models from popular fashion magazines, which flooded newspaper stands in early twentieth-century Buenos Aires. Storni’s description of the parrot girl alludes to the theatricality of gender:

Si vuestra visión de la chica-loro, empezara por los pies y fuera ascendiendo, como si un telón se levantase, imaginaríais que a cuatro dedos del tobillo habría de iniciarse el ruedo de la pollera correspondiendo el largo de ésta a la osadía del taco.

Nada de eso. (2:850)

(If your sight of the parrot-girl started with her feet and gradually rose, like a curtain rising, you would imagine that four finger-widths away from her ankle the skirt’s hem would start, proportionate in length to the boldness of the heel.

None of that.)

Conjuring up other feminine models in other women’s magazines of the period, Storni singles out predictable items composing the parrot girl’s appearance—shoes, skirt, collar, hair, accessories, and make-up—only to rearrange the whole picture highlighting the irritating discrepancy between the desired effect and the actual portrait. The heel of the parrot-girl’s shoe is slightly crooked, her tights reveal a less than perfect ankle, and the skirt’s waistline is too low. One could argue with Butler that gender “is a production which, in effect—that is, in its effect—postures as an imitation”

(p. 176). There is indeed no origin(al) that the parrot-girl is imitating; her behavior is the imitation of an imitation, and it is precisely in this “perpetual displacement” that lies the possibility for “gender parody” to lead to “resignification and recontextualization” of gender meanings (pp. 176, 175).

A slippage has occurred in the endless repetition of acts in which the parrot girl engages as part of her performance to attract the attention of young men cruising in their cars in search of a prospective fiancée. This discrepancy, the *discontinuity* alluded to by Butler, generates a tension that cannot have gone unnoticed by a female reader accustomed to emulating the fashion models in movies and magazines. The tension resonates as well with Lispector’s columns, which oscillate between innumerable recipes to help readers become perfect housewives and the writer’s explicit call to her female readers to be themselves and never betray their precious individuality. In a piece entitled “Beleza em série” (Mass-produced beauty) appearing in *Correio da Manhã* on 1 April 1960, Lispector, writing as Helen Palmer, embarks on a diatribe against the prevailing tendency among young ladies to become carbon copies of famous actresses. The column ends by urging readers to stay true to themselves with the exclamation “Por favor, meninas, sejam vocês mesmas!” (Please, girls, be yourselves!).⁴² The subject is “done’ by gender,” as Sara Salih suggests in her reading of Butler, inverting the common presupposition that a subject does or performs gender instead.⁴³ The proliferation of models that the parrot girl—and Lispector’s reader, for that matter—emulates from fashion magazines, movies, and store catalogues produces an effect that is forever an imitation, without any essential notion of a subject antedating and generating the stylized repetition of acts. Lispector’s urging of her readers “to be themselves” betrays her awareness of the constructed nature of ideals of femininity perpetuated by the women’s pages; they are all carbon copies replicating that model, without any singular or individual essence.

Storni also calls on her readers to become aware of their copycat tendencies in a piece written for the 19 September 1919 issue of *La Nota*—“Los detalles; el alma” (Details; the soul)—in which she reviews the history of women’s and men’s clothes to chastise women for their lack of practical sense and their ludicrous loyalty to unhealthy fashion trends. She focuses specifically on the use of corsets and high heels, reviewing their trajectory throughout western history and their pernicious influence on women’s health in language echoing that of doctors and hygienists at the time:

Por más que se haya dicho que la enfisema vesicular, la tuberculosis, la dilatación cardíaca, la úlcera redonda del estómago, la dispepsia y otras distintas enfermedades pueden provenir fácilmente del uso abusivo del corsé, la mujer no se resuelve a perder su actual elegancia ficticia, convencional, exterior.⁴⁴

(However often it has been stated that gall-bladder emphysema, cardiac dilation, stomach ulcer, dyspepsia, and other distinctive disorders can easily come from the abusive use of corsets, women do not resolve to lose their current fictitious, conventional, and external elegance.)

Storni's use of intense and powerful adjectives to describe women's elegance—whose secrets the women's column is supposed to unveil for its female readers—betrays harsh criticism towards women's fashion while also exposing its fake and imitative nature.

Alongside scientific and historical evidence to sustain her argument, Storni includes a series of questions that point to the personal and subjective value of her judgment: “¿Voy muy allá? ¿Es todo esto muy confuso? Bien puede ser que yo tenga de las cosas un concepto demasiado personal” (2:877; Am I going too far? Is all of this too confusing? It could very well be that I have too personal a concept of things). These words somewhat undermine the forcefulness of her disapproving remarks but also, and above all, point to a slippage of meaning in the column itself, to the elusiveness of a discursive space that is endowed with the authority to pass on knowledge necessary for the attainment of ideals of feminine beauty and elegance. This discursive effect—calling into question the rhetorical efficacy of women's columns—is reinforced towards the end when she reflects upon her emotional diatribe: “Con una elasticidad realmente femenina he saltado, sin darme cuenta, del taco y el corsé a la lágrima” (2:878; With a truly feminine elasticity I have jumped, without noticing, from heels and corsets to tears). The authoritative language of the column therefore has also been shown to be merely repetitive, the mere echo of a script, the performance of a series of pre-determined gestures much like the repetitive, hollow, and fictitious performance of fashion. Indeed, Storni mocks this performance in writing about women's use of high heels: “esos graciosos espectáculos callejeros de damas que danzan . . . un tembloroso minuet” (2:875; those funny street spectacles of women dancing a shaking minuet). In so doing, she also mocks the performance of femininity as it is understood through and within the space of the women's column, as the successive repetition of acts, gestures, and behaviors destined to produce the ideal of healthy and beautiful elegance visually encapsulated in *Lispector's* cutouts from foreign fashion magazines. An error in the performance has the potential to resignify and recontextualize gender meanings.

Parody in Conversation

The parodic recontextualization of gender meanings ensuing from *Lispector's* and Storni's discursive and rhetorical maneuvers draws attention to what Butler calls “the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self” (p. 176). Instead and in place of this illusory self, Butler argues that

“gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations” (p. 176). In the hands of Lispector and Storni, the women’s column “interpellates” its audience, calling its gender identity into question—following the ideological mechanism delineated by Catherine Belsey—and forcing readers to become acutely aware of the meanings they have inherited, predominantly through the use of irony and parody.⁴⁵ In her book *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (1985), Linda Hutcheon underlines the existence of a critical distance in parody that is “implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signaled by irony.”⁴⁶ Storni’s and Lispector’s columns parody the women’s columns published contemporaneously—as well as the religious, medical, scientific, and advertising discourses on women—thus ratifying Hutcheon’s notion that in parody, “the discursive practices active at a particular time and in a particular place are involved” (p. 45). Parody is therefore not sheer repetition—in this case repetition of the patterns of already existing columns. It is “repetition that includes difference,” that is, “imitation with critical ironic distance” (p. 37). In this scenario, the reader is asked to “‘bounce[el]’ . . . between complicity and distance,” close enough to the new text to identify with certain characters and situations but far enough from it to gain a critical perspective (p. 32). It can then be argued that both Lispector and Storni resort to this rhetorical strategy to involve and engage their readers in an active process of decoding and interpretation, which in turn draws attention back to their own subjectivity. A tension is consequently established within the space of the column between two conceptions of the world, so to speak, or, as Bakhtin would have it, “an arena of battle between two voices.”⁴⁷

The representative tensions underlying “Diario de una niña inútil” (Diary of a useless girl) by Storni, published in *La Nota* on 23 May 1919, make it an almost paradigmatic text, in that it encapsulates all of the aspirations of young, avid readers of the women’s pages, who were in search of a “good match” that could guarantee a comfortable future. It is to this goal that the “useless girl” directs all of her efforts, receiving guidance in a dialogue from her friend Mechita, the president of the “Asociación secreta de niñas inútiles pro defensa de sus intereses” (Secret association of useless girls pro-defense of their interests).⁴⁸ Having read the rules, the useless girl shows impatience with one of the items: “No hurtar a la amiga un novio pobre” (2:828; Do not rob your friend of a poor fiancé). Indignant, she cries, “¿A quién se le ocurre prohibir que se robe un novio pobre?” (Who on earth would think of forbidding that a poor fiancé be robbed?), and concludes by justifying her anger:

¡Hay cada deseo de hacer ganar dinero a los fabricantes de tinta!

Y escribo esto porque creo que esta franqueza mía expresa mi íntima psicología y no debo olvidarme de la receta para transformar una niña inútil en una gran mujer. (2:829)

(The desire there is nowadays to help ink manufacturers make a profit!

And I write this because I believe that this frankness of mine expresses my intimate psychology and I shouldn't forget the recipe for transforming a useless girl into a great woman.)

Humor and irony traverse this piece, allowing Storni to denounce indirectly the artificiality inherent in sociocultural constructions of gender and establishing an unsettling tone. In trying to record her innermost thoughts and feelings, her "intimate psychology," the "useless girl" comes to the realization that there is in fact not much to say. As she tries to recollect what has happened to her on a particular day, for instance, all that comes to mind is a sharp pain in her foot. Storni's readers can in fact recognize themselves in the useless girl and in her struggle to find a good match, but as they slightly distance themselves from it, they can perceive the superficiality characterizing the useless girl and, by extension, all of the women's pages of the period. The useless girl, while not described as "useless," was indeed the girl portrayed in those pages, someone whose entire time would be consumed by figuring out how to find a good husband. Herein lies the "critical distance" described by Hutcheon.

Almost three decades later and further north, Lispector also subtly pulled her readers into a discursive play where they were caught in unforeseen signifying mechanisms. Amidst food recipes, fashion tips, and beauty treatments destined to turn the reader into the perfect mother and wife, there appears in *Diário da Noite's* issue for 16 August 1960, a recipe to get rid of cockroaches. Lispector had already published this recipe, in slightly different form, in *Comício* on 9 August 1952, and it would become the germ for her story "A quinta história" (The fifth story) published in the magazine *Senhor* (Sir) two years later. Advice on killing cockroaches may seem like a typical household hint, but the unusual use of plaster in a domestic setting and the ludicrous closing image indicate that the recipe is a mockery. Lispector, as Soares, advises:

Deixe, todas as noites, nos lugares preferidos pelas baratinhas horríveis, a seguinte comidinha: açúcar, farinha e gesso, misturados em partes iguais. Comida ruim? . . .

O gesso endurece lá dentro delas, o que provoca morte certa. Na manhã seguinte, dezenas de baratas duras enfeitarão como estátuas a vossa cozinha, madame.⁴⁹

(Leave, every night, in the places preferred by those horrible little roaches, the following little dish: sugar, flour and plaster, mixed in even quantities. Bad food? . . .

Plaster will harden inside them, which is bound to cause immediate death. The following morning, dozens of stiff cockroaches will decorate your kitchen like statues, madam)

This recipe for killing roaches parodies recipes filling this and other similar columns of the period. It replicates in its structure and tone other recipes whereby Lispector instructs women on how to be perfect housewives; didacticism and use of the imperative *você* (you) prevail. The instructions are disguised amongst tips on social etiquette and practical housekeeping advice. Most of the ingredients are familiar, as is the setting, but the method described is ridiculous. The advice for killing cockroaches introduces a fictional element into a discursive space that presents itself as credible. It is therefore valid to wonder whether most or even all of the recipes reproduced by Lispector are fulfilling the same parodying mission.

Parody constitutes one of the forms of double-voiced discourse theorized by Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Although Storni and Lispector invoke the precepts underlying the rigidly codified discursive space of the women's column, it is also true that in parodying through irony this space of enunciation, their discourse sets up an almost imperceptible displacement in relation to the standard discourse of the column, a fault line, so to speak, from which the column is called into question.⁵⁰ The dialogism that characterizes every utterance, to use Bakhtin's terminology, becomes ostensibly visible in the women's column through the use of imperatives—as recipes command readers to follow certain steps—as well as through the frequent presence of the first person plural form of the verb and of phrases like “my dear readers,” “my friends,” and the like, recreating the intimacy of a chat among close friends, as Buitoni suggests in *Mulher de papel*.⁵¹ In the 18 July 1960 “Nossa Conversa” section, for instance, Lispector, under Soares's name, responds to a question that she received from one of her readers using the reader's real name, therefore persuading her readers that true friendship and camaraderie indeed exist between them: “Quanto a você, Maria Cristina” (About you, Maria Cristina).⁵² The dialogue with the reader is the column's *raison d'être*, a dialogism that, in the case of Lispector and Storni, is also in turn the result of the coexistence of multiple voices within the boundaries of a single column.

Both Lispector and Storni recycle the words of other writers. In “A irmã de Shakespeare” (1952; Shakespeare's sister), Lispector paraphrases part of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929).⁵³ The presence of a text that explores the condition of women beyond the confines of the house alongside others about the benefits of a tomato-based facial or

advice to gain a narrow waist adds another layer of dialogism to the page. No one discourse assumes preeminence over the others; on the contrary, a discursive polyphony is set in motion in which all discourses enter into dialogue with each other and with the reader on equal footing. In turn, the dialogism inhabiting Lispector's and Storni's columns reverberates with the implicit conversation existing in other discursive practices present within the publications in which their contributions appear. "Las cartas de la niña boba" (Letters from the silly girl)—addressed to the editor, the only one supposed to know the silly girl's true identity—as well as a section called "Notas Femeninas" (Feminine notes)—containing a couple of brief, anecdotal articles—appeared alongside Storni's page. An intriguing gesture of Lispector's, on the other hand, was her practice of consulting "expert" publications on women like *The Homemaker's Encyclopedia: Personal Beauty and Charm* (1952), *Ricettario domestico: Enciclopedia moderna per la donna e per la casa* (1954; Household recipes: A modern encyclopedia for women and the home), and *Beleza e personalidade: O livro azul da mulher* (1944; Beauty and personality: Woman's blue book), some of which were part of Lispector's personal library.

Lispector indulged in recycling stories for her different contributions to newspapers and journals, the core of many of which can also be found in her fiction. Storni "contaminates" her columns with discursive and rhetorical maneuvers that blur the boundaries between literary and journalistic discourses. Several of Storni's pieces for the press set forth powerful and carefully thought-out arguments around issues like divorce, single motherhood, working conditions for the female workforce, and the various legal, juridical, and civil obstacles faced by Argentinean women during the first decades of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, we also find, interspersed with the articles of a more political nature, hybrid forms like the essay-letter, the essay-diary, or the essay-confession. This discursive maneuver enables Storni to inhabit, in the first person, the female subjectivities addressed by most women's pages of the period and to infuse the discourse of these young ladies with the penetrating irony that became the trademark of her journalism.

Conclusion

The ventriloquism displayed in the women's pages crafted by Lispector and Storni speaks to the coexistence of multiple voices in their columns and to the acting out of multiple subject positions that generate a polyphonic discourse with potentially transformative power. It is a polyphonic discourse in which gender is always and inevitably performed according to a script that has been culturally and socially validated, the result of, as Butler points out, "the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions" (p. 178). This

agreement is concealed by “the credibility of those productions” (p. 178). Storni and Lispector subtly disarm this credibility by installing a tension, a discontinuity in the sequence, a glitch in the scripted repetition of the recipe, causing their readers to feel ill at ease with a discursive space that has been all too comfortable for them. In her columns, Lispector introduces small and subtle gestures that, like the epiphanies of her short stories and novels, threaten to alter the status quo, the complacent quiet of her readers’ domestic havens, albeit less conspicuously. The inclusion of the unusual, the playful, the unexpected, takes the reader by surprise, a reader used to absorbing quietly and submissively the knowledge necessary to live, dress, and feel well. Storni revels in mocking the same columns that she agreed to author—though covertly at times—while also advocating for women’s access into the public sphere, teasing her readers’ comfort zone, and advancing a powerful feminist agenda. Both Lispector and Storni are fully aware of the expectations of readers of the women’s column and can therefore anticipate the risks of introducing changes that are too deep or too dramatic. Thus, they both at least appear to maintain the status quo, preserving the reader’s trust and the intimacy of friendship, while managing at the same time to instill a certain subjacent unease bound to make the audience interrogate deeply entrenched notions of so-called femininity.

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NOTES

All translations are provided by the author unless otherwise noted.

¹ From today’s vantage point, it is possible to argue that Alfonsina Storni was “the first modern Latin American poet to write widely read feminist poems,” as Vicky Unruh claims in her book *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture*

in *Latin America: Intervening Acts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 31. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Storni's contemporaries failed to appreciate the feminist agenda underlying her verses—or purposefully opted not to do so. Unruh makes a compelling argument for the complexity of Storni's self-fashioned public persona as a woman writer in early twentieth-century Buenos Aires and concludes that “her eulogists by and large disregarded this complexity. Instead they shored up ‘romantic honeys’ of her *poetisa* image, stripped of the irony, wit, critical edge, and intellectual depth with which Storni had transformed the role” (p. 50). Unruh explains the “cultural expectations for a *poetisa*”: “she would write ‘intimist’ verse about matters of the heart, [and] her poetry would be emotive but self-abnegating, devoid of excessive passion, and expressive of ‘feminine’ qualities of gentleness, softness, purity, beauty, fragility, and moral superiority” (p. 42). The overemphasis placed by Storni's contemporaries on her *poetisa* image also explains the scant attention they paid to her journalistic production, which did not hide her commitment to the civil, legal, and political rights of women in early twentieth-century Argentina.

² By women's page or column, I mean a specific section in Argentinean and Brazilian newspapers dedicated completely to women. Sometimes it was an entire page focused on women and their interests; other times, it was a smaller section, typically a column, which formed part of a full page of other pieces usually about women as well. In either case, it was generally authored by a woman or a female persona, and it was addressed specifically to a female readership.

³ Rachel Phillips, *Alfonsina Storni: From Poetess to Poet* (London: Tamesis Books, 1975).

⁴ See Janice Geasler Titiev, “Alfonsina Storni's *Mundo de siete pozos*: Form, Freedom, and Fantasy,” *Kentucky Romance Quarterly*, 23 (1976), 185-97; Titiev, “Alfonsina Storni's *Poemas de amor*: Submissive Woman, Liberated Poet,” *Journal of Spanish Studies: Twentieth Century*, 8 (1980), 279-92; and Titiev, “The Poetry of Dying in Alfonsina Storni's Last Book,” *Hispania*, 68 (1985), 467-73.

⁵ See Gwen Kirkpatrick, “The Journalism of Alfonsina Storni: A New Approach to Women's History in Argentina,” in *Women, Culture, and Politics in Latin America: Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 105-29; Kirkpatrick, “Alfonsina Storni as ‘Tao Lao’: Journalism's Roving Eye and Poetry's Confessional ‘I,’” in *Reinterpreting the Spanish American Essay: Women Writers of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Doris Meyer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 135-47; and Kirkpatrick, “The Creation of Alfonsina Storni,” in *A Dream of Light and Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers*, ed. Marjorie Agosín (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 95-117.

⁶ Kirkpatrick, *The Dissonant Legacy of Modernismo: Lugones, Herrera y Reissig, and the Voices of Modern Spanish American Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 231-32.

⁷ Francine Masiello, *Between Civilization and Barbarism: Women, Nation, and Literary Culture in Modern Argentina* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

⁸ See Alicia N. Salomone, *Alfonsina Storni: Mujeres, modernidad y literatura* [Alfonsina Storni: Women, modernity, and literature] (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2006); and Tania Diz, *Alfonsina periodista: Ironía y sexualidad en la prensa Argentina (1915-1925)* [Alfonsina as journalist: Irony and sexuality in the Argentine press

(1915-1925)] (Buenos Aires: Libros del Rojas, 2006). Subsequent references to Diz will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁹ Unruh, *Performing Women and Modern Literary Culture in Latin America*, 7. Unruh takes the concept of the “art of living” from Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 58. She states:

Grounded in a conception of cultural practice as both embodied and improvisational—a way of learning by doing—Bourdieu coined the term “the art of living” to describe the intricate, group-based forging of new artistic personae in late-nineteenth-century European literary culture. A “fundamental dimension of the enterprise of artistic creation,” Bourdieu argued, was the invention of the “*style of an artist’s life*.” Thus writers introduced audacities or innovations not only into their written works “but *also into their existence*,” which, Bourdieu argued, was itself conceived as a work of art. Similarly, I myself have argued elsewhere that the early-twentieth-century avant-gardes in Latin America are best understood not as a series of canonical works or experiments in a single genre, but rather as a form of multifaceted activity that coalesced around the quest for a particular, if varied, style. (p. 7)

Subsequent references to Unruh will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁰ Viviane Mahieux, *Urban Chroniclers in Modern Latin America: The Shared Intimacy of Everyday Life*, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 10. Chronicles were brief articles originally published in newspapers and magazines to entertain and inform a broad readership about subjects of public interest. Subsequent references to Mahieux will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹¹ See Clarice Lispector, *Correio feminino* [Ladies’ mail], ed. Aparecida Maria Nunes (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2006); and Lispector, *Só para mulheres: Conselhos, receitas e segredos* [Just for women: Tips, recipes, and secrets], ed. Nunes (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 2008).

¹² For publications of Lispector’s *crônicas*, see Lispector, *A legião estrangeira: Contos* [The foreign legion: Stories] (Rio de Janeiro: Editora do Autor, 1964); Lispector, *A descoberta do mundo: Crônicas* [Discovery of the world: Chronicles] (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 1984); Lispector, *The Foreign Legion: Stories and Chronicles*, trans. Giovanni Pontiero (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986); Lispector, *Discovering the World*, trans. Pontiero (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992); and Lispector, *Selected Crônicas*, trans. Pontiero (New York: New Directions, 1996).

¹³ Nunes, *Clarice Lispector jornalista: Páginas femininas e outras páginas* [Clarice Lispector as journalist: Feminine pages and other pages] (São Paulo: Editora Senac São Paulo, 2006). Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁴ One of Lispector’s sons recalls that because his mother was one of the first female Brazilian reporters, her colleagues at Agência Nacional (the national news agency) and the newspaper *A Noite* (Night) would refrain from using curse words in front of her, which amused Lispector immensely; see Nádia Battella Gotlib, *Clarice: Uma vida que se cuenta* [Clarice: A life that tells itself] (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2007), 176.

¹⁵ In Brazil, as opposed to the rest of Latin America, the chronicle was recognized

for its literary value much earlier, largely due to the fact that Machado de Assis (1839-1908)—the founding father of Brazilian letters—cultivated the genre for four decades. The tradition of chronicle writing in Brazil was to some extent devoid of the anxieties suffered by nineteenth-century modernists around the technological advances brought about by modernity.

¹⁶ The “authorial anxiety” I am thinking of here refers to Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s argument that “the ‘anxiety of influence’ that a male poet experiences is felt by a female poet as an even more primary ‘anxiety of authorship’—a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a ‘precursor’ the act of writing will isolate or destroy her”; see Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 48-49. Gilbert and Gubar are responding to Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

¹⁷ Unruh also refers to the anxieties surrounding women’s incorporation into the public sphere as she elaborates upon the dilemmas facing the woman writer/performer in Latin America in the 1920s and 1930s.

¹⁸ In this sense, my study fits into the project of a transnational feminist critical practice that “allows us to view the experience of women more broadly than is possible in localized situations, while at the same time it allows us to recognize the limitations of a global perspective that tends to homogenize experience, masking historical specificity”; see Constance S. Richards, *On the Winds and Waves of Imagination: Transnational Feminism and Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 13.

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson, *Theory and History of Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 185.

²⁰ Quoted in Gotlib, *Clarice*, 111.

²¹ Storni, “Entre un par de maletas a medio abrir y las manecillas del reloj” [Between a pair of half-opened suitcases and the hands of the watch], *Alfonsina Storni: Obras* [Alfonsina Storni: Works], ed. Delfina Muschietti, vol. 2, *Prosa: Narraciones, periodismo, ensayo, teatro* [Prose: Narrations, journalism, essays, drama] (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1999), 1077. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²² As Diane E. Marting points out, Lispector’s role in the Brazilian literary scene is comparable to that of the famous writer María Luisa Bombal in Chile. Both women explore “the inner lives of materially comfortable women” and therefore go against the grain of the (predominantly male) literary tradition in their respective countries; see Marting, *Clarice Lispector: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), xxv. Marting clarifies that whereas Bombal’s treatment of women characters is “psychological and mythic,” Lispector’s is “philosophic and metaphysical,” bringing her closer to writers like Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield (p. xxv). The collection of short stories *Laços de família* (1960; Family ties) secured Lispector a place among the best Brazilian writers of the twentieth century, a reputation further augmented by her fourth novel, *A maçã no escuro* (1961; The apple in the dark), published the following year to wide acclaim from both critics and readers.

²³ In an interview for Editora Rocco, the publishing house responsible for

bringing out the collections *Correio feminino* and *Só para mulheres*, Nunes explains Lispector's consistent use of pseudonyms for her columns:

[Clarice] temia comprometer a produção literária com textos menos elaborados para os jornais. Ainda, segundo a família, Clarice queria manter a atividade de escritora em paralelo ou discriminada da sua atividade jornalística, até mesmo para não confundir os leitores. Por isso, assinava os textos jornalísticos com pseudônimo.

([Clarice] was afraid of compromising her literary production with the less elaborate texts for the newspapers. According to her family, Clarice even wanted to keep her activity as a writer parallel to or separate from her activity as a journalist, even fearing she would confuse her readers. Because of that, she would sign her journalistic texts with a pseudonym.)

See "Entrevista com Aparecida Nunes, organizadora de *Só para mulheres*" [Interview with Aparecida Nunes, organizer of "Just for women"], Editora Rocco, accessed 1 April 2012, <http://www.claricelispector.com.br>.

²⁴ Dulcília Schroeder Buitoni, *Imprensa feminina* [Feminine press] (São Paulo: Editora Atica, 1986), 15.

²⁵ Quoted in Nunes, *Clarice Lispector jornalista*, 114.

²⁶ In *Clarice Lispector jornalista*, to which I am indebted for this brief survey of the different publications in which Lispector's women's columns appeared, Nunes quotes Jefferson de Andrade's revealing words on *Correio da Manhã's* history in relation to Brazil's government: "[*Correio da Manhã*] se posicionou sempre contra as oligarquias, contra as forças governamentais que se distanciavam dos direitos do povo brasileiro, denunciou constatemente as falhas, as faltas, como também as corrupções que grassavam entre os meios governamentais" (p. 200; [*Correio da Manhã*] always positioned itself against oligarchies, against governmental forces that distanced themselves from the rights of Brazilian people, it constantly denounced the faults, the deficiencies, as well as the corruption in government circles).

²⁷ While Lispector was solely in charge of writing the page, she would discuss some of her ideas with Soares. The two women ended up being friends and neighbors.

²⁸ Drawn from Nunes, *Clarice Lispector jornalista*, 244.

²⁹ Salomone, *Alfonsina Storni*, 218.

³⁰ In *Sectores populares, cultura y política: Buenos Aires en la entreguerra* [Popular sectors, culture, and politics: Buenos Aires in between wars] (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1995), historians Leandro H. Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero enumerate some of the transformations that left a deep imprint on Buenos Aires, emphasizing how the urbanization of the outskirts and the growth and improvement of public transportation resulted in an exceptional increase in the number of people inhabiting the city (pp. 69-71). Thanks to this drastic urban development, a larger and more diverse readership was formed, one that had access to the cultural activities and services offered by the city. In turn, this growth translated into new modes of participation and publication for writers and intellectuals of the period. In her essay "The Journalism of Alfonsina Storni," Kirkpatrick argues that "Storni's life dramatically illustrates the rise of a new class of activist professional women, often immigrants or first-generation citizens, whose emergence in Argentina was

affected by a growing feminist movement and by labor movements in urban areas” (p. 110). She adds, “these women often entered the public sphere through the classroom, through journalism, or through community organizing and service fields” (p. 110). On different occasions, Storni earned a living as a teacher alongside various odd jobs like factory worker, secretary, shop assistant, and seamstress.

³¹ Storni, “Autodemolição” [Self-destruction], *Repertorio Americano: Semanario de cultura hispánica* [American repertory: Weekly on hispanic culture], 20 (1930), 329.

³² See Storni, “Feminidades” [Femininities], in *Alfonsina Storni: Obras*, 2:801.

³³ Julieta Lanteri (1873-1932) was the first female candidate to run for Deputy in the National Congress.

³⁴ It is worth noting that Lispector designed the entire page with such care that only minute adjustments would have to be made by editors.

³⁵ Lispector, “Uma mulher esclarecida” [An enlightened woman], in *Correio feminino*, 18.

³⁶ In tracing the trajectory of the women’s press in Brazil throughout the twentieth century, Buitoni notices that it is far more common for women to be qualified by certain attributes (using “to be” verbs) than to be engaged in action, and when the latter is the case, it is an action circumscribed to the realm of home, husband, and kids; see Buitoni, *Mulher de papel: A representação da mulher na imprensa feminina brasileira* [Paper woman: The representation of women in the Brazilian feminine press] (São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 1981), 136.

³⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 179. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

³⁸ The first “Nossa conversa” section appeared on 21 April 1960, under the title “Nossa primeira conversa” (Our first conversation), setting the tone for the kind of dialogue the column would foster with the reader. Nunes describes this exchange as one in which the reader is made to feel that she can indeed identify with the ideal model of beauty, elegance, and seduction that Soares represents (p. 253).

³⁹ Lispector, “Pose, o segredo das pernas” [Pose, the secret of legs], in *Só para mulheres*, 130.

⁴⁰ Such is the case with Ana, in the story “Amor” [Love] in *Laços de Família*, where seeing a blind man chewing gum from the bus she is riding shocks her out of her comfortable existence into a process of self-discovery whereby she discovers her deep dissatisfaction with her life as mother and housewife.

⁴¹ Storni, “Tipos femeninos callejeros” [Feminine street types], in *Alfonsina Storni: Obras*, 2:850. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴² Lispector, “Beleza em série” [Mass-produced beauty], in *Só para mulheres*, 48.

⁴³ Sara Salih, ed., *The Judith Butler Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 91.

⁴⁴ Storni, “Los detalles; el alma” [Details; the soul], in *Alfonsina Storni: Obras*, 2:877. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁵ Drawing from Louis Althusser’s thoughts on the effects of ideology, Catherine Belsey argues that people “‘recognize’ (misrecognize) themselves in the ways in which ideology ‘interpellates’ them, or in other words, addresses them as subjects, calls them by their names and in turn ‘recognizes’ their autonomy”; see Belsey, “Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text,” in *Feminisms: An Anthology of*

Literary Theory and Criticism, eds. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Price Herndl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 596.

⁴⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 32. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁷ Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 193.

⁴⁸ Storni, "Diario de una niña inútil" [Diary of a useless girl], in *Alfonsina Storni: Obras*, 2:828. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

⁴⁹ Lispector, "Receita de assassinato (de baratas)" [Assassination recipe (for cockroaches)], in *Só para mulheres*, 95.

⁵⁰ See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 185-98.

⁵¹ Buitoni, *Mulher de papel*, 125.

⁵² Lispector, "Resposta às leitoras" [Answer to Readers], in *Só para mulheres*, 61.

⁵³ See Lispector, "A irmã de Shakespeare" [Shakespeare's sister], in *Correio Feminino*, 125.