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Female Subjective Strategies in Post-Franco Spain as Presented by Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria

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FEMALE SUBJECTIVE STRATEGIES IN POST-FRANCO SPAIN AS
PRESENTED BY ROSA MONTERO AND LUCÍA ETXEBARRIA

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents. I cannot thank them enough for all of the support and love they have given me through this process.
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ABSTRACT

This project studies the subjective strategies that Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria present in post-Franco Spain. I approached this study with an understanding that Spain’s society since the death of Franco is still changing, and its people were still coming to terms with this new order. Spanish literature has reflected this change and the people’s desire to find their place and find autonomy within this new society. Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria are both women authors who present female protagonists who are also attempting these changes. Both are well-known authors in Spain and offer two very different subjective strategies as a sort of ethical stance for their readers to adopt. To demonstrate these strategies that Montero and Etxebarria employed, I used a psychoanalytic, and more specifically Lacanian, approach to reading, understanding, and analyzing these texts. In order to present a Lacanian approach, it was necessary to employ the works of Slavoj Žižek, Paul Verhaeghe, Bruce Fink, Anne Dunand, and Judith Feher-Gurevich.

I began the project with an explanation of Lacanian psychoanalysis and the coinciding terms by using the films of Pedro Almodóvar. Almodóvar is a well-known and well-studied director who is famous for his portrayal of hysteria and perversion, the subjective strategies employed by Montero and Etxebarria respectively. I then focused on Montero’s novel La hija del caníbal and how she interpolates the protagonist into a subjective strategy of hysteria. It is a strategy used to come to terms with desire and the Other in the new order created in post-Franco Spain. Indeed, the strategy is a successful one, and the protagonist, Lucía Romero, is also able to achieve a step beyond hysteria in the end. I then moved on to Lucía Etxebarria’s novel Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas and explained and demonstrated the perverse subjective strategy that she employed. The three Gaena sisters are morphed into one composite perverse subject who is the protagonist by the author in this novel. They are also struggling to come to terms with desire and the Other in post-Franco Spain, like Montero’s protagonist, but are doing so with a subjective strategy which appears, superficially, to be a failure. However, upon understanding Lacanian psychoanalysis and understanding the end of the novel, the composite perverse strategy
is clearly a successful strategy for the Gaena sisters. I conclude the project by comparing and contrasting the strategies and their success as presented by Montero and Etxebarria and explaining the need for more study of female subjective strategies in post-Franco Spanish literature.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This project investigates how two Spanish women authors, Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria, have used their novels as a means to express desire and to try and come to terms with the Other in post-Franco Spain. The foundation for this study is the Lacanian theory that subjects are always trying to come to terms with desire and the Other. Montero and Etxebarria present the reader with female subjects in a changing society who are trying to achieve just such a conclusion with whatever strategies they know how to use. Lacan provides a manner in which we can analyze and understand the means that the women protagonists are using to reach the desired end. The novels and their protagonists’ struggles become much more comprehensible once the reader can see and understand that the women involved are using hysteria and perversion as their *modus operandi*. These two strategies are the way that Lucía, the protagonist from *La hija del caníbal* by Rosa Montero, and Cristina, Rosa, and Ana, protagonists from *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* by Lucía Etxebarria, understand and deal with their struggles with desire and the Other.

Spanish history in the twentieth-century has been dramatic, violent, and full of major changes, all of which has been reflected in its literature. Literature before the Spanish Civil War reflected the desire of Spanish intellectuals for renewal and reform following Spain’s defeat in the Spanish-American War and the subsequent loss of its last colonies in the Philippines. The writers during this period are known as the Generation of 1898 and include Pío Baroja, Miguel de Unamuno, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Antonio Machado, and more. The writers of the Generation of 1898 were opposed to the restoration of the monarchy in Spain and rejected the aesthetics of Realism. They tried to modernize Spain to follow the philosophical ideals of European Irrationalism as suggested by Friedrich Nietzsche to promote an awareness of the need for a liberalization of Spain, while at the same time recognizing what was traditionally and importantly Spanish. The writers of the Generation of ’98 experienced great pessimism, distinguishing between what they saw as the “Real Spain” as a miserable country and the “Official Spain” which was false, a façade. They used their pessimism, criticism, and innovations to stage a literary rebellion and revolution, which has been both, criticized and defended later in the twentieth century. The writers of this generation, as well as those who
began publishing in the early years of the twentieth century, were influenced by the chaos in Europe including the violence and effects of World War I. All the social and political strife in Europe was also seen within the borders of Spain, marked by a series of protests and strikes, assassinations, and several changes in government, including a dictatorship under Primo de Rivera and ending with the formation of the Second Republic in 1931.

The varying governments led to social changes that caused strong opposition among some Spaniards. The Second Republic established many controversial reforms including the Agrarian Law (1932), which distributed land among poor peasants. Millions of Spaniards were poor and lived under the control of noble landowners and this new Law created great opposition from the elite. However, distribution of land was not the only act that angered Spaniards; the government also passed several unpopular anticlericalist acts and military cutbacks and reforms. The loss of empire left a great impact on the country, but especially on the men within the military who grew to believe that the civilian politicians were the ones responsible for this loss and could therefore not be trusted nor did they have the right to govern the country. According to Helen Graham in *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*, this belief grew so powerful that when Francisco Franco entered the military academy at the age of fifteen in 1907, he and his fellow cadets saw themselves as the defenders of the unity of Spain and responsible in keeping it both culturally and politically homogenous. Although the military reacted negatively after World War I, Spain’s economy was boosted greatly and there was industrialization, especially in the cities in Sevilla and Zaragoza. However, the majority of the country was rural and poor, consisting mainly of peasant smallholders bound by their poverty, religion, and traditions. In fact, labor unrest became such a problem that King Alfonso XIII welcomed a minor military coup led by General Miguel Primo de Rivera in 1923. King Alfonso XIII preferred military intervention to constitutional reform when it came to the government’s problems (3-6).

Graham continues by noting that Primo de Rivera’s brief dictatorship marked a return to a conservative government and was supported by the public. Spaniards hoped that the economic problems and the turmoil and violence of recent years would finally come to an end under Primo de Rivera, a strong leader who was backed by the military. Civilian politicians were fired and replaced with officers of middle ranks, the legislative body was dissolved, and the constitution was suspended but Primo de Rivera found barriers from corporate military interests when
attempting to implement reforms in the army. Primo de Rivera opened a National Assembly in 1927, which had no legislative power. However, in 1929 the National Assembly produced a constitution that he intended the nation to accept. Among its provisions was the right for women to vote, as Primo de Rivera believed that women’s political views were less inclined toward political radicalism. Unfortunately for the dictator, the public had tired of his absolute rule, especially with the faltering of economic growth and the falling value of the peseta (6-8). Ultimately, Primo de Rivera’s dictatorship was doomed to failure, as the Spanish military had never backed his rise to power, at least not unanimously. Therefore, when he lost the support of King Alfonso XIII and he began instilling politics into military promotions and decisions, his fall began. Primo de Rivera did not have to be removed from power, however, as he recognized that the King no longer supported him and he noticed the unenthusiastic responses of military leaders when asked if they still supported him. Primo de Rivera resigned two days later and left for Paris where he died in less than two months.

King Alfonso XIII was forced into exile, with many Spaniards feeling betrayed by his support of Miguel Primo de Rivera’s regime. The Second Republic was subsequently formed and greeted enthusiastically by the Spanish people. Unfortunately for the Second Republic, it was not only the Agrarian Law that angered Spaniards just a year after the Republic’s establishment. The Second Republic focused reforms on restructuring the military and reducing the power of the Church. Michael Burleigh, in Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror, notes that the new government created the Republican Constitution, which was approved December 9, 1931, and appeared to attempt a step towards a modernization of Spain but which actually caused further division and discord in Spain. The new Constitution established freedom of speech, probably the only measure not met with controversy. It also instituted a new separation between the Church and State, the right to divorce (in a still strongly Catholic Spain), extended universal suffrage to women, and stripped the nobility of any juridical status (128-29). The Second Republic not only failed because of its extreme reforms, but also because of its multiple changes of leaders who changed the previous leader’s reforms. Manuel Azaña was in power for a second time in 1936 when a military coup d’état, led by Francisco Franco for the Spanish Falange and Juan de la Cierva as a civilian conspirator, began in Spanish Morocco and quickly spread to nearby regions.
The Civil War began with a military coup, an event seen many times in the history of the Spanish government, but this time used to halt its progression and modernization into the democracy it seemed destined for after the First World War. Many cultural wars developed as a result of the military coup pitting Spaniards against each other. Helen Graham, author of *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*, states that these culture wars that erupted were diverse: “urban culture and cosmopolitan lifestyles versus rural tradition; secular against religious; authoritarianism against liberal political cultures; centre versus periphery; traditional gender roles versus the ‘new woman’; even youth against age” (2). Spain was divided between the Nationalist forces led by Francisco Franco and the Republicans with Miguel Azaña as both president and prime minister. Conservative towns and villages such as Salamanca, Ávila, and Burgos welcomed the rebels (the Nationalists), although initially there was an opposite reaction in Spain’s capital, Madrid, and other key cities such as Barcelona and Valencia. In these cities, trade unions, militias, and military and police forces who were still loyal to the Republic were originally successful in defending their cities. When two-thirds of Spain’s navy backed the Republican cause, the Nationalists were surprised and were faced with a greater struggle than they expected. At this point Franco asked Germany and Italy for help, whereupon Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini’s forces sent planes that took part in the first major airlift in modern warfare, helping Franco and his troops from Morocco to mainland Spain.

Both the Republican and the Nationalist sides committed atrocities, but only the Nationalists had foreign help, from Hitler and Mussolini. Meanwhile, the Republican side was left to fend for itself while the rest of Europe followed a policy of “no intervention.” Publicly, the United States remained neutral, but the government quietly sent troops of volunteers to help the Republicans. Franco allowed Hitler to use cities sympathetic to the Republican cause as a dress rehearsal for his blitzkriegs before World War II began. Finally, in 1939, with Franco in Madrid and the Republicans dwindling, Francisco Franco advised Hitler and Mussolini that he no longer needed their assistance, and they pulled out of Spain. Francisco Franco won the war, leading to his dictatorship of thirty-six years during which he did bring order and stability to the nation. However, this was at a great price to the people of Spain, especially any of his former enemies. In the first decade after the Civil War, retaliations against Republicans were severe, and many thousands of them were imprisoned and tens of thousands more were executed.
Originally his government was strongly Fascist, only becoming less noticeably Fascist when World War II ended and his previous allies of Germany and Italy lost.

Francisco Franco and the Nationalists were the victors of Spain’s Civil War, and Franco became dictator of Spain until his death in 1975. Helen Graham points out that Franco reversed many of the changes and reforms created by Miguel Primo de Rivera’s regime and revoked many liberties originally allowed by Primo de Rivera. Strikes were forbidden and Franco’s government required all business owners, and all workers in general, to join syndicates controlled by the government. The Catholic Church regained its power and position lost under the Second Republic and in fact gained more power when Franco gave the Church control over education in Spain (134-137). Rigid laws against abortion and divorce were imposed as well as the permiso marital (marital permission), which required women to have the written permission of their husbands to work outside the home. Franco believed that Spain could support itself and rebuild economically without any foreign trade, investment, or alliance. This policy destroyed Spain – the country was left in a state of economic standstill, malnutrition was rampant, and poor medical care affected the majority of the country (Graham 136). Censorship was widespread and severe, applied to the press and to works of fiction, causing many writers to publish their works in other countries. Indeed, many of Spain’s most notable authors and artists went into a self-imposed exile during the Civil War and Franco’s subsequent dictatorship.

There were two major literary generations writing before the Civil War broke out in Spain, the previously mentioned Generation of ’98 and the Generation of ’27. The Generation of ’27 is the major literary movement leading up to the Spanish Civil War. Though there many names discussed to label this group of writers (among the possibilities were the “Generation of the Dictatorship,” “Generation Guillén-Lorca,” “Generation of Avant-Gardes,” etc.), the “Generation of ‘27” became the accepted title as this influential group of Spanish writers had their first formal meeting in Seville in 1927 to mark the 300th anniversary of the death of Luis de Góngora. Unlike the Generation of ’98, this group of writers does not fit into one group stylistically, with the exception of using Góngora’s refinement, delicacy of imagery, and richness of vocabulary as their model for writing. Their poetry reflected themes and forms from traditional Spanish lyric poetry while at the same time combining and updating these trends with those of the European avant-gardes. Comprised of many poets, including Jorge Guillén, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Cernuda, Rafael Alberti, Pedro Salinas, Federico García Lorca, the Generation
of ‘27 was not a group with a singular movement as their mode of expression; for example, Alberti and García Lorca were part of a Neopopular group while Aleixandre, Cernuda, and many others formed part of a much larger Surrealist group. The Spanish Civil War meant the end of the movement of the Generation of ‘27, when many of the writers were forced into exile (although almost all of them kept writing and publishing) and others being jailed or killed. Most notable was the execution of Federico García Lorca.

The majority of Spanish writers sided with the Frente Popular, or the Republicans, and realized that living in Spain under Franco would be too repressive or too dangerous. Very little was published during the Civil War in Spain, although some notable examples that did not follow this trend do exist. For example, Ramón Sender wrote and published Mr. Witt Among the Rebels in 1937, although publication took place in England. This was no doubt due to his loyal fighting on the side of the Republicans as this novel has autobiographical elements. Indeed, his loyalty to the Frente Popular was so great that his enemies killed his wife and brother while he was fighting. Another example of a novel published during the Civil War is by Agustín de Foxá, although, unlike Sender, he agreed with the rebels and was loyal to the Spanish Falange. His novel, Madrid, de Corte a checa, was published in Spain in 1938 and is considered exemplary of the Falangist ideology. When the Civil War came to an end, Spanish intellectuals were either forced into exile, followed a self-imposed exile, or were submitted to stringent censorship.

Spanish literature after the Civil War was censored greatly and began to reflect the dark and oppressive atmosphere that writers were experiencing in Spain. The literary trend of tremendismo reflected this sentiment and was first seen in La familia de Pascual Duarte written by Camilo José Cela in 1942. Spanish novels written under the influence of tremendismo were characterized by their darkness and distinctive traits. There was a certain crudeness to the plot which usually dealt with violence, characters were generally marginalized individuals that often times had physical or psychological defects, and the language is brazen, harsh, and rude. This style is based on a description of reality that has been exaggerated, employed to create the idea and the feeling that tragedy is imminent and unavoidable. The writers under tremendismo focused on the violence and terror that appeared to dominate society and demonstrated the destructive influences of social and religious upbringing on the behavior of Spanish citizens. Although Camilo José Cela is said to have begun the movement, he is not the only writer to adhere to the characteristics of tremendismo. Carmen Laforet’s novel Nada, about a young
woman from Barcelona, is also considered to be part of the *tremendismo* tradition. Indeed many writers were influenced by the post-war situation, and although they may not be classified as writers of this style, they focused on existence in Spain as grotesque, brutal, horrific, and full of repression and violence.

Several women began writing in the years after the Civil War, producing novels that portrayed the struggles that women faced during Francisco Franco’s dictatorship. Besides Carmen Laforet, other women writers who were important in these post-war years were Ana María Matute, Elena Quiroga, Carmen Martín Gaite, Mercedes Salisachs, etc. Ana María Matute wrote *Primera memoria*, a novel that helped cement her style and demonstrated her preference for writing about children and adolescents who grew up under Francisco Franco. Matute, as well as these other women writers, analyzed Spanish society’s attitudes towards women in the workplace, women’s sexuality, anxiety about aging and death, and the struggle of all Spanish citizens to free themselves from the restrictions, cruelties, and controls imposed by the dictator Franco and his government. Women, however, were not the only ones to attempt to describe the hardships of Franco’s dictatorship and the new society created by it. Male writers such as Juan Goytisolo, Luís Martín Santos, Juan Marsé, Juan Benet, and many others explored the despair, the emptiness, and the farce of life in Spain. Spanish literature was dark and depressing and also represented a search for a reprieve from this oppression.

After Franco’s death in 1975, an explosion of porn, violence, and fantasy appeared in society, finding a new place in Spanish literature. The detective novel made a strong appearance in Spain, finding a large audience several decades after its popularity in English-language literature. Spanish literature started to analyze the new Spanish society under what was considered the liberalization and the tolerant influence of King Juan Carlos. This new society created after Franco’s death allowed Spanish writers to express themselves openly and candidly and to address their freedom as well as the lack thereof under the previous regime. In the late 1970s, a group of Spanish women writers entered the literary world in order to discuss and analyze concerns facing them as women and to do so with their own language. Esther Tusquets is one of these authors who used her writings to explore the rights of women to control their bodies and to deal with their desires. Others, such as Rosa María Pereda, Ana María Moix, and Rosa Montero, addressed the new struggles faced by the changes in women’s rights as well as contradictions that they saw in their new society. They discussed the societal taboos that existed
versus societal permissiveness, these two ideas manifested in the way men and women were viewed differently. More new authors entered into the literary world after this and began describing a modernization of Spain that the majority of Spain’s citizens, and even its writers, had not experienced nor could have foreseen. Many of these writers, including Lucía Etxebarria, have been criticized for their style and content.

Bearing in mind the new liberties that writers have since Franco’s death, it comes as no surprise that many of them, especially the women authors, would use their literary works to express their desires and their search for autonomy in this new society. Analyzing these trends with a psychoanalytical lens, more specifically a Lacanian lens, can provide insight into how these goals are accomplished. Psychoanalysis as a literary theory is applied differently based on the school of thought that the critic follows. The two psychoanalysts whose theories are applied to literature the most are Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. While Lacan used Freud’s theories as a starting point, his theories and applications are quite different from what Freud was proposing. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the theories and their application as literary theory. A variation in the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis can be seen in the criticism of Slavoj Žižek. It is possible to analyze a text using the criticisms and theories that are set forth and applied by these three psychoanalysts once their different perspectives are understood.

Sigmund Freud was the first to propose the existence of the unconscious and the idea of repression. Freud believed that the unconscious was the site of the creative process and the dream process; this led to his belief that dreams represented a person’s unconscious desires. A literary critic working under a Freudian analysis interprets the text of an author as if it were the author’s dream. The critic must read the literal text while at the same time s/he must look for what the text is hiding or repressing, its symbolic message. Like dreams, the text is a representation of the unconscious because stating the truth would be too painful for the writer or the analysand. A critic analyzing the text through Freudian psychoanalysis often views the text as the repressed thoughts and desires of the author and will therefore read the text as a document of the author’s unconscious. The text is then read as a means to analyze the author who is expressing all of his/her fears and desires through the text. This type of analysis using Freudian theory, to read the text as the unconscious desires of the author, is the most common, although there are other approaches to the text using analysis under Freud’s theories.
The Freudian critic applies psychoanalytic theory to the characters in the text as if they were analysands. In other words, the characters are treated as if they were real people and their behaviors and thoughts could be analyzed. This type of literary critic would examine the characters in an author’s texts as if they were people in real life, applying psychoanalysis to explain any hidden motives and their psychological makeup or, as in the analysis of the author, their unconscious desires as represented in their actions. This type of analysis is well known from Freud’s interpretation of the stories of Oedipus and Hamlet. It is due to Freud’s analysis of the behaviors and the sexual stages he felt all people go through in childhood that the theory of the Oedipal Complex became a well-known and often applied theory in psychoanalysis, both in real-life therapy and in literature. Indeed, the idea of the Oedipal Complex has not only been applied to the character Hamlet, it is a concept that is known and discussed by the layperson to describe situations the s/he may come across in day-to-day life. Bennett Simon and Rachel B. Blass note in “The Development and Vicissitudes on Freud’s Ideas of the Oedipus Complex” that Freud first began developing his theory on the Oedipal Complex in 1897, a year after his father’s death, although he does not label it as such until 1910, first calling it the “nuclear complex” (163).

The application of psychoanalysis from the Freudian perspective is markedly different from the theories of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek’s version of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Neither Lacan nor Žižek would propose a reading of a text which would attempt an analysis of the author or the characters in the text. Lacan’s notes that it is impossible to analyze the author through the text, reminding the reader that the text is in fact a forgery of the Unconscious (discussed by Lacan in his Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”). Žižek follows the maxims set forth in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theories although his analyses of the text itself are different from the way that Lacan reads the text. Lacan presents the concept of sujet supposé savoir, in English, the “subject supposed to know” or the “supposed subject of knowledge.” This subject possesses symbolic knowledge, and this subjective position is then attributed to the analyst by the analysand in treatment, although it must be pointed out that the analyst is not the supposed subject of knowledge, just that s/he is placed in that position by the analysand. Lacan demonstrates this theory by using the texts of various authors for his analysis and states that it is the text itself that is the supposed subject of knowledge.
By treating the text as if it is the subject supposed to know, the critic or the reader can analyze the text for symptoms and constructions of the three main clinical structures of neurosis, perversion, and psychosis. Lacan has explained that the unconscious is actually the discourse of the Other, which helps explain why one cannot analyze a text as a representation of the author or the characters under Lacanian psychoanalysis. The Other, specifically the so-called big Other, is equated with language and the law and is therefore inscribed in the symbolic order. Indeed, the Other is in fact the symbolic order. Therefore, if the Other is language, the law, and the symbolic order, and the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, then the unconscious that is read through the text is that of language or the symbolic order. Hans Bertens explains in *Literary Theory: The Basics* that in the process of reading a text, the reader enters into a complex relationship with the text “in which we allow it to master us, to fill our lack” (163). What a Lacanian critic will then attempt, according to Bertens, is to explain the different ways that these narrative structures will take advantage of this relationship between the reader and the text. This relationship is unmistakably one-sided, as the text has been propped up into the position of the master by the reader. Indeed the text, if read from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis, is in the position of the subject supposed to know. The text provides the structures discussed by Lacan and, as is the case in my study of Montero and Etxebarria, may present an ethical stance that the reader may adopt.

An understanding of the concept of the Other is especially important as there have been many descriptions and definitions in the history of literary theory. Hegel’s definition of the other was conceptualized as a component in self-consciousness. When describing pre-self-conscious man, Hegel stated that seeing separateness between the self and another, there is then a feeling of loneliness or alienation. This sense of alienation causes pre-self-conscious man to attempt to resolve the situation through synthesis. Simone de Beauvoir took the notion of the other that was first described by Hegel and applied it to gender and cultural studies. De Beauvoir used the term other to describe how male-dominated society and culture treat woman in relation to man. This idea of the other was adapted by Edward Said to represent the. For example, in Said’s works, Middle Easterners or Arabs and especially Palestinians would be considered people on the margins of society. Said’s description of the other is similar to the description of the people living on the *frontera* as representing the other. None of these depictions of the other is the other
that will be used in the current project. It is Lacan’s definition of the Other that will remain at the forefront.

Lacanian psychoanalysis is better suited to the analysis of texts than Freudian psychoanalysis for various reasons. Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on the individual, treating the literary text as a clue to some supposed pathology, whereas Lacanian analysis focuses on unconscious structures outside the individual, especially language. In Does the Woman Exist?: From Freud’s Hysteric to Lacan’s Feminine, Paul Verhaeghe states: “The paradoxical result of this Freudian approach, which privileged the individual, even the individual symptoms of one individual patient, was that Freud was the only person who succeeded in making a general theory about the human psyche” (97). This type of psychoanalysis reads the text in one of two different ways, one which provides an analysis of the author, something which in reality cannot be done based just on his/her text, and the other which provides an analysis of one or more of the characters, who should in any case not be treated as real analysands. Lacanian psychoanalysis, on the other hand, focuses on communication and language and how this structure constitutes the individual subject.

This distinction is not only important in understanding the utility of Lacanian psychoanalysis for literary criticism, but it can also be directly tied to Rosa Montero and her novel La hija del caníbal. Montero’s protagonist Lucía narrates: “But I am convinced that narrative is the essential art, because, to be able to exist, we humans have to narrate ourselves. Identity is nothing more than the story that we make about ourselves’ (17). This declaration made by Lucía echoes the Lacanian notions of communication and why people keep talking. Verhaeghe explains further that Lacan’s discourse theory “starts from the assumption that communication is always a failure, and, moreover, that it has to be a failure, and that is the reason why we go on talking” (100). Montero’s declaration supports basic Lacanian claims by proclaiming that narration (which can be written or oral communication) is the way that human identity is formed, that is to say, each subject’s way of discovering what his/her desire is, is a means to understanding his/her position relating to the symbolic (i.e. signifying) order, but which will always be a failure, which is why subjects continue to speak and to read – that is, to be engaged in the work of the signifier.
Overview of the Following Chapters

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature on Pedro Almodóvar and his films. As there is not as much criticism on female subjectivity and the strategies used to come to terms with desire and the Other, critics’ analyses of Almodóvar’s male subjects and tactics will prove valuable in understanding Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria’s female subjects. Articles that discuss Almodóvar’s use of hysteria and perversion, male subjective strategies to deal with desire and the Other, and placement of woman as object in post-Franco Spain will be helpful as an introduction to this study of Montero and Etxebarria’s female protagonists and their strategies. These two authors provide a space for women to come to terms with their desire in a still-changing post-Franco society, where the study of female subjectivity is not appreciated as much as male subjectivity.

Chapter Three begins with a critical analysis of the text La hija del caníbal by Rosa Montero, outlining the characteristics of hysteria that can be seen in the protagonist, Lucía. It begins with an overview of the existing criticism on the novel. It then continues with an analysis of its symptoms and structures. Very early in Montero’s novel the reader learns that the protagonist has a propensity for lying: “Bien, no he hecho nada más que empezar y ya he mentido” ‘Alright, I have only just begun and already I’ve lied’ (17). In fact, she continues to state that to be able to exist, humans have to tell a story, that identity is nothing more than a narrative that we have made. In the next paragraph, we learn that lying, or as she terms it creating or inventing, has always been an inherent characteristic of hers. With the help of Paul Verhaeghe, this study points out that Lucía’s common strategies fit well within the list of traits of the hysterical personality. Chapter Three demonstrated that her “lying, exaggeration, play action, mendacity, pseudologia phantastica, dramatic self-display, centre of attention” (Verhaeghe 81), as well as other characteristics, are common attributes of hysteria. It is when Lucía realizes that the Other does not have what she wants that she is able to move beyond on hysteria.

Chapter Four begins the discussion of Lucía Etxebarria’s text Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas and her protagonists’ use of perversion as a strategy to come to terms with desire. This chapter likewise begins with a brief overview of the literature that is available on this novel.
This chapter looks at not only their choice of sexuality but also choices the disavowals the characters make regarding marriage, motherhood, career, and vices. Variations in the decisions the protagonists have made are the focus in this chapter. The three sisters will be considered as a single composite perverse subject. The protagonists’ disavowal of forced choices (i.e. marriage, motherhood, etc.) is a key factor in understanding their use of perversion as a strategy to deal with desire and in the Other in post-Franco Spain. Indeed, the three sisters seem to some extent aware of the implications of some of their choices, or more precisely lack thereof.

Chapter Five, the Conclusion, starts with a review of the different characteristics found in the strategies of hysteria and perversion used by the protagonists in La hija del caníbal and Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas. Not only are the various traits and tactics used in each strategy discussed, but also their effectiveness in both novels. The authors of these novels, both women, are writing fiction that is about the true journey and positioning that Spanish women are facing in the time since Franco died in 1975. This new society, almost as if it were a “foreign” symbolic order (though such a thing does not exist), has forced Spaniards to search for an identity, a place within it as a subject. Both Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria make it clear that this is not an easy task for any women to take on, but Montero finds that it can be achieved while Etxebarria finds that while it may be possible, there is not always a positive outcome. Though the subjective strategies employed by Montero and Etxebarria have fundamentally different structures and symptoms, both authors provide evidence that the subjective strategy they describe is an effective ethical stance.

The Conclusion also includes limitations to the current study, such as the impossibility to truly understand what it is that twentieth-century Spanish women are struggling to achieve. Considerations for a future study of post-Franco literature are presented during the Conclusion. For example, a continued analysis of these two works would prove interesting when compared to the film versions based on the novels, which were both written and directed by men. It would also prove beneficial to study other works by the authors, published both before and after the novels presented here, in order to analyze the possibility of a trend or variations in the subjective strategies presented. Various problems that are beyond the scope of the present study could be achieved in a future study of these works, post-Franco literature, and women writers.
One of the most significant changes that came about after the death of Francisco Franco involved the roles of women in Spanish society. There had been a strict code of moral values and even more rigorous standards of sexual conduct for women that were not in place for men. The opportunities women had for a professional career were greatly restricted even as their role as wives and, most significantly, mothers were honored. The married woman “was prohibited from almost all economic activities, including employment, ownership of property, or even travel away from home” (Clark). With all of these repressive elements that the protagonists are faced with, there is much more than a simple journey for autonomy. Montero’s protagonist Lucía struggles with her identity even before she loses her husband; it only becomes more crucial when she realizes how alone she feels now that he is gone. She also has been attempting to write a novel instead of the children’s books that she has been writing for years. She is able to attain both of these goals at the end of the novel. Cristina, as well as the other sisters of Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas, are working towards several goals including their careers, love lives, and identities but are unable to achieve them.

The autonomy of the twentieth-century Spanish woman was an ever-changing effort of the past thirty years and, to this day, is still a confusing and unknown struggle for Spanish women. The following chapters analyze two psychoanalytic strategies that are used as a means to this indefinite end. The protagonists find a space in which to desire; they are allowed to find openly and freely the subjectivity that was previously only available to men. These characters use whatever ethical stance is available to them, whether it is hysteria as in Lucía’s case or perversion as in the case of the three sisters. The chapters that follow demonstrate how the protagonists use these strategies and their success or failure.
CHAPTER TWO
MONTERO AND ETXEBARRIA VERSUS ALMODÓVAR: FEMALE SUBJEC TIVITY INSTEAD OF FEMALE OBJECTS

Contemporary Spanish woman was relegated to the traditional role of daughter, mother, and ama de casa (housewife) for many years. During Francisco Franco’s reign (1939-1975), these social values were strictly enforced, especially the permiso marital (marital permission) which prohibited the married woman from having a job without her husband’s authorization. When Franco died in 1975, the changes that had been brewing for the past few years now started materializing with full force, with the remarkable exception of abortion and divorce, which were still banned. In fact, in Robert P. Clark’s chapter in the online work, A Country Study: Spain, he notes that “a 1977 opinion poll revealed that when asked whether a woman's place was in the home only 22 percent of young people in Spain agreed, compared with 26 percent in Britain, 30 percent in Italy, and 37 percent in France.” Spanish women were finally searching for a place for themselves in the job market and fighting for their own rights, independence, and, in the end, autonomy. While having a career was important to women, they finally had the chance to try and get what they wanted, to desire, ultimately to come to terms with the Other. It is this desire and this struggle that is represented in La hija del caníbal by Rosa Montero and Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas by Lucía Etxebarria.

Perhaps the most famous exponent of strategies of desire is Pedro Almodóvar, the Spanish director whose use of hysteria and perversion in his films is well documented. These strategies are how Almodóvar’s subjects are able to come to terms with the changes in their lives and in society as well as allowing them to articulate their desire. The female characters in his works are often, but not always, positioned as objects, while the male characters tend to be the subjects. In any case, when the characters are burdened with the strategy of hysteria or perversion, Almodóvar tends to use either female characters or feminized, homosexual male characters. Due to the large amount of criticism written about Pedro Almodóvar’s films and his tendency toward hysterical and perverse subjective strategies, his use of these Lacanian theories will work as a sort of barometer against which the same strategies can be analyzed in the works of Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria. While this will prove to be helpful, there is, nonetheless, the problem that his subjects are most often male. There are female subjects, but in general they
tend to be relegated to the position of object, limiting the usefulness of many of his films as a comparison.

Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria present the same strategies as Almodóvar, their female protagonists using them to accomplish subjectivity. They depict women striving to achieve subjectivity instead of just being objects, something seen in many texts including some of Almodóvar’s films. There is very little analysis of these texts by Montero and Etxebarria (La hija del caníbal and Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas) and even less criticism on subjective strategies of female subjects. Although criticism on female hysterical and female perverse subjects is lacking, with the necessary background knowledge of the traits of hysteria and perversion, the strategies are also recognizable in Montero and Etxebarria’s texts. While Montero and Etxebarria’s characters will demonstrate similar attributes of hysteria and as do Almodóvar’s characters, variations of the same strategies can be seen. And, of course, the biggest difference will be the use of female characters as subjects in Montero and Etxebarria’s novels, when often times Almodóvar’s female characters are objects.

This chapter is the jumping off point for the rest of the study, as it provides space to discuss the Lacanian concepts of hysteria and perversion. Using Almodóvar’s films as examples, Chapter Two will provide evidence of as well as explain many of the Lacanian terms and concepts that will be pertinent in the other chapters, beginning with Peter Evans’ article “Almodóvar’s Matador: Genre, Subjectivity, and Desire” to introduce the Symbolic and the Subject’s relation to it. Then, citing Žižek in Looking Awry, two trilogies which can be constructed out of Almodóvar’s films, the trilogy of hysteria and the trilogy of perversion, will be identified and discussed. The trilogy of hysteria, using “Figuring Hysteria: Disorder and Desire in Three Films of Pedro Almodóvar” by Brad Epps, will be used to demonstrate the hysterical strategy, and before moving on to the trilogy of perversion as found in “Che vuoi? Enjoying the Perverse Symptom in the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar” by Nancy Blake. After considering Almodóvar’s two trilogies, a synopsis of the storyline and plot of Rosa Montero’s La hija del caníbal and Lucía Etxebarria’s Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas, referring to current articles about these novels at this point, will indicate what information they will provide in later chapters. Ending this chapter is a discussion of other articles about hysteria and perversion in Almodóvar’s films, concluding with the mention of the differences in subjectivity and gender found in Almodóvar’s films and the novels by Montero and Etxebarria.
Many critics have noted the similarities between the films Almodóvar has directed and his own life, leading them to the conclusion that many of them are semi-autobiographical. Peter Evans in “Almodóvar’s *Matador*: Genre, Subjectivity, and Desire,” notes that Almodóvar’s films, “… as María Antonia García de León and Teresa Maldonado have argued, are conspicuously autobiographical” (329). Analyzing the author or the characters are the focus of traditional applied psychoanalysis, an approach that will not be employed in the current study. Lacanian psychoanalysis is specifically focused on the literary or cinematic text that articulates the desire of a particularly structured subject or subjects. In Jean Rabaté’s discussion of Lacan, in *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature*, he notes that Lacan refuses to psychoanalyze the characters, the author, or texts. Rabaté explains Lacan’s maxims regarding psychoanalysis: “At every moment, any written work cannot but lend itself to interpretation in a psychoanalytic sense. But to subscribe to this, ever so slightly, implies that one supposes the work to be a forgery, since, inasmuch as it is written, it does not imitate the effects of the Unconscious’” (3). Because the text is a forgery of the Unconscious, it cannot be psychoanalyzed, it is a representation, nothing more. Therefore, this analysis will be focused within the text, on the subjects and their desires. Almodóvar’s characters display an internal and external struggle for identity that is characteristic of Spain at the end of the century. Hysteria and perversion are trademark subjective strategies of the characters found in Pedro Almodóvar’s films. All of his characters are noticeably working to cement an identity among the bewildering changes that occurred in the wake of the death of the dictator. Many of his films deal with gender and sex identity, a concept that, as previously mentioned, has been on the minds of twentieth-century Spaniards since Franco’s death.

The discussion of identity necessitates an understanding of the meaning of the subject and the Symbolic Order as presented by Lacan. What is the subject, and what is the Symbolic Order or Other? What is the subject’s relationship to the Symbolic Order? The subject is a split between two agencies which are the ego as other and the unconscious as Other. It is the opposite of the Cartesian subject of both thinking and being, “Cogito, ergo sum” ‘I think, therefore I am’. The Lacanian subject is caught between a false sense of self (the ego; being), and the automatic functioning of language (the unconscious; thinking). These are also the two types of discourse,
ego talk, which are conscious thoughts and beliefs, and unconscious talk, where the unconscious is the Other’s (Symbolic Order’s) discourse. When we are born, we come into a world of language, which has preceded us and will continue after we die. This is the Other as Language. That it enables the subject to express or speak his/her desires is because of the Symbolic Order that s/he desires. The Symbolic Order is also the Law; it is the guidelines, customs, laws, and traditions that frame a society. The subject is a relationship to the Symbolic Order, the position one adopts to the Other as Language and as the Law. The Other, as detailed in Chapter One, is language and the law and is in fact the Symbolic Order itself.

Evans discusses the problem of the Symbolic (both language and the Law) in his aforementioned article “Almodóvar’s Matador: Genre, Subjectivity, and Desire.” All of Almodóvar’s characters appear in a Subject position that seems antagonistic toward the Symbolic Order. The Subject has a fraught relationship with the Symbolic; the Symbolic alienates the Subject, separates the Subject from the object of desire, even though at the same time it is the Other that constitutes the object. The Subject is always confused as to what it is that the Symbolic Order wants, only knowing that s/he [the Subject] does not want to be separated from his/her object of desire. Evans sees the law enforcement, legal, bullfighting, and family worlds as representations of the Law from which the characters in Matador (“Bullfighter”) are seeking release. In Montero’s La hija del caníbal, we also see her protagonist Lucía struggling to understand the Symbolic Order and its distinct systems of Law and Language. In fact, various avatars of the Law confront Lucía as well, including law enforcement and family, as is the case of the characters in Matador, but also meeting up with the political and industrial worlds. Like Matador’s characters, Lucía is straining against the Symbolic Order and the laws presented before her.

According to Evans, Almodóvar scrutinizes sexual identity and sexual or political repression as a sort of celebration “… at all levels, of the polymorphous perverse, even if on occasion characters like Ángel in Matador find release from the cocoons of guilt and prejudice more awkward than the more liberated Sexilias and Pepis of other films” (329-30). The three male characters in the film range from being staunchly masculine and macho to a somewhat feminized character attempting to appear masculine. The ex-torero (ex-bullfighter), Diego, is one extreme on the continuum of masculinity that Almodóvar presents in this film. Diego is a typical misogynist who murders women, completing his socialization in a patriarchal society.
He is macho, teaching his students how to kill a bull, describing the event with a sort of erotic satisfaction. Then there is the torero’s student Ángel, who pretends to have committed rape and other crimes against women as a means to affirm a heterosexuality that is contrived. He even goes so far as to turn himself in for the rape against his neighbor, in an effort to prove his masculinity to his teacher. However, Eva, the teacher’s girlfriend and the girl attacked, denies she was raped, stating that Ángel tried but did not succeed. The final male character is a police inspector who falls in between Diego and Ángel in terms of his masculinity and whose sexuality is hard to determine.

Evans also discusses the roles that women have filled for Pedro Almodóvar. There is a wealth of female characters in the movie *Matador*, and although Almodóvar finds it important to explore the consequences of repression (the heritage of the Francoist regime) and the results of liberation from said repression, his female characters still tend to be relegated to traditional and somewhat stereotypical roles. This film, for example, has the Good Mother, the Bad Mother, the psychiatrist, the slave of desire, and the transsexual. There are also characters whose roles resemble hysterical and perverse subjectivity as outlined by Lacan. The two main female characters fill these roles, with Eva demonstrating the characteristics of an hysterical subjectivity and María displaying traits of a perverse subjectivity. Eva seeks to fill the role of the missing object for Diego, acting out whatever he wants to keep him desiring her. María, on the other hand, has a very different motive and attempts to set boundaries for the Law, boundaries which she believes to be missing and desperately needs. María also seems to be placed in the position of subject, while Eva appears to be relegated to the position of the object.

Eva has been positioned as the typical female object in this film, playing the role of a submissive woman. She has been marked by her encounter with Ángel; a scar on her face reminds her of the attempt to claim her femininity. Evans notes Eva’s complete acceptance of her role as the obedient gender, noting that Eva “has internalized the mythology of female subservience to the male, ready to act out any stereotyped fantasy – to the point of accepting her role as the symbol of death” (333). Demonstrating the hysterical structure, she is the object of desire for Diego and will do everything necessary to keep him desiring her, becoming the ultimate signifier, death, to do so. While making love to her, Diego asks that she remain silent and still as if she were dead, and she complies. She is then modeling in a show where the designer has her makeup pale and bloody to complement her scar and to make her look like
death. And finally, at the end of the film, Eva dresses herself up, does her hair and makeup just so in an attempt to keep Diego from leaving her. Her mother claims that she looks like death, and Eva responds positively, knowing that death is what Diego ultimately desires. This constant need and attempt to be exactly what Diego wants, the object of desire, demonstrates the hysterical subjectivity of trying to complete the Other, make the Other whole; the Other is lacking, and the hysterical subject wants to fill this lack and therefore attempts to become the object of desire that the Other lacks.

María Cardenal, a murderer of men, proves to be a complex character who is stuck within the Symbolic Order and cannot find her way out. Evans believes María to be an advocate of the Symbolic Law, imposing upon men the higher law of a more radical form of feminine justice. María acts in place of the law; in a perverse subjectivity, there is a perceived absence of the Law, and the pervert feels the need to create the boundaries and laws that are missing. This act can also be labeled as an enacting of the perverse side of the Law. Lacan claims that although the perverse subject may seem to present him or herself as a subject who seeks constant jouissance, this subject actually needs boundaries. Jouissance is a term used by Lacan that does not have a precise and adequate translation in English. It refers to pleasure, but in the extreme, and is at times translated as enjoyment. However, it is more than mere enjoyment, it is a pleasure that reaches an almost intolerable level of excitation, a deadly enjoyment. Due to the difficulty in marking this exact meaning, it is often left untranslated, and is therefore understood better left in French as jouissance. In A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Bruce Fink notes that, although it is less obvious, the perverse subject’s “aim is to bring the law into being: to make the Other as the law (or law-giving Other) exist” (180). This makes María’s actions less surprising, as she does indeed show endless jouissance at the same time that she brings order, imposes the Law, the Other. Perhaps María’s murder of the men is also a “lawful” way of preventing them from getting too close to their object of desire, for when the object of fantasy moves too close or too far away from the subject, the subject gets anxious. Like María, Montero’s Lucía is not presented to the audience in a stereotypical female role, and throughout the novel, she continues to demonstrate her position as not stereotypical, unlike Eva.

Some of the most exemplary models of hysteria and perversion are figured into Almodóvar’s films. His characters, mainly the females and male homosexuals, are imbued with
symptoms of hysterical subjectivity ranging from hyperactivity to depression, from sexual promiscuity to abstinence and masturbation, etc. Looking at Almodóvar’s films Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, What Have I Done to Deserve This?, and Labyrinth of Passions, hysterical symptoms can be found which will also help to explain Lacan’s theory about hysteria, as it is remarkably different from Freud’s hysteric and is one of the variants of Lacan’s neurosis. Brad Epps uses these films in his article “Figuring Hysteria: Disorder and Desire in Three Films of Pedro Almodóvar” to demonstrate Almodóvar’s use of hysteria. Epps makes the argument that although hysteria is seen more as metaphor than actual illness in film, there remain bits and pieces of its historical significance. Indeed, though it is now understood that hysteria is not a wandering womb, there is still a restless movement and agitation of the hysteric. Even though Almodóvar denies that his films are a reaction to Franco and his regime, there are subversive tendencies and messages that seem to challenge Franco and any remaining ideals.

Labyrinth of Passions opens with Sexilia, the nymphomaniac, and Riza, the son of the exiled emperor of Tiran, searching the marketplace for the most attractive crotch, not noticing each other until later that night at a club. Sexilia, played by Cecilia Roth who also plays Lucía in the film Lucía, Lucía (the film based on Montero’s novel La hija del caníbal), and Riza, played by Imanol Arias, renounce their current subjective positions for one another. Sexilia chooses to have a monogamous relationship with Riza, who is sharing his first heterosexual experience with her. Sexilia and Riza demonstrate hysterical structures with their promiscuity, restless movement, and desiring through the Other, and Sexilia herself declares that she is hysterical several times throughout the course of the film. However, Sexilia is not the only character to proclaim hysteria outright: Fabio, who sends a note to Riza stating that he would like to make him happy, also announces his malady. Fabio’s interaction with Riza occurs in a busy café with the two men sitting just a couple of tables away from each other. Fabio articulates his own hysterical subjectivity by using the feminine form, “¡Estoy histérica!,” and not the masculine “histérico.” Fabio’s use of the feminine in claiming himself hysterical reinforces the traditional mapping of hysteria on women. Of course, the others around him also note the gender trend of hysteria by calling him “histérica” as well after he annoys them. These three characters (and the characters of the other two films by Almodóvar) exemplify Lacan’s structures and symptoms of hysteria and help to understand these concepts better before moving on to the textual analysis of Rosa Montero’s La hija del caníbal.
In the sexual encounters that Sexilia and Riza experience, the audience cannot help but feel that the two of them are thinking of each other as they pleasure a different partner. By dreaming of each other while having sexual relations with another person, they are remaining the object of desire for the Other they are pleasuring. But by imagining that they are with someone else, Sexilia and Riza are keeping the desire of the Other unsatisfied, for they want to make the Other desire but not experience jouissance. Also, Sexilia, before Riza, was constantly changing sex partners, never allowing one man to possess her, showing him what he lacks, allowing him to get close but never satisfying his desire or even need for her. The hysterical formula for fantasy is markedly different from the neurotic’s fantasy, which is played out in Labyrinth of Passions. The fantasy for the neurotic, according to Lacan, is the subject in relation to the object of desire, something that the subject is constantly trying to claim so that s/he may experience jouissance. Fink suggests a more precise formulation of fantasy for the hysterical subject which demonstrates the importance of the Master, the other filling in for the Other, for the hysteric. The Other is occupied by another subject who is the Master, a figure that will also be important in the discussion of perversion. The hysteric desires through the Other, and his/her fantasy is more precisely seen as the object of desire in relation to the Other. This can be seen not only in Sexilia’s promiscuity, but also in Sexilia and Riza’s thoughts, as they are involved in relations with other people in the club (Sexilia is dancing, trapped between two creeps, and Riza has a singer’s head bobbing between his thighs).

Returning to Fabio, Epps comments upon the manner in which Fabio speaks and dresses, taking into account that Fabio also explicitly states what he is lacking. Fabio’s note to Riza is what Epps describes as a “lispy, idiosyncratic piece of writing … and that darling of gays, Elizabeth Taylor, is tacked onto the word for happiness” (104). It is in this manner of speech that he also declares what he is lacking, of which the hysteric is always conscious. Epps provides an excellent translation of Fabio’s exclamation of lack: “‘No money, baby. No car, no ‘girl,’ no drugs, no vice, no rimmel. I’m hysterical’ (¡Estoy histérica!” (104). It is characteristic that this object is bound to language, for desire is connected to language, or, more precisely, a chain of signifiers. And this is not just a simple exchange; all lacks are simultaneously in attendance, presented as a catalogue – a kind of knowledge. The hysteric, such as Fabio, is always on the search for what s/he desires and wants the Other to provide it. However, once this object of desire (a) is gained, the subject proceeds to another object of desire, or, in the case of
knowledge on the part of the Other, prove that there is lack in his knowledge. Fabio’s seduction of Riza follows this hysterical structure. Fabio wants to proposition Riza, but the waiter requires money to deliver Fabio’s note, to which Fabio says that Riza will pay, and indeed he does. This exchange of money should lead to a release of sexual energy for Fabio. However, the audience sees Fabio proposition Riza and pick him up but never sees anything else. Once the Other (as Riza falls into this position) demonstrates his knowledge, the hysteric seeks more.

Moving on to Almodóvar’s *What Have I Done to Deserve This?*, Gloria, played by Carmen Maura, is not seen by the characters as anything other than a scatterbrained and hysterical woman. The audience perceives the fact that Gloria is not seen by the other characters except when they are noting her “nervous” tendencies. Epps states that Gloria “remains the object of the spectator’s gaze, but an object that is largely missed by other objects of the gaze (i.e., the other characters)” (110). Epps also mentions that this position has Gloria seen as a blank screen for the other characters. Another critic, Dino Felluga in his “Modules on Lacan: On the Gaze,” notes this is important because the object of desire (a) is really just a “screen for our own narcissistic projections; to come too close to it threatens to give us the experience precisely of the Lacanian Gaze, the realization that behind our desire is nothing but our lack.” In other words, since Gloria is the blank screen for the others, her position is a constant reminder of what it is that they are lacking.

The characters around Gloria openly proclaim her to be hysterical; but she is able to move beyond hysteria, although in the end she falls back into it. Her good friend Cristal states that Gloria is hysterical, her son is nervous about turning out like her, and her mother tells her she’s going to have a breakdown if she doesn’t calm herself. In the final scene of the movie one can see Gloria’s failure to overcome her hysteria, although Epps states that she moves toward a state where she is emotionless, which he claims is beyond hysteria. After she has murdered her husband and is left alone in the apartment, she heads to the balcony and leans far over as if to commit suicide. This subjective destitution is a move beyond hysteria; however, repetition draws her back into hysterical subjectivity. She is stopped by the return of her son, who announces that he is back and that their house needs a man. Gloria, smiling and seeming to agree, enters the house and is happy to have someone to fill the place of the Other that she was missing. After killing her husband and with her son having left, Gloria had no one else to fill in for the Other, and for the hysteric, the Other is necessary in her life.
The Other is most greatly felt in absence; it is lack, and the hysteric invests this lack in another subject. Lacan uses the term lack to demonstrate a lack of being which in turn causes the subject to desire, desire what is lacking. In his symbol for the barred Other (≜), lack designates the lack of a signifier in the Other, because no matter how many signifiers exist in the signifying chain, it will always be incomplete. This missing signifier is constitutive of the subject, i.e. the lack is what establishes the subject. The hysteric needs another subject to step in for the Other. Then, when the subject filling in for the role of the Other disappears, the hysteric is desperate. Therefore, when Gloria’s husband was dead and her son gone, she was moved to a state of great despair, for what importance does she have as the object of desire with no Other to lack her? This is true for Montero’s Lucía as well; she needs the Other most when he is actually absent, and therefore must depend on various supplementary others. In the case of Lucía, the missing subject Ramón, who is standing in for the Other, leads to an investigation. She feels the need to be the object of desire, and she fills in for the lack of one other filling in for the Other after another until she is finally able to move beyond hysteria, something that Gloria is unable to accomplish. The audience sees this dependence on the Other, and how it has not been overcome, when Gloria’s son returns and tells her the house, and she herself, needs a man. She smiles, does not end her life, and feels that everything is right again. The ending of La hija del caníbal, on the other hand, suggests a different sort of moving beyond hysteria, with subjective destitution not being a viable option.

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown is another film by Almodóvar in which the female characters are structured by hysteria. Epps notes the importance of the need for a man, or the need for an other standing in for the Other, as a prerequisite of hysteria, which runs the lives of all the women in Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown, with Pepa being the only one who truly overcomes this need. Pepa begins the film by stating that her lover, Iván, has left her and that her world has ended. She is, however, able to overcome this need for the Other in her life, recognizing that she is indeed able to desire without him. The rest of the women in the film do not overcome their hysterical dependency on the Other (a man in their lives). There is Pepa’s friend Candela who moves from a dependency on one man to the next. She discovers that her boyfriend is a Middle Eastern terrorist and runs to Pepa for help and a place to hide, for she does not know what to do and cannot figure out what she is supposed to accomplish without her boyfriend as the Other. While at Pepa’s place, she meets Marisa and her boyfriend Carlos.
Carlos and Candela fall for each other, with Carlos slipping into the position of the Other, thus permitting Candela to desire again, through him and from his place.

At the end of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, Pepa saves Iván’s life, knocking over his ex-wife Lucía as she is about to shoot him. What it is about this selfless act that helps Pepa to overcome her hysterical subjectivity is uncertain, but it is clear that she is done with her need for the other standing in for the Other. She states explicitly that she does not love Iván anymore and does not want or require him in her life. Perhaps it is the understanding that she has saved his life that helps her to realize that she does not need the Other. Although Lucía in *La hija del caníbal* does not save Ramón’s life, on her own she has done all the investigating and tracking that has led to the discovery of his hideout. Granted, his friends take her to Ramón, but only because she is getting too close and learning too much do they decide to end it before she can – that, and Félix points a gun at them forcing the men to take Lucía and her friends to Ramón. So like Pepa, Lucía is ultimately able to act – and not on behalf of the Other. This is important, because in the hysterical structure the subject cannot desire without the Other. She tries to be the object of desire that is lacking in the Other, while at the same time she is only able to desire through the Other.

Pedro Almodóvar has also employed elements of perverse subjectivity in his films. Nancy Blake discusses just such an application in one of Almodóvar’s most recent films, *La mala educación* (*Bad Education*) (2004), looking at the director’s analysis of perversion and its structures. Blake uses Almodóvar’s film *Bad Education* to observe the structures of perversion, looking mostly at fetishism and transvestism. This film is very useful to Blake’s argument in distinguishing between perversion and psychosis, which helps her to explain Lacanian theory.

To understand perversion, Blake begins by discussing the role of the Name-of-the-Father in both perversion and psychosis. The Name-of-the-Father is the first signifier, the master signifier, which then allows the subject to enter the Symbolic Order. In the case of the neurotic subject, including the hysteric which lies within neurosis, the subject has undergone castration, has *jouissance* cut off, and the master signifier is repressed. Just as the characters in Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* demonstrate, the perverse subjects that Blake discusses exhibit the Lacanian concept of disavowal. In disavowal, the pervert has come into contact with the Name-of-the-Father but disavows it, acting as if s/he had not had that experience. In psychosis,
on the other hand, there is a foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father, and this foreclosure does not allow for subjectivity; it does not even allow for alienation in language (the Symbolic Order), let alone separation.

Blake cites Jean Laplanche who states that this signifier is also known as the substitute for the desire of the mother. “Che vuoi? What does the mother want – this is the primordial encounter with the opacity of the Other” (13). The phallus is a signifier and does not provide an answer to the subject who wishes to know what his/her mOther desires. What the phallus as signifier does is point out that the mOther desires, that the mOther lacks. By disavowing the Name-of-the-Father, the subject in perversion has not stepped into the Symbolic Order and has not subjected him/herself to its rules. By staging castration, the perverse subject is attempting to form the boundaries and guidelines to which s/he has not been exposed. She also proposes the “not-entirely phallic” in which “there is a sort of highlighting of that which, in the phallic, had been masked, paradoxically, by the existence of fantasy” (6). She comes to this conclusion by stating that the “entirely phallic” contributes to the subject’s inclination towards repression (neurosis) and that the “not-at-all phallic” displays an absence of the phallic signifier, i.e. the paternal metaphor. Blake’s distinction of the “not-at-all-phallic” is representative of psychosis, as the phallic signifier, or the Name-of-the-Father, is not present. Therefore, the “not-entirely phallic” is representative of perversion, with Bad Education’s characters displaying the “not-at-all phallic” psychosis and the “not-entirely phallic” perversion.

Blake mentions that other critics have referred to the character Zahara, who is a transvestite and prostitute, and other Almodóvar characters as pre-operative transsexuals. Blake, however, states that this declaration could not be any further from the truth; “… it is impossible to imagine these subjects demanding surgery which would remove the penis which gives all of its meaning to their identity” (9). She goes on to assert that these characters wish to have the appearance of a woman, but that they clearly value the penis most. This refusal to give up the penis reiterates that Almodóvar’s characters are not transsexuals; they are transvestites, and they are perverse subjects. A psychotic subject will not have any access to the Symbolic Other, as s/he has foreclosed the Name-of-the-Father and the access that comes with it. However, as transvestites and perverse subjects, they need some sort of access to the Symbolic Order, to the Other. This is what the pervert has in common with the neurotic: they both have access to the Symbolic Order, and though the pervert’s access may be temporary, both s/he and the neurotic
do have that access. It seems that these men want what women have, feminine jouissance, but cannot give up the phallic sexuality to which they completely belong to accept the appearance of the non-phallic. Zahara, as a transvestite male, does not have access to feminine jouissance, but only to phallic jouissance. Men, whether transvestites or not, are subject only to the phallic, and cannot attain the feminine jouissance, because they were born into that place. Man and woman are both subject to phallic jouissance, although woman also has her feminine jouissance, which is not absolute. Phallic jouissance, however, always belongs to the Lacan’s Other, which was Freud’s primal father, and is always prohibited. Therefore, the enjoyment, a.k.a. jouissance, of the Other is impossible, even though it does not include prohibition.

Although Blake focuses on the distinction between psychosis and perversion, the differences between perversion and neurosis are important in the discussion of Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas. Perversion is one of the three clinical structures laid out by Lacan as a possibility for the subject and is distinctly different from Freud’s depiction of perversion as sexual acts deviant from heterosexual intercourse. While hysteria, as a structure found within neurosis, is marked by repression of the Name-of-the-Father, perversion is the disavowal of the master signifier. Blake looks at Almodóvar’s use of fetishism, a structure that is found within perversion, something that can help explain the technique of disavowal by the perverse subject. Citing Freud, Blake observes that the fetishist denies reality, which in turn determines the attitude he takes towards castration. By denying reality, i.e., disavowing the Name-of-the-Father, the pervert needs to stage castration over and over to get relief from his anxiety. The neurotic subject represses the Name-of-the-Father, having had complete contact with this first signifier. The neurotic works within the Symbolic Order, works with the reality principle, and s/he has become alienated within language, has achieved separation from the Other. The perverse subject, however, operates outside of the Symbolic Order and outside the reality principle, not allowing separation from the Other to occur. The perverse subject disavows the first signifier, the Name-of-the-Father, only one of many things that the pervert will disavow. The neurotic has accepted the Name-of-the-Father, thereby recognizing the forced choices that come with that acknowledgment.

Perversion as a strategy may be used as a mask that a neurotic subject employs to carry out fantasy, for it is the pervert who acts out the perverse fantasies of the neurotic. Lacan described fantasy using his mathemes as the subject in relation to the object of desire (object a).
If the subject were to get too close or too far from this object, it would cause great anxiety. Therefore, this strategy, along with the suspension of the Master, allows a neurotic subject to act out his/her fantasy using the guise of a perverse subject. The suspension of the Master is a concept discussed by Slavoj Žižek in *The Plague of Fantasies* where he applies Lacanian theory to the notion of cyberspace. The main function of the Master, as explained by Žižek, “is to tell the subject what he wants – the need for the Master arises in answer to the subject’s confusion, in so far as he does *not* know what he wants” (153). The subject requires the presence of the Master, the incarnation of the Other, in order to desire and understand what s/he desires. One might suspect that in the absence or suspension of the Master, the subject would then be able to choose freely and desire any object s/he wishes. However, Žižek points out, that is precisely what does not happen: “it is when there is no one there to tell you what you really want, when all the burden of the choice is on you, that the big Other dominates you completely, and the choice effectively disappears – is replaced by its mere semblance” (153). This means that in the face of the disappearance of the lack in the Other, the subject is now forced to make choices, choices of sexuation, parenthood, career, etc. The suspension of the function of the Master allows for the possibility of multiple rewrites of the life of the subject.

This mask of perversion is a strategy offered as a possibility for dealing with desire in post-Franco Spain by Lucía Etxebarria in *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*. The main function within perversion is disavowal, and it begins with the disavowal of the paternal signifier, the disavowal of the Name-of-the-Father. By disavowing the paternal signifier, the perverse subject rejects the Symbolic Order and refuses to submit him/herself to it. This is a purposeful suspension of the Master, as opposed to the Master structurally being absent and the subject being at a complete loss. By forcing the suspension of the Master, the neurotic, using the mask of perversion, is then able to act out his/her fantasy of the freedom of forced choices. Once the neurotic steps into the Symbolic Order, s/he has accepted the fact that s/he will be confronted with forced choices. The perverse subject, on the other hand, has rejected the Symbolic Order and is therefore able to disavow the forced choices that s/he would have had to make as a neurotic subject. This neurotic strategy of wearing a mask of perversion is exemplified in Etxebarria’s novel in her three protagonists. Etxebarria provides three protagonists so that she can take one composite subject and decompose her into three subjects. With the suspension of the Master, Etxebarria’s protagonists are able to force a “rewrite” of their lives by using the lives...
of the other sisters as their own. With the mask of perversion, Cristina can live through Rosa, Ana, or herself, and the same goes for the other sisters. These are the options that the perverse subject has available by avoiding the Symbolic Order and thereby suspending the function of the Master.

This element of the strategy is seen in another concept discussed by Žižek in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch’s Lost Highway*. Žižek discusses how cyberspace and hypertexts offer the perfect setting for perversion to be used as an ethical stance, as a mask. Video games serve as an excellent example of the perverse subject’s denial of the reality principle, of death. As Žižek states, “the pervert’s universe is the universe of the pure symbolic order, of the signifier’s game running its course, unencumbered by the Real of human finitude” (36). In a video game, death, or human finitude as it were, is not a concept that a subject needs to come to terms with or confront. There is always the possibility of restarting the game and using a new life, the chances of beginning anew are endless. This is the ultimate denial of the reality principle: one never dies, but keeps getting to do things over when necessary. Video games, much like Etxebarria’s novel, are fine examples of a perverse structure, because they allow for the disavowal of the reality principle and ultimately the Symbolic Order.

Blake concludes her article by asserting the importance of returning to the absence of the Name-of-the-Father that she put forward in the beginning of her paper. The Name-of-the-Father is the paternal metaphor as an empty signifier. In the perverse structure, this signifier is missing because in the perverse subjectivity, the Name-of-the-Father has been disavowed. The pervert has avoided castration but will find it necessary to stage castration as s/he finds that in reality s/he needs those boundaries that castration would give. With acceptance of the first signifier, the Name-of-the-Father, castration is achieved; there is separation from the Other.

**The Feminist Approach as Traditional Critique of Works by Pedro Almodóvar, Rosa Montero, and Lucía Etxebarria**

Much of the criticism of Pedro Almodóvar’s films follows the feminist tradition, most likely because the characters suffering from hysteria and perversion in his films are many times women. The works by Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria have also been studied from a feminist point of view. Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* stands up to the feminist perspective by
which it has been analyzed, because although the protagonist is dependent on men and several others during her journey, in the end she is independent and does not need or want to rely on anyone else. Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* has been criticized rather harshly under feminist analysis. The protagonists are three sisters trying to achieve autonomy and happiness in post-Franco Spain and are unable to do so. The critics of Etxebarria’s novel note the protagonists’ failure to find independence, or autonomy, and happiness, and claim that Etxebarria really is continuing the tradition of keeping women dependent. Feminist criticism has also been unfavorable in the analysis of Almodóvar’s films. It has been consistently noted that the women in his films tend to be consigned to the position of object, many times in stereotypical roles such as the mother, the housewife, the prostitute, etc.

In their article “Maternidad y violación: Dos caras del control sobre el cuerpo femenino” ‘Motherhood and Rape: Two Aspects of Control over the Feminine Body,’ Jacqueline Cruz and Barbara Zecchi propose that rape and motherhood are two seemingly irreconcilable sides of the coin that represents control over woman. Cruz and Zecchi believe that the discourse of the sexual and professional emancipation of women that can be found in the novels and films of the late twentieth century is merely makeup that hides or simply embellishes a more conservative reality and rhetoric. They try to trace a cause-effect relationship between the affirmation of woman, whether it be sexual or professional, and the violence of man, whether physical or verbal, through the works of Almudena Grandes and Pedro Almodóvar. The proposal of Cruz and Zecchi is to “remove the makeup” of what attempts to come off as subversive in the discourses of Grandes and Almodóvar and to denounce the seeming evolution of the situation of woman in Spain as a regression.

Cruz and Zecchi begin by discussing Almodóvar’s movie ¡Átame! (“Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!”), about Ricky and Marina. The plot of the movie, according to the authors a simple one, is about a character who could be considered a psychopath, Ricky, who has kidnapped the woman of his dreams, Marina. Ricky ties up Marina and mistreats her until she ends up falling in love with him, the fulfillment of his plan. Cruz and Zecchi criticize Almodóvar for what they believe is his erasure of the line that separates passionate love and sexual violence. They note Almodóvar’s seeming acceptance and use of the Machiavellian theory that the end justifies the means, for the free will of Marina has been neutralized and incapacitated by Ricky’s violence. At this point, Simone Beauvoir’s concept of masochism enters the discussion. Cruz and Zecchi
note that for Beauvoir masochism is more than the search for a painful experience; it is essentially subordination to another person: subordination that, originating from the primordial desire of man to distinguish himself from woman, reduces the feminine identity to the state of the second sex (151). Ricky’s violence has conquered and transformed Marina from independent woman into a docile child; she has gone from being her own person, a subject, to being the object of someone else’s desire.

Cruz and Zecchi also discuss the characters and plot in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Matador*, but instead of focusing on Diego, María, and Eva, as Peter Evans does, they focus on Antonio Banderas’ character, Ángel. Ángel is not presented as a rapist, according to Cruz and Zecchi, and Almodóvar’s presentation of the violation and following events certainly has the audience pitying him rather than being disgusted. He attempts to rape his neighbor, Eva, and is unable to penetrate her. When he turns himself in, the police speak with all of them, and Eva denies that she was raped, saying that he attempted and failed. Cruz and Zecchi find that this depiction of violence, or lack thereof, against a woman presented by Almodóvar, does not differ much from the law’s interpretation. The authors present a sentencing found in the newspaper *El País*, a case of a judge who “no puede considerarse como ‘particularmente vejatoria o degradante’ la conducta de un violador que amordazó a su víctima, la amenazó con un cuchillo y le penetró vaginal y bucalmente” ‘doesn’t believe the conduct of a rapist was ‘particularly cruel or degrading’ when he gagged his victim, threatened her with a knife, and penetrated her vaginally and anally’ (Hermida). The reporter, Xosé Hermida, states that the judge points to the rapist’s offer of a glass of water to the female victim when she was at the point of vomiting as evidence of the lack of degradation and cruelty. This same interpretive nuance seems to be at work in Almodóvar’s *Matador* when Ángel’s female victim does not want to report the crime because the man didn’t actually complete the rape.

*Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (in the United States’ version *Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls Like Mom*) offers another glimpse into the Almodovarian view of women and rape in the article by Cruz and Zecchi. In this film, it is a confrontation with the law, a police officer, that makes the experience of rape even more intriguing. Pepi begs the officer who blackmails her to penetrate her from behind, because at the very least she wants to keep her virginity intact. The police officer does not respect the wishes of the woman, and he rapes her. This scene suggests that if the man had obeyed the girl’s petitions and penetrated her from
behind, even though she did not want any sort of penetration at all, there wouldn’t have been a rape. Cruz and Zecchi go on to state that if for a woman rape is an invasion of privacy, whether it is sexual, emotional, etc., “for the (masculine) law, not as much Spanish as Almodovarian, the concept is reduced to the physical (vaginal) penetration” (153). This is not just about rape, but about the presentation of what constitutes rape and into what position women are placed. Women are forced into the position of the object, both as a result of a rape and in many of Almodóvar’s films where they struggle for independence but never quite make it.

Not only has Almodóvar’s cinema indicated a dangerous trivialization of violence against women, but it also shows how violence has transformed into a lesson for women who have left the norms and attempts to channel her once again towards the patriarchal order. Cruz and Zecchi demonstrate this concept with the film *All About My Mother*. Nina, a lesbian who is also a heroin addict, comes close to dying after overdosing. After this event, she is “cured” of her addiction to heroin and is apparently also “cured” of her homosexuality, as she returns to her hometown, gets married, and has a child. What remains to be decided, as Cruz and Zecchi point out, is whether marriage and motherhood are her reward for being cured, or if the reverse is true; the recovery is the reward for having submitted to the traditional norms and values of the society in which she lives. It does not matter which one is the cause-effect; it is important to note that being a wife and mother appears to bring happiness to a woman who once was outside the boundaries of patriarchal norms.

Cruz and Zecchi continue by observing that the only desire that appears in this film is that of being a mother. Feminine sexuality does not have its own role in this film unless in suppression and acceptance of motherhood or degradation into prostitution and lesbianism. The female characters that exist in this film are only permitted the roles of mothers, whores, or nuns, or a combination of the three. For example, Rosa starts as a nun and becomes a mother; Agrado is a whore who behaves like a mother; and Manuela is a mother who pretends to be a whore. It is also observed that when the men want to be women, it is solely to fulfill traditional roles: “Esteban/Lola is father/mother of the two children …” (156). And finally, when women do not adjust themselves to the established roles, they seem to be punished. Cruz and Zecchi cite the example of the nun, Rosa, whose punishment for being a former nun and a pregnant, single mother is that she contracts the AIDS virus and dies in childbirth.
Kristine Butler’s article “‘Acceptable’ Violence: Conventions of Seeing in Hollywood ‘Women’s’ Movies” focuses on “the Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar’s most recent film, Kika, in order to offer some comments about conventions of seeing violence against women…” (249). Butler mentions many movies, including Almodóvar’s Kika, which have a female protagonist or protagonists and a rape or implied rape and violence against those women as the driving force behind the story. The structure of these movies puts men into the position of the enemy and always in a position of power over the women. The women protagonists in these films seem always to be engaged in the pursuit for independence, which is achieved through a final, cathartic act. The feminist analysis presented by Butler is markedly more positive than that of Cruz and Zecchi.

However, the film begins with two women being objectified and in very traditional roles. Kika opens with “three sequences which establish the fetishizing of the gaze” (249): we see a woman in bra and panties being photographed on a bed by Ramón who ends up straddling her on the bed as he directs her through a series of shots and ends up very close to orgasm as he communicates through his camera. We then learn that Ramón’s mother has mysteriously committed suicide and was found by his stepfather Nicholas. Three years after her death, Ramón has a shrine to her kept in a locked cabinet, with the key always on his person. In the shrine he keeps her diary, which he has not been able to read, and above and around the cabinet is an abundance of images of the Virgin Mary. Butler claims that these three opening sequences reveal Ramón’s obsession with the “trinity of the ‘ideal woman’: mother, virgin, prostitute” (250).

In this Almodóvar movie, as well as in the Hollywood movies that Butler mentions, the relationship that is found between fashion and the objectification of women is not questioned. Kika dresses in garish outfits, be it bright orange or a red-checkered dress that looks as if it should be on a picnic table. Although the way in which Kika dresses is ridiculous, the audience’s attention is drawn to her. It is impossible for the spectators not to look at her, not to watch her, and she therefore has succeeded in placing herself where society, fashion magazines, popular culture, history, and film have positioned women: at the center of attention. This is to ensure that all eyes are on her, that she is the object of focus. It is one more example of Almodóvar placing another woman into the role of object. Even Ramón concentrates on
objectifying her, taking polaroids of the two of them as they have sex, placing her as the object of the gaze where women have traditionally been told to place themselves.

It is clear from the films and examples that Cruz and Zecchi and Butler discuss in their analyses of Almodóvar that the women in the director’s films are not given much of a chance for subjectivity or less traditional, more progressive roles. A feminist critique of Almodóvar’s films, such as the one Cruz and Zecchi provide, finds little evolution or advancement in the treatment of women and their hopes for independence, desire, and subjectivity. Butler’s feminist review appears somewhat more hopeful, but in the end finds that the women are unable to free themselves from the role of object. Feminist analysis certainly is not limited to only Pedro Almodóvar but scrutinizes many authors and directors, including Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria. While Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* illustrates the protagonist’s dependence of several subjects filling in for the Other signaled by feminist criticism, it is unlike Almodóvar’s films mentioned here and Etxebarria’s novel because she is able to achieve independence and subjectivity. Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* does not fare so well under feminist analysis, as the protagonists attempt to discover their own identities but are completely unable to do so, as seen in several films by Almodóvar.

In “Beyond Almodóvar: ‘Homosexuality’ in the Spanish Cinema of the 1990s,” authors Santiago Fouz Hernández and Chris Perriam use Almodóvar’s films as a jumping off point to discuss the Spanish director’s films. Fouz Hernández and Perriam are interested in discovering whether Almodóvar and other directors’ films actually depict a change in gender and sexual politics in Spain or if they are just following a formula. It seems that these films use humor and transgression as techniques to confront the patriarchal norms of Spanish society. Almodóvar uses strong and vulnerable women and his subversion of authority figures in an attempt to challenge the accepted norms. So the question is if this challenge is a reflection of Spain’s changing situation or if it is just movie making on the part of Almodóvar and other Spanish directors. Fouz Hernández and Perriam note that in the history of Spanish film the representation of homosexuality is full of disavowals, repressions, and revelations, similar to the strategies of perversion.

Fouz Hernández and Perriam discuss what they consider to be Spain’s most famous, and most homosexual, film, Almodóvar’s *Law of Desire*. They discuss the problems found in the reviews of this film and the disagreement between reviews. Fouz Hernández and Perriam
observe that reviewers such as J.V. Aliaga, J.M. Cortés, and Ricardo Llamas state that *Law of Desire* depicts both a natural and spontaneous gay love and represents the reality of the lives of homosexuals. However, they find a problem within these reviewers’ statements because the quality that is highlighted detracts from the values identified, since “in many ways the film is extremely unrepresentative” (97). Fouz Hernández and Perriam note that Pedro Almodóvar has never actually come out and stated his homosexuality in Spain. They also find that his “many lesbian and gay roles are not subversive, just stridently ‘modern’, … mere style rebellion” (97). Perhaps this is why many of his roles for women at first seem to be strong and independent but end up being somewhat traditional and psychoanalytically oppressed.

Fouz Hernández and Perriam find that this film fluctuates between a representation of what are considered radical sexual alternatives and reactionary politics of representation. The audience is given a chance to enjoy the thrill of transgression while at the same time joyfully scheming with the comic strategies that are very dependent on caricature. Fouz Hernández and Perriam go on to state “this was a film which had interpolated viewing subjects in the 1980s who were themselves perhaps shifting between a queer and a complacent reception” (98). They start off by mentioning the scene in which Antonio, played by Antonio Banderas, hurries to the bathroom after watching “a masturbatory fantasy of penetration” so that he can masturbate (98). It is noted that Antonio is straight, both in terms of sexual orientation and social attitudes, but that he loses himself to the law of desire. Fouz Hernández and Perriam assert that Antonio’s elision with the film’s fantasy object and his subsequent submission to this obsession deconstruct stable identity, the meaning of love, and, for him, manliness.

Antonio morphs from what Fouz Hernández and Perriam call a straight-acting and uptight gay husband into a deranged, jealous, and wronged woman who is destroyed at the end of the film by staging his/her own suicide. This character is given a domineering mother, a caricature, as a sort of explanation for his troubled sexuality. There is a strong questioning of sexuality in Almodóvar’s film, but gender roles seem still to be rooted in tradition and stereotypes. Consider Tina, the transsexual sister of the director of the film Antonio watched, who was once a choirboy and is now a mother. Tina has a flamboyant female presence which in turn makes this feminine presence denaturalized. She also has many contradictory beliefs, such as being libertarian, authoritarian, sensualist, and a devotee of the Virgin Mary, all at the same time, which destabilize any traditional values to be found. While not necessarily treated as a
feminine object or a male subject in Almodóvar’s film, Tina “is excessively coded, not only as feminine but as drama queen, the prey of fate and emotion” and the closest one can get to finding an object of identification, according to Fouz Hernández and Perriam (99).

**Rosa Montero’s La hija del caníbal and Lucía Etxebarria’s Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas**

A basic familiarity with the plot and narrative of La hija del caníbal by Rosa Montero and Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas by Lucía Etxebarria will enhance a psychoanalytic reading of the novels. These novels, on their most basic level, describe women trying to deal with the obstacles that are thrown at them in their lives, whether it be as mundane as caring for a husband and child, as Ana does, or as outlandish as searching for a husband who has been kidnapped by a political group, as Lucía does. A deeper examination reveals the subversive strategies of Montero and Etxebarria to demonstrate the struggle of Spanish women to find autonomy and to cope with desire in post-Franco Spain. However, in this chapter, it is the basic narrative of the novels that is the focus of the discussion. The summaries found in the following pages will be quite detailed so that the reader will have more information to work with Lacanian theory when applied to the novels in later chapters of this project.

La hija del caníbal by Rosa Montero is a novel with an adventurous narrative containing lots of twists and turns in each chapter. The narrative begins with Lucía, a writer of children’s books, and her husband Ramón in the airport on their way to a vacation in Vienna, Austria. Ramón enters the bathroom but does not come out, thus initiating the action and the lies that will pepper the story that Lucía provides of her search for her missing husband. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, she calmly states that she has just started telling the story, and she has already lied to the reader (the double implication of the word “story” as both a factual or a fictitious narrative is not lost here). The date of Ramón’s disappearance is the first lie that Lucía has presented, and we learn that it will not be the last. The majority of the novel is in the first person, once in a while jumping to third person, presented by Lucía herself, which causes the reader to start questioning every detail that is offered. Oddly enough, the reader still empathizes with Lucía and feels like a part of her journey even with this questioning of veracity.
Lucía reports her husband’s disappearance to the police who seem uninterested in what has happened and fault her. García, the detective to whom she speaks, questions her about her fidelity, to which she indignantly replies that she has always been faithful – another lie, though she chooses to inform only the reader and not the detective in charge of her case. She heads to her apartment and feels desperate and lonely without Ramón. An elderly neighbor, Félix, knocks on the door, and the two become fast friends, deciding to search together for Ramón as they come to understand that the police will not be doing much. After receiving a call from Orgullo Obrero (Worker’s Pride), a group claiming to have kidnapped Ramón and wanting a ransom, Lucía and Félix realize there is much more going on than they previously thought. And then a shock; Ramón calls to inform Lucía of a little secret he never told her: his inheritance from his Aunt Antonia was actually much more than Lucía knew, and it is in a safety box under both their names at the bank. After returning from the bank with the money, Lucía and Félix meet Adrián, a young neighbor, who upon encountering a fight helps them fend off some attackers, getting himself hurt in the process.

Feeling that they owe Adrián for risking his life for helping them, Lucía and Félix inform the young man about the kidnapping and the money that they have to get Ramón back. Interestingly, Félix joins Lucía in lying to Adrián, telling him that they have subsequently larger amounts of money, until they finally tell him the truth on the third try. The trio of friends then becomes involved in a long, harrowing race to get the money to the kidnappers without anyone finding out, as García finally seems interested in what they are doing, not where Ramón is. In the process of getting the money to the right people, Lucía is reminded of the urgency of this task by receiving one of her husband’s fingers in the mail later and her dog Lola’s ear is cut off. Even though she missed the first drop, Lucía is finally able to get the kidnappers the money, though her husband is not returned to her. Not sure what to do at this point, the unlikely group of friends waits and spends their time getting to know each other. Lucía seems to be enjoying herself at this point, her missing husband a far-off thought, as she gets to know these men and even begins to discover she has romantic feelings for the younger Adrián. Lucía and Adrián begin a sexual relationship, and her feelings of friendship and love for Félix also continue to grow. Yet even with all this love, alliance, and support among the three, Lucía continues to lie to the reader.
The three finally decide that they want to know what really happened to Ramón, even though they all seem to be content with where they find themselves in this part of the narrative. Félix explains that he has a friend who may be able to help, a man who was once a brother in arms during the Spanish Civil War, fighting against the common enemy, Francisco Franco. So the three friends decide to go see Félix’s friend to see what they can learn about this group Orgullo Obrero and find out where they are hiding Ramón. Lucía, Félix, and Adrián have no idea what they are up against and do not understand that they are in dangerous territory. It turns out that there is no group called Orgullo Obrero: it is a cover used by several men to get away with federal crimes that they have been committing for several years. And, we finally learn, Ramón is part of this group; it is he who is implicated in these crimes and he who allowed his own finger to be cut off and sent to Lucía thinking it would get her to move fast and follow the rules, rather than taking the situation into her own hands to find answers.

Lucía, Félix, and Adrián are attacked and Félix orders the men at gunpoint to take the three to where Ramón is supposedly being held captive against his will. Lucía is then led into Ramón’s room where she sees her husband, who is thinner than he was before, looking as if he has suffered a great deal. The relief she feels at finding her husband, the excitement of the situation, and the confusion of all that has happened leads to Lucía having sex with Ramón right there, with the kidnappers just outside the room. After this quick encounter (“fuck” as she puts it), Lucía wants to know when he is going to be released, because they have already paid the ransom. As he is telling her that they have agreed to free him if he leaves the country for a couple of years, Inspector García enters the room and orders Ramón to tell Lucía the truth. Lucía, realizing that García is not who she thought he was and that Ramón has been lying, loses her temper and demands “la verdad descarnada” ‘the honest truth’ (356). Since Ramón cannot seem to inform Lucía of what really happened, García tells her about Ramón’s involvement in accepting bribes: this was common practice, but Ramón got caught. Lucía realizes that everything has been for naught, that her fear over her husband’s disappearance was pointless, that giving them the ransom money only supported Ramón’s criminal enterprises.

At this point in the novel, realizing that Ramón has been lying to her, Lucía, knowing she has been manipulated, feels disappointment, anger, and sorrow. She then reveals to the reader that she has been lying as much in the novel she has written as she has her whole life. It is in the last thirty pages of the work that she informs the reader of the lies that she has told and what is
really truth. It seems as though she has no more reasons to lie, but perhaps has found happiness and all that she has desired in her life. She is now alone, happier than ever, and has finally written the novel that she has always wanted to write, instead of children’s books. Lucía’s sense of accomplishment and her joy at learning the truth about Ramón and especially about herself is evident as the novel comes to an end. It is an ending full of satisfaction, happiness, and relief at finally finding herself and achieving autonomy.

Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas by Lucía Etxebarria is just that, a novel filled with love, confusion, Prozac, and doubts. Of course the text is also full of sexual encounters, street drugs, and promiscuous heterosexuality, as well as their contrasts, marriage and possibly sexual dissatisfaction, social anxiety, and homosexual monogamy. This novel is about three sisters and their daily efforts to come to terms with their desires, find an identity in post-Franco society, and deal with their relationships – with each other and with other people. The storyline of this text is sometimes disjointed and confusing due to the first-person narrative presented by each of the sisters. The reader must decipher who is speaking in each chapter through clues presented by Etxebarria and the dialogue of the characters. Through the reading, it becomes evident that although the sisters each have different vices and different lifestyles, they are all searching for a sense of independence and identity.

The novel begins with a first-person narrative, stating what the narrator’s horoscope is for that day. The text quickly continues into the first chapter, marked by a capital A, “for Atypical” (13), where the reader finally determines that the voice is feminine. The very first thing that we learn from this narrator is that she has just had sex for the first time in a month, the first time since what she dubs as the catastrophe. The reader is also aware that the narrator feels dreadfully alone and starved for affection. The sense of how this text is going to flow throughout the novel can be felt in the comment that occurs right after the narrator states how alone she feels. She then describes just how tiny the man’s “member” was, dedicating a whole paragraph to just how miniscule his penis was and how disappointed and betrayed she felt. After the discussion of this man’s anatomy, the narrator continues to discuss her childhood up through recent years, where we learn her name, Cristina, and the names of her sisters, Ana and Rosa. Cristina also reveals a very important health issue in her life that has had an obvious effect on her identity: she has had problems with her menstruation and has seen a doctor various times, finally learning that she has endometriosis; she notes that this is one of the principle causes of feminine infertility. Although
she has gynecological and psychological issues (which she mentions in this chapter as well), Cristina is happy with who she is.

The novel’s next few chapters continue with the discussion of Cristina’s life, from her childhood vacations to her current Ecstasy use. Early in the text, we learn that Cristina does not care what her sisters think of her and that they feel she is wasting her life. Rosa, the middle child, arrives at the bar where Cristina works, and the discussion that follows reveals her feminist beliefs, as well as her concern and love for her sister, and Cristina’s not wanting to hear her advice and “sermons” (47). In the chapter titled “F for Frustrated,” the voice changes to Rosa’s, and she discusses the Coca-Cola that she had at Cristina’s bar. Rosa describes her apartment, and how she likes it, giving the reader great insight into her personality. The reader is given a paradoxical image of Rosa based on her closets alone; in one closet, Rosa keeps her suits, lingerie, and blouses neatly folded and coordinated; the other is left in chaos with her jeans, T-shirts, and summer dresses intermingled, with no order whatsoever. Then the phone rings, and Rosa stops briefly, acknowledging that she knows what to expect as this is a recurring event: when she answers, she will hear no voice, only the music of “The Fatal Hour” by Purcell.

This call playing “The Fatal Hour” leads to more discussion about Cristina and about the childhood of the sisters. Rosa used to be able to sing every word to this same song, until their father left them. It is clear that this is an event that had devastating consequences on the sisters, filling them with doubt, uncertainty, and hatred for their father, although Rosa seems to aim much of her hatred toward her sister Cristina. In Rosa’s eyes, it is clear that Cristina received much attention because of her beauty which made Rosa very jealous and angry. Rosa continues making judgments and discusses her older sister Ana, stating that she found her to be somewhat timid and infantile. Rosa states that she does not feel that she can really judge Ana, that Ana’s life is no better and no worse than her own. The chapter ends with Rosa discussing Gonzalo, a boy that both she and Cristina liked, but who ended up only wanting to be with Cristina. Rosa finishes by claiming that she cannot fully blame Cristina for that incident because she was so young, but frustration and ire taint her words.

The next chapter returns to Cristina’s point of view with her declaring that she is going to do what Rosa and their mother want from her – visit Ana. The visit is to check on Ana, as Cristina has been told that she has not been doing well recently and needs to check on her, although Cristina states that “No tengo ovarios para ser tan directa” ‘I do not have the ovaries to
be so direct’ (77). While trying to find out how Ana is, the discussion turns to Cristina’s well-being, and Ana learns that Iain has left Cristina, to which she says that Cristina will have no problem finding another man and that she and Rosa have always been strong, unlike Ana. In the next chapter, Ana takes over the narration after Cristina has left. It is now Ana’s turn to describe the sisters and their parents, specifically about her mother and father’s relationship. We hear again, this time from Ana, how she felt as a child because of her parents, her father’s leaving, and her relationship with her sisters.

In the next chapter, the narration switches back to Cristina, and we see her getting on a bus with her friend Line. It is in the conversation with Line in the chapter “I for Intolerance” (91) that the reader sees the influence of psychology and psychoanalysis in the author’s text and in Cristina and Line’s actions and thoughts. The two women discuss Freud, especially his theory of sublimation, which Line thinks is very applicable to the two of them. Throughout this discussion, before and after mentioning Freud, Cristina and Line are talking, very loudly, about all of the men that they have slept with, detailing many sexual exploits. The bus driver and many men on the bus are consumed by the conversation that the girls are having, causing the bus driver to slam on the brakes to avoid hitting another driver. This promiscuity and the pride taken in it are common topics throughout the text as the reader follows Cristina, sometimes in the company of her friend Line.

The narrative voice changes repeatedly, following Cristina, Rosa, and Ana through their lives and thoughts. Throughout the novel, the reader is given direct access to each of the sisters, gaining a better understanding of who they are and why they are that way. Ana explains that her mother is right and that she cannot continue spending her life locked up inside her house “llorando como una Magdalena” ‘crying my eyes out’ (113). Ana’s view of life as slow, uncomfortable, and full of insufferable people makes it easier for the reader to understand what appears to be a sort of social anxiety. Her timidity and immaturity finally seem to be quashed in a moment of self-empowerment that surprises even her, until her worst fear is realized and she cries in front of the people in the supermarket. Ana notes that she has a wonderful husband, an adorable son, and a picturesque house, yet she still feels like crying. This sister, the eldest, feels as if she has everything that a woman could want, but in spite of all of this, she is depressed, feels she has nothing, and does not understand why.
Rosa describes her last “experimentos con los chicos” ‘experiments with boys’ (131), when she was twelve years of age. It is during this time that the reader learns of Rosa’s first specific encounter with the lesbian experience when she details her feelings and thoughts about a classmate. She notices that this girl is ethereal and unlike any other girl in her class; this being who has an indescribable beauty fascinates her. The shift in narrative voices is not only staccato and quick; the content of the text is also stilted. The storyline shifts from a tender description of Rosa’s same-sex love to Cristina’s discussing the rental of porno movies with Line, fucking men, and recklessly taking drugs. The only gentle and affectionate words uttered by Cristina are in regards to her relationship with Iain. She describes the passion and the love that existed in this relationship, although at the same time the reader is aware of the jealousy and perhaps even dependency that was also found in the romance with Iain. The termination of the relationship has left Cristina lost and confused, torn up inside, feeling like she is not herself (146).

The sisters as well as their mother, according to Ana, found Cristina to be difficult and promiscuous. Ana remembers a time when their mother claimed that Cristina must be like her father because all the women from her side are calm and controlled. It is also Cristina’s great beauty that seems to endear her to her father as well as prove that she is from his side of the family. However, Ana sometimes feels like calling Cristina because she feels as if her youngest sister would be the only one who would be able to understand her. Ana wants to know who could tell her that her sister’s life is better or worse than hers, that her sister who has seen many psychologists since the age of fifteen couldn’t give her advice. The reader is becoming more and more aware that all of the sisters are suffering from the same misguided belief that the other sisters’ lives are fulfilling for them, if not better than their own. The sister who says she loves her life, Cristina, tells the reader in the same sentence about the tragedy of the breakup with Iain. Ana explains that she has everything that a woman could want – a house, a husband, a son – and that she is on the verge of tears daily, extremely depressed. Cristina fears that she will never love again and will never be kissed like Iain used to kiss her. She states outright that she feels alone and empty, begging Line to give her three reasons to live, which Line cannot provide. And the response that Cristina provides reflect the lack of depth and meaning in her life: “Los éxtasis… el chocolate… y el sexo anal” ‘Ecstasy… chocolate… and anal sex’ (160) are Cristina’s necessities for this life, even though she continues to tell us that she truly wanted to die when he left.
Rosa explains later that she lost her virginity to a professor, contradicting her previous assertion that the experimentation with the male gender was finished. However, she claims that her reasons for sleeping with this man was because she felt at the age of twenty-one that it was time for her to become a woman. She figured that since he was married, it would work out well – no attachments. However, he began to call her all the time, claiming that he would leave his wife. Rosa then states that it wouldn’t surprise her if it was he who was calling her and playing “The Fatal Hour,” because he knew of her obsession with Purcell. And even though this experience was not the best for her and she has known about her lesbian tendencies since she was young, she still fantasizes about the sisters’ cousin Gonzalo to this day. She also has clear ideas about how a female executive should act: “compórtese como un hombre” ‘act like a man’ (216).

The story continues as Cristina and her friends Gema, who she notes is a lesbian, and Line get arrested for possession of drugs. However, after their stories match up and the police realize that this is the first time the three have been in trouble with the law, they are all released. They are told if they are caught again there will be trouble and that, just so that they know, the drugs upon first glance are fake. And proving that the police have failed to impress any lesson upon the girls, Line and Cristina decide to go further and do heroine with their male friend Santi, or Santiago. Cristina informs the reader that she wants to fuck Santi but that he wants to fuck Line while she wants to fuck everyone and no one. After enjoying themselves quite a bit, the two girls realize that their male companion is dead. Line convinces Cristina that there is nothing they can do for Santi, and the two girls leave him where he is and run home so that there will be no trouble with the law. It seems that this incident has left Cristina with a reason to ponder her life and everything that has happened in it. She realizes that perhaps she never loved Iain, that he was only there to fill the hole that she felt inside herself. She then concludes the novel explaining how things are turning out for her two sisters and herself, noting that they all seem to feel empty.

The reader learns, from Ana herself, that she is the one calling Rosa and playing “The Fatal Hour.” She wants to tell Rosa how depressed she is, how lonely she feels, but she does not know how to do that, so she plays this music. When Ana finally breaks, as we learn through Cristina in the final chapter, Rosa and Cristina realize that Ana is the glue that kept this family together. Through conversations with Rosa and their mother, Cristina narrates what happened
one day that started just like any other. She states that Ana made breakfast, woke her child, and changed his diaper, as usual, and then sat down and told her husband she wanted a divorce. She gave no reasons, stating only that there was not another man and repeating that she wanted this divorce. Ana’s husband, Borja, and her mother then talk, coming to the conclusion that this was not normal for a girl who has always been so responsible. When Ana sees a psychiatrist, she is diagnosed as having a nervous breakdown, leaving her to be admitted into “lo que mi madre llamaba una casa de reposo, y Borja una clínica privada y Rosa una clínica psiquiátrica, y que era, para entendernos, un loquero” ‘what my mother called a rest home, and Borja a private clinic, and Rosa a psychiatric clinic, and that was, so that we understand each other, a madhouse’ (257).

In the end, Cristina hears from Rosa about the phone calls, which she has found out have been coming from Ana. Cristina is at first unable to believe that her model sister had psychological problems, but fully understands when she hears that Ana has been popping pills such as tranquilizers and others. It is on her way to visit her institutionalized sister that Cristina realizes that Ana has been put there for the drugs as much as for her depression. Then, while Ana lies asleep in bed, the other two sisters have an opportunity to talk to each other, revealing in the process that both of them feel as though they have done nothing with their lives, that they are empty. While Rosa and Cristina believe they have lost out, they have always thought that the other one has something special, some wholeness, to her life. In this final chapter, the sisters realize that they all have nothing, and they start to understand each other a bit better. Ending this novel is the realization on Cristina’s part that although “desde niña alguien (mi madre, o Gonzalo, o las monjas, o todos, o el mundo) había decidido que éramos distintas… ¿quién asegura que somos tan distintas? ¿Quién nos dice que en el fondo no somos la misma persona?” ‘since childhood someone (my mother, or Gonzalo, or the nuns, or everyone, or the world) had decided that we were different… who is sure that we are so different? Who can tell us that deep down we are not the same person’ (267).
Pedro Almodóvar versus Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria: From Female Object to Female Subject

Pedro Almodóvar has also had his characters struggle with perversion as seen in his feminine and homosexual male individuals. There seems to be a lot of disavowal on the part of these characters, as well as in Pedro Almodóvar himself. Barbara Morris notes this in her article “Almodóvar’s Laws of Subjectivity and Desire,” when discussing Almodóvar’s thoughts on filmmaking in the time since Francisco Franco. Morris states that “Almodóvar’s famous dictum that he makes films as if Franco had never existed, reveals a clever disavowal of history in which the Father’s Law, although masochistically suppressed, is not entirely forgotten” (95). Therefore, Almodóvar’s characters are not the only perverse individuals who disavow; Almodóvar himself also takes part in this tactic of perversion. Morris notes that in Almodóvar’s Laws of Desire, Pablo, the controlling agent of the film, plays the role of the masochistic subject. The masochist controls and dominates the pleasure/pain situation using contractual texts and disavowal, “much as Pablo tries to govern the behavior of his lovers through letters, choosing a lover who abandons him, and successfully disavowing his final union with Antonio by means of amnesia and withdrawal” (92).

The painful loss that Pablo experiences because of Antonio’s murder of Juan allows a sort of rebirth. This also enables him to experience the pleasure and joy of reciprocal love, though it is only for the hour that he spends as Antonio’s love hostage. Antonio’s role shifts from that of a controlling sadist to suicidal masochist. Morris notes that “Pablo’s parthenogenesis is catalyzed by the other’s death as the fantasy fulfillment of his desire and, ultimately, his reunion with the idealized mother figure, as represented by Tina” (92). According to Morris, it is Pablo’s rebirth brought about by all of these experiences that allows him to successfully use perverse tactics and eventually surmount his perversion. This assertion comes as Morris points out that masochism is based upon disavowal and fetishism which are projected in fantasy fetishizing the suspenseful anticipation of pleasure which in turn creates intricate and ironic structures of formal artifice so that one may prolong the painful waiting of rebirth (92). However, if the perverse individual is able to achieve that rebirth, whether intending to or not, one could conclude that this person has been able to overcome his perversion.
This is very different from Lucía Etxebarría’s characters Cristina, Rosa, and Ana who are also employing perversion as a subjective strategy. Like Montero’s, Etxebarría’s protagonists are in the position of subject rather than object, but at the same time are similar to Almodóvar’s characters who are also utilizing perverse tactics. On the other hand, the three sisters of Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas are unlike some characters found in Almodóvar’s films because the mask that they are using as a subjective strategy does indeed work, similar to the successful strategy of hysteria employed in Montero’s novel. While Cristina, Rosa, and Ana are subjects in Etxebarría’s novel (whereas women tend to be objects in Almodóvar’s films), they are failed subjects, only in the fact that they are stuck within the structures of perversion. They do gain some knowledge at the end of the novel that could perhaps be a step in the right direction, but seems more likely to be the simple acceptance of their situation rather than acceptance of their place within the Symbolic Order. In any case, they fail to move out of perversion and into neurosis, while Montero’s protagonist and a few of Almodóvar’s are permitted to use their subjective strategies successfully and eventually overcome them.

This study will begin with a look at Rosa Montero’s La hija del caníbal and her protagonist’s successful use of hysteria and the ability to move beyond it. There are many clear and provocative examples of Lucía Romero’s hysteria and its clear-cut relation to the Other, her husband Ramón. From beginning to end, the novel is rife with hysterical traits and tactics that Lucía even admits to using at some points, such as her propensity to lie to everyone around her and especially to the reader. However, in the end she finally comes completely clean and admits to every bit of lying, realizing that what she had always thought that she wanted, or what she truly desired, could not be found in the Other, that the Other did not have the answers for which she has been searching. In the end, Lucía is able to move beyond the hysteria that has been ruling her life and become a successful subject.
CHAPTER THREE
HYSTERIA AS SUBJECTIVE STRATEGY IN LA HIJA DEL CANÍBAL BY ROSA MONTERO

Lucía Romero is exemplary as a protagonist struggling with desire and the Other, displaying traits of hysterical subjectivity. *La hija del caníbal*, by Rosa Montero, is a text which demonstrates the need for women in post-Franco Spain to find a place for themselves within the Symbolic Order, establish their subjectivity, and come to terms with their desire and the Other. There has been little analysis of this novel even though it has been in publication for ten years now, since 1997. Surprisingly, no one has attempted a psychoanalytic, and more specifically, Lacanian analysis of this novel. The critiques to be found on the text center around the memory of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and Franco’s dictatorship (1939-1975), the detective story structure, and identity (this search for identity that is mentioned in some articles, could have been expanded into a Lacanian approach). Also, of the articles that do mention and/or analyze this text, many times *La hija del caníbal* is just one of several novels by Rosa Montero that are discussed. Therefore, I will review briefly the few articles that mention this novel, spending a little more time on the article by Marisa Postlewate, “The Use of the Detective Story Framework as a (Pre)text For Self-Realization in *La hija del caníbal,*” as her critique comes very close to being psychoanalytical.

“La narrativa poliedrica di Rosa Montero” by Susanna Regazzoni discusses the growth of Rosa Montero’s writing, ending with the assertion that *La hija del caníbal* is Montero’s most ambitious and important work. In fact, Regazzoni sees Montero as an eminent author among women authors in Spain during the Twentieth-century. She starts out the article by noting: “L’evoluzione di Rosa Montero come autrice scorre, non a caso, sugli stessi binari dell’evoluzione storica della scrittura femminile, essa è, inoltre, uno dei nomi fra i più significativi nella storia della narrativa spagnola contemporanea” “The evolution of Rosa Montero as an author runs, not by chance, parallel to the historical evolution of women’s writing, her being, moreover, one of the most significant names in the history of Spanish Contemporary narrative” (41). This article, and especially this quote not only represent the plight of Spanish men but also that of Spanish women, as both groups attempt to carve a place for themselves within society. It must be noted that Montero has been writing as a journalist since 1960 and...
only beginning to write fiction after Franco’s death in 1975. Notably, Montero’s first novel was *Crónica del desamor*, published in the year 1979, four years after the dictator’s death in the years of repression and censorship were over.

Regazzoni continues discussing some of Montero’s most well known novels, ending with *La hija del caníbal*. Of all of the texts that Montero has written, it is the only one that has been translated into Italian, though it has not been translated to English. Regazzoni notes that this novel deals with the search of a woman for her own identity, brought on by the “kidnapping” of her husband. Regazzoni also mentions that Rosa Montero herself defines the book as being a *Bildungsroman*. This analysis and interpretation of the novel serves also as a backdrop to a psychoanalytic reading, where the search for identity is seen as this hysterical subject’s struggle to come to terms with desire and the Symbolic Order. Indeed, the search for identity is certainly an important aspect of the novel, but an in-depth discussion into the text is lacking in this article. Unfortunately, this is typical of the articles that mention *La hija del caníbal*: they discuss several of the novels that Rosa Montero has written, only briefly mentioning each one and the importance it may serve in Spanish contemporary narrative, especially since Francisco Franco’s death.

One critic does directly mention Lacan, although only because her analysis is reminiscent of Lacan’s theory dealing with the Law of the father. Monika Wehrheim, in her article “De amantes y caníbales: Divagaciones en torno al concepto del amor en la obra reciente de Rosa Montero,” discusses love and its relationship to cannibalism as found in *La hija del caníbal* and other Montero works. Wehrheim comments that, on a symbolic level, the person eaten no longer exists as himself but as part of another person. Anthropophagy is designated as a metaphor for human relationships where the victim finds himself reduced from the position of the subject to the level of an object, in this case, food. Already the reader can see the connection to psychoanalysis with the structure of the subject and the object, the object falling into the position of the object of desire. Wehrheim then observes that, as a consequence, cannibalistic love would be the complete destruction “del otro” ‘of the other’ (179) in the love relationship. This article takes into consideration the title of the novel, in English “The Daughter of the Cannibal,” and notes its importance in the novel. In a Lacanian psychoanalysis, this symbol of the father as cannibal is a reference to the Primal Father, the evil father or the lawless father. This Cannibal-father is first and foremost Francisco Franco himself, then being filled in for by others: Lucía’s
father and Inspector García. Wehrheim finds that the subject is relegated to object in a cannibalistic relationship, but in this psychoanalytic reading, Lucía accepts her hysterical subjectivity and indeed uses her position as a subversive strategy.

Wehrheim at this point mentions Lacan, noting that her discussion is very reminiscent of the notion of the Law of the father. Wehrheim finds that “la metáfora del padre que transmite la lengua e inaugura el orden simbólico … coincide perfectamente con los padres caníbales y tárwaros de Montero” ‘the paternal metaphor that transmits the Law and introduces the Symbolic Order … coincides perfectly with Montero’s cannibalistic and Tartar parents’ (180).

Cannibalism is, in most societies and cultures, a taboo, going against what is acceptable and allowable by the laws of that society. However, it seems that the anthropophagical tradition that Wehrheim is discussing is that which is the Primal Law. She goes on to state that these Tartars and cannibalistic parents submit the world around them to their desires, laws, and perversions. Again, this cannibalistic father is represented most importantly by Francisco Franco, the dictator and lawmaker in Spanish society. Even after his death in 1975, the Spanish people are left to come to terms with their desire and subjectivity with the memory of Franco that still weighs heavily on society. The police, the State, are corrupt and have filled in for the Other in his absence, becoming yet another cannibalistic representation. All of the others who are propped up into the position of the Other are extremely important within Lucía’s hysterical structure, as they represent this cannibalistic, Primal father.

Monika Wehrheim also places Lucía in the position of object in this novel, though it appears that she is not relegating her to the place of the Lacanian object. Wehrheim believes that Lucía is able to liberate herself, no longer remaining in the position of the object, but moving into the place of the subject. She notes the importance of the final chapter where Lucía states her contentment with being alone, stating that this ending works well with the goals of feminism, creating her own identity and arriving at autonomy without a man. This ending demonstrates a move from desiring through the Other to not -- perhaps a move beyond hysteria, in a psychoanalytic reading. The end result in a feminist reading, such as Wehrheim’s, is the independence and autonomy achieved by the female protagonist. In a psychoanalytic reading, however, the goal is not for an identity, Lucía is an hysterical subject, rather for a restructuring of the Symbolic Order. In the case of the subject, according to Lacan, one of Lacan's end of analyses is the traversal of fantasy. The subject can be either a man or a woman with the same
being said of the Other, while in feminism, the only concern is the triumph of a woman to become her own independent person separate from men, and without their help or involvement.

Marisa Postlewate is the author of “The Use of the Detective Story Framework as a (Pre)text for Self-Realization in La hija del caníbal,” that the structure of the novel, the detective story, allows the protagonist to accomplish self-realization. Postlewate describes this self-realization as “a woman’s attempt to free herself from the patriarchal society’s constraints that have promoted a subordinate and subjugated position, and, thus, has prevented her from leading an independent life” (131). Upon reading this statement, a Lacanian interpretation is readily available, bringing to mind the subject and his/her relation to the Symbolic Order. The subject is struggling to find a way to restructure the Symbolic Order, for s/he does not know what it wants. While this Lacanian approach is noticeably different from the detective story track that Postlewate takes, the desired conclusion is similar with one attempting to hystericize the Other, or restructure the Symbolic Order and the other searching for an independent life free from patriarchal norms, respectively. The similarity is found in the need to get what one wants from the Symbolic Order, also known as the patriarchal society. Postlewate also points out that this process includes Lucía's ability to become confident while attempting to break away from those patriarchal norms that have limited her as a woman and a writer. However, Postlewate's interpretation of Lucía's actions is a feminist analysis rather than a Lacanian approach.

An important shift occurs in the beginning of the novel when the reader is starting to feel sympathetic to the plight of this woman whose husband has disappeared. Lucía suddenly interrupts her story to tell us that although she has just begun relating the event, she has already lied. In the Lacanian approach, seen later in this chapter, this lying is a symptom of the hysterical subjectivity that Lucía demonstrates. Postlewate, on the other hand, remarks that there are different perspectives one can take as to why the protagonist lies. She then observes that the possibility that this is a joke on the part of the narrator directed toward the reader who has been drawn in to the story. She continues by noting that, regardless of what the interpretation of this event is, these little interruptions cause the reader to doubt the veracity and the makeup of the story. Postlewate ends this part of the analysis by stating that this should “serve as a comment on feminine epistemologies” (133). Although all of the elements that make up a detective story are present; a violent criminal act, a search for the perpetrator of said act, the discovery of the perpetrator by the investigator, and a resolution. The lying by Lucía, the investigator, adds
another element to the story. It is an element that Postlewate evidently believes is a result of the protagonist’s gender.

Postlewate does realize that Lucía is representative of someone attempting to restructure the Symbolic Order, though not quite in a Lacanian way. Postlewate observes that Lucía characterizes the middle-aged citizens of Spain who grew up during Franco’s dictatorship and now must find an identity for themselves within the democracy. She also notes that Lucía represents the Spanish woman who has become used to the traditional values of the Francoist regime and is now exposed to new ideals. Postlewate states that this representation of Spanish woman demonstrates “the need to prove themselves without having to depend on the ‘other’” (134). The need to achieve autonomy and independence from the “other” is Postlewate’s interpretation of Lucía's need for investigation in the novel. This description of Lucía makes sense, although in this analysis of her as demonstrating an hysterical subjectivity there is no attempt to show her as trying to come to terms with the Other. Consequently, although Postlewate comes close to a psychoanalytic approach, and indeed seems to have thought of its applicability to Montero’s novel, her reading varies from a Lacanian approach that I use to posit an hysterical subjectivity on the part of Lucía.

Postlewate states that Ramón’s disappearance serves as an example of the ramifications of the forced subordinate position of women and the total dependence it creates. Her interpretation of what Lucía says and the events that follow reflect the feminist theory that she is using to analyze this novel, while a Lacanian analysis is relevant for any hysterical subject, not just women. Postlewate remarks that Lucía, “feeling lost in the absence of the ‘other’ and needing someone to rely on, as a submissive member of the patriarchal society is accustomed to do…,” ends up letting Félix take charge and takes his advice, as Lucía herself says (137). Postlewate notes that Lucía thinks about letting Félix take charge later on in the book and realizes the craziness behind that action, therein confirming Postlewate’s belief in the fallacy of the patriarchal tradition that encourages the dependence and submissiveness of women. From a Lacanian point of view, however, the (hysterical) dependence on an other can be found in any subject, male or female. In fact, any subject, hysterical or not, has some sort of relationship with an other and the Other, whether it be an attempt to be the object of desire for the Other, an attempted blocking out of the Other, or seeing him/herself as the Other. The feminist reading of this turn of events is much more outwardly pessimistic than the Lacanian psychoanalytic reading.
In the feminist reading, Lucía is seen as the typical woman who struggles, is unsure and vulnerable, and feels lost after the disappearance of the man on whom she was dependent. On the other hand, in the psychoanalytic reading, Lucía demonstrates an hysterical subjectivity and her relationship to the Other (even though women are historically and typically hysterics, there are male hysterics). In the feminist reading, only women are submissive in a patriarchal society, while in a Lacanian reading, both men and women, as subjects, have troubled relationships with the Other.

Postlewate’s discussion of identity also demonstrates a marked difference in a feminist and psychoanalytic reading. When Lucía realizes that what she knows of her father does not fit with his story of cannibalistic survival during the Civil War, that part of her identity changes. Incredibly, Postlewate uses this moment to explain how women have no identity without an other in their lives: “By relating these stories, Lucía exposes the fallacy of relationality that defines and constructs her in relation to the ‘other.’ In the absence of the other, regardless of the reason, a woman lacks an identity” (142). In other words, with a feminist reading, one is to understand that a woman is nothing without the other, which is a man. Alternatively, a man has an identity whether there is a woman in his life or not; it is only women who are dependent on an other in life. Lacanian theory has a much different view on a subject, man or woman, and how the subject reacts to the absence of an other. The Other is never absent as it is language or the law; it is only the other, or another subject, who fills in for the Other which can be absent. And the subject does not lack an identity when the other is missing; although the subject may be lacking an object of desire, stability in his/her subjective position, or another subject in which s/he can cause desire. The difference between the feminist reading and the psychoanalytic reading is the belief that only women lack an identity in the loss of the other versus men and women simply lacking when the other is absent.

The ending of La hija del caníbal is positive whether viewed through a feminist or Lacanian lens, though obviously for different reasons. After all is said and done, Lucía ends up alone and is happy about it; the house is hers and her time is all her own now. Postlewate comments upon the magnitude of the process women must go through to achieve autonomy, demonstrating that the importance and exertion of liberation through which women pass is seen when Lucía declares that her independence from her husband is like “‘un país colonial [que] se independiza del imperio’” ‘a colonial country that gains independence from the Empire’ (142).
Postlewate claims that this statement throws light on the course of action women must take to free themselves from the laws set up by a restrictive patriarchy and to achieve self-realization. Postlewate continues, stating that this is especially difficult in a country with a very repressive government that lasted for several decades. While it is true that Spanish women have more repressive traditions to overcome than Spanish men in post-Franco years, all of Spain’s citizens have had to struggle to find their own identity in a new society. This difference between the feminist and Lacanian reading is problematic for the feminist reading, because it does not consider that men have also had to come to a new self-realization in Spanish society with the drastic changes that occur in the wake of the dictator’s death in 1975. That is where the Lacanian reading will be more valuable, because it is all of the people of Spain, men and women, that struggle with the symbolic order and for subjectivity. However, Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria prove important because they provide a space for women to encounter, explore, and confront their subjectivity. Even though Lacanian theory works for men and women, the issue of subjectivity has been written about and studied more with relation to men, making the study of female subjectivity relatively new.

Postlewate also discusses what makes the ending of the novel happy, one point which seems somewhat of a contradiction to a feminist analysis. Noting that even Lucía’s dog is doing better in Ramón’s absence (which Postlewate believes is humorous), Postlewate claims that this conclusion serves as an extreme view of how the presence of men in the life of women is negative, so much so that even the dog is affected. Postlewate goes on to claim that the ending is happy for another reason – Lucía’s father receives a role on a television show as a grandfather, something Lucía was unable to provide him. Postlewate states that “this seems to imply that Lucía is not a ‘failure’ because of her inability to fulfill her biological functions, as her father is still able to play the role of a grandfather, even if it is only on stage” (143). This unfortunate reading that comes out of a feminist approach indicates that Lucía would be considered a failure had her father not obtained the role of grandfather on a television show. In a Lacanian reading, on the other hand, the dog’s apparent happiness and ease of life due to the absence of a man, or the other, and the father’s ability to at least play a grandfather have no bearing on the success of the hysterical subject to come to terms with desire and the Other and to move beyond hysteria. The psychoanalytic reading focuses instead on Lucía’s struggle in the absence of the other (and Other), her move beyond hysteria, and her subjectivity.
Lucía Desiring Through and As the Other: Hysterical Structures Described in *La hija del caníbal*

Rosa Montero presents Lucía as an ethical model for the women in post-Franco Spain who are finding it nearly impossible to function. With the death of Franco, there was a rush of male subjects attempting to assume all of the subjective positions that were available in this new Spanish society. As demonstrated in Chapter One with the films of Almodóvar, male figures have taken over roles that were stereotypically female. This left women to struggle in the search for their own subjectivity in a still male dominated society. By allowing her protagonist to utilize an hysterical strategy as her ethical model, Montero is encouraging the reader to adopt a similar ethical stance. Montero demonstrates that this is a valid mask or model, even though at the end of the novel, the protagonist no longer subscribes to this particular model. The reason why this ethical stance is no longer present at the end of *La hija del caníbal* is because there has been a successful restructuring of the Other on the part of the hysterical subject. This strategy that Montero presents proves to be a successful one and is presented to the reader as an ethical stance in their own personal struggles with the Other and desire (one suspects that Montero is writing to the Spanish women of post-Franco Spain). Rosa Montero is a very popular author in Spain, especially among women. Indeed, the author uses Lucía at the end of the novel to demonstrate the use of the hysteric's mask and its viability in the real world. Lucía asks why she is who she is and not someone else, stating that she could be anyone including the author herself, Rosa Montero. Montero is providing textual evidence for the reader that the hysterical structure is a possible ethical stance in dealing with the Other and desire in post-Franco society.

A distinction must be made between the structures of hysteria and its symptoms, and Montero’s novel provides a space where one can see this. To discuss the subjective strategy of hysteria modeled by Lucía, the hysterical structures will be mapped out first, so that the symptoms can then more easily be seen. Evidence of an hysterical structure, as an ethical stance taken by Lucía, can be seen from the very beginning of the novel almost until the end, when the mask is finally dropped and there is a move beyond hysteria. The hysteric desires through the Other, for the subject cannot desire without the presence of the Other. The hysteric identifies her desire with the desire of the Other, and it is through the structure of lying that the hysteric is able to find out the Other’s, and therefore her desire. The hysteric is constantly lying in order to get
what she wants from the Other, and it is in the lying where this will be revealed. Slavoj Žižek, in *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*, states that the original hysterical position is characterized by the paradox of “telling the truth in the form of a lie: in terms of the literal “truth” (of a correspondence between “words” and “things”), the hysterical subject undoubtedly “lies,” but it is precisely through this factual “lie” that the truth about his desire is articulated” (182). In other words, the hysteric reveals the truth through her lies, or, lying expresses the truth of her desire.

Through the hysteric’s lying, she is able to identify her desire with the desire of the Other; in other words, the hysterical subject desires through the Other. Joël Dor, in *Structure and Perversions*, discusses the strategy of desire with regards to the hysteric as “interrogating the desire of the other with the sole aim of knowing what one’s own [desire] is like, as well as the paradigm of alienation of the subject’s desire through the desire of the other” (27). There are two results that the hysteric is attempting to produce with her lying, results that she hopes to get from the Other. The hysterical subject is attempting to arouse the Other’s attention so as to provoke him into asking her a question. Through her obvious lies, the hysteric wants the Other to ask what it is that she wants him to know, the question “What do you want to tell me?” More specifically, the hysterical subject wants the Other to ask what truth it is that she is trying to tell him through her lie. The hysteric’s lying is also an attempt to get an answer from the Other: she interrogates the Other for knowledge with the sole aim of learning her desire, because the only information that she will get from the Other is the Other’s desire, which she assumes to be her own desire. Through all of her lies, the hysterical has attempted to both provoke a question and an answer in an attempt to learn her desire and restructure the symbolic order by changing her relationship with it. This hysterical structure is pervasive throughout Montero’s novel, though this study considers just a few events to demonstrate this.

Shortly into the novel, just after Ramón’s disappearance and Lucía’s admission that she has already lied, the reader is informed of Lucía’s delight in inventing and creating stories. After telling the reader of the facts behind the lie, she relates a story that occurred when she was nine years old in which she causes problems for her father due to her lies. Her father, the Cannibal, and her mother are actors, the mother in movies and her father in soap operas. Her father has been propped up into the position of the Other, a place that both he and her mother occupy at different times. As Lucía is waiting for her father in the car while he picks up his things from the
place where he rehearses, Lucía gains the attention of several people walking by when she screams for help. She proceeds to tell the people that her parents were killed by a train and that her evil aunt and uncle took her in but keep her locked up in the car and do not feed her enough. A young husband pulls her out of the car to save her in just when her father shows up to be slapped, and all of them end up in the police station. The reader is informed of this event right after Lucía explains that she has lied about the date of Ramón’s disappearance as proof that she has had a propensity for lying her whole life.

With these lies that a young Lucía is telling to a group of people, she is attempting to arouse their attention in order to provoke a question from them. The little girl is hoping that these strangers will ask her what it is she really wants to tell them. She begins the whole scene by shouting for help which automatically gets a question as a response: “¿Qué te pasa, bonita?” ‘What’s wrong, beautiful?’ (18). She then “compungidísima, fui respondiendo a sus preguntas y les conté mi vida…” ‘with extreme sorrow, I responded to their questions and told them my life story…’ (18). It seems as if these nice people that a young Lucía has met on the street have done exactly what she wanted them to do. They have fallen into the trap of the hysterical structure of lying: by screaming for help, Lucía has provoked the small crowd into asking her a question, asking her what it is that she wants to tell them. However, these are not the only others filling on for the Other in this manner for Lucía: her father also is propped up into the position of Other. This is a position that he fills in for many times throughout the life of the protagonist, including at this point when he arrives on the scene of his daughter being saved by these strangers. However, unlike the many people attempting to help this girl, the Cannibal-father does not provide his daughter with what she wants: he does not ask her a question. In fact, the only reaction that the father has is to repeat, for several years, that “Esta chica ha salido como yo, va a ser actriz” ‘This girl has turned out like me, she is going to be an actress’ (18). In this scene, as in many others involving Lucía’s father, he is not provoked into asking what it is that she wants to tell him.

This scene with a young Lucía attempting to provoke her father demonstrates Lacan’s concept of acting out. In An Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Dylan Evans notes that acting out occurs “when the Other has become ‘deaf’, [and] the subject cannot convey a message to him in words, and is forced to express the message in actions. The acting out is thus a ciphered message which the subject addresses to an Other, although the subject himself is
neither conscious of the content of this message nor even aware that his actions express a message” (3). Lucía defines her father as the Cannibal and sees him as the primal father, the father of the limitless law, the law without boundaries. Cannibalism exists before the law, as does the primal father, so the representation of her father as her padre-caníbal (“Cannibal-father”) only makes his role as the primal father clearer. Lucía is acting out because, as Lacan notes, when the Other has become deaf and does not listen to the subject, the subject must act out what it is that she wants from the Other since words will not work. The subject is not conscious of the message that she is trying to convey, nor is she conscious that her actions are indeed communicating a message. In the acting out, it is the responsibility of the Other to interpret the message that the subject is attempting to send, though it will be impossible for the Other to do so. By not asking Lucía the question that her hysterical lying is attempting to provoke, the Cannibal-father is demonstrating his deafness, which is of course the reason that the young Lucía is acting out. The detective story aspect of this novel could also be seen as a drawn-out episode of acting out in response to the redoubling of the Other. This acting out, however, is a response to the redoubling of the Other with García filling in for this role, as a later discussion will show.

The next event that demonstrates the characteristic lying of an hysterical structure occurs after Lucía and her neighbor Félix have obtained the money for Ramón’s ransom from the bank. After some men attempt to steal it from them, another neighbor, Adrián, jumps in to help and is knocked unconscious. Lucía and Félix carry Adrián up to Lucía’s apartment and hide the money in the back of a bag of dog food while they leave Adrián unconscious on the couch. In the next couple of days, the three of them become great friends, slowly starting to trust each other. Lucía feels that she can trust Adrián so much after twenty-four hours that she tells him about the forty million pesetas. After forty-eight hours, she feels she knows Adrián enough that she tells him they really have two hundred million pesetas and that they are in the armoire. Finally, on the third day, Lucía reveals the complete truth, that the two hundred million pesetas are hidden in the bag of dog food. In this scene, the reader can see that Lucía repeatedly lies, slowly revealing the truth to Adrián with the help of Félix. On the final day, Lucía tells Adrián the truth while at the same time making sure he understands that she indeed has told him the complete truth.

The response of Adrián, propped up into the position of the Other, in this scene is very interesting and is remarkably different from the reactions of the crowd and Lucía’s father in the earlier scene mentioned. The exchange that occurs between Lucía and Adrián is very revealing.
of the thoughts of an hysterical subject and the reaction of someone who has fallen into the position of the Other:

- Ya lo sabía – contestó Adrián.
- ¿Cómo que lo sabías?
- Pues sí, desde el primer día. No estaba dormido del todo y os escuché cuchichear y barajar posibles escondites y arrastrar la bolsa de pienso y todo eso.
- ¿Y por qué no lo dijiste, por qué nos has dejado hacer el ridículo todos estos días?
- Pues ya ves. Quería comprobar que confiabais en mí. El hombre que no teme a las verdades nada debe temer a las mentiras. Es una frase de Thomas Jefferson. Además, estaba seguro de que el engaño no iba a durar mucho. Una mentira nunca vive hasta hacerse vieja. Esto lo dijo Sófocles. (66-7)
  “I already knew that,” answered Adrián.
  “What do you mean you already knew that?”
  “Well yeah, since the first day. I wasn’t completely asleep and I heard you both whispering and considering possible hiding places, dragging the bag I think, and all that.”
  “And why didn’t you say anything? Why did you allow us to make fools of ourselves these past few days.”
  “Well then. I wanted to confirm that you guys trusted me. The man who does not fear the truth should not fear lies at all. It’s a quote by Thomas Jefferson. What’s more, I was sure that the deceit would not last long. A lie never lives to become old. Sophocles said that.”

This conversation between Lucía and Adrián reveals a great deal about the hysterical structure that is present due to the ethical stance that Lucía takes. It also appears that Adrián is not going to be drawn into the structure, since he does not ask Lucía any questions, revealing that he has known the truth the whole time. Adrián is a representation of the father of pure knowledge, a figure that exists before the Oedipal complex with the evil father, or the father of pure pleasure. Žižek himself discusses these two fathers noting that they “represent the two sides of the same pre-Oedipal conjunction... [one] with his own gapless undivided knowledge, and the mean “anal father,” the master who pulls the strings of this knowledge-automaton, a father who exhibits in an obscene way his shortened little finger -- an ironic allusion to his castration” (101).
The final scene to be considered here occurs near the end of the novel when Lucía reveals to the reader that she is still lying. Lucía begins the antepenultimate chapter: “He mentido. Llevo escritas cientos de páginas para este libro y he mentido en ellas casi tantas veces como en mi propia vida. He mentido, por ejemplo, respecto a mi situación profesional. Al principio he dicho que era capaz de vivir de mis textos, y esto ya hace mucho que dejó de ser verdad…” ‘I have lied. I have written hundreds of pages and I have lied in them almost as many times as in my own life. I have lied, for example, with respect to my professional situation. At the beginning I had said that I was capable of living off of my works, and this has not been true for a very long time now…’ (310). In this apostrophe, Lucía is speaking directly to the reader, informing him/her of the multiplicity of lies that have been told by the protagonist throughout the course of the novel. While discussing her fraudulent storytelling, she then mentions just one of the lies that she has been claiming as truth, finally admitting that her children’s books are not popular and that she is not good at writing them. As the reader is drawn into the narrative, s/he forgets Lucía’s predilection for fibbing and finds him or herself drawn into the protagonist’s hysterical subjectivity.

This revelation of the truth occurs shortly before the end of the novel and the culmination of Lucía’s journey and move beyond hysteria. But before Lucía moves beyond hysteria, she attempts to provoke a question out of yet another other, this time the reader. The reader is prompted into reacting after reading that Lucía has been lying to him/her the whole time she has been narrating events. There are several questions that quickly arise in the reader’s mind the minute Lucía reveals she has been lying the whole time. Why has she been lying? Is any of the story that I have just read true, or is it all a lie? How do I know that she is telling the truth now, maybe this is yet another lie? The reader is now embroiled in the structure of hysterical subjectivity as much as the characters of the novel have been. The reader wants Lucía to tell the truth, to say what has really been happening and why she has felt it necessary to lie throughout the novel. The reader has been aware of various lies during the course of the narrative, although only when Lucía reveals them. This last disclosure feels to the reader as if the protagonist has stepped over the line.

But it is the doubling, and redoubling, of the Other that leads to the longest acting out, which provides the plot for the detective story. Lucía meets with Inspector García, who has been redoubled into the position of the Other for the information that Lucía believes she can gain from
García has been redoubled as the Other because Lucía’s husband Ramón is the original double of the Other. It is because of his disappearance that she must find another replacement for the Other. This mask of hysterical subjectivity that Lucía employs throughout the novel is applied strongly to García as he represents the Law, the Symbolic Order, just through his association with the police. As a part of his connection to the Law, he is also a representative of someone who has knowledge, thrusting him into the position of the Other to Lucía’s object of desire. She knows that, as a member of law enforcement, he can provide her with information into her husband’s disappearance that she would not otherwise be privy to as the victim’s wife. But, as it turns out, Inspector García also wants information from her, which we can see as the investigation moves along. He asks Lucía questions and proves his ineptitude with each meeting that they have. It is shortly after Ramón’s disappearance that Lucía is upset by the deafness of the Other – García as other filling in for the Other. Upon understanding that the Other is deaf to her lies and is not going to be provoked into asking her questions, Lucía begins to act out. This acting out that the reader sees takes place throughout the rest of the novel in the form of Lucía’s own search for her husband.

Lucía goes to the police station the day after Ramón disappears and meets this inept detective, Inspector García. It is clear from this first meeting that García is a shoddy detective who is working within the Symbolic Order, the patriarchal post-Franco society. García tells Lucía that she should not worry about Ramón’s disappearance because this sort of thing happens all the time. Lucía reacts negatively, commenting upon the behavior of the police: “¡Así trabaja la policía en este país! ¡Por supuesto que es mucho más cómodo pensar que Ramón me ha dejado que ponerse a buscarlo!” ‘That’s how the police work in this country! Of course it is much more convenient to think that Ramón has left me than to start looking for him!’ (24). Clearly Lucía believes Inspector García, a representative of the State, to be working under the patriarchal order, assuming that her husband has left her. García’s response does not do much to prove his interest in helping Lucía, never losing his bored expression as he explains that they are looking for Ramón: they have checked hospitals, morgues, train and bus stations, as well as the airport. But then he finishes by noting the date – December 31, the equivalent to April Fool’s Day in Spain – and that people have parties to go to, that people suddenly have the desire to change their lives, and that Lucía should just wait a few days. After describing García and imagining the many women who have had to deal with this inferior detective, Lucía states that she felt nauseated and
had to leave. She finishes by saying: “No se puede decir que aquella primera entrevista fuera un éxito” ‘You can’t say that that first interview was a success’ (25). It is pretty clear at this point that the police, especially García, are not going to be a great help in finding Ramón.

Soon after Lucía’s first meeting with García, after she has also met Félix and told him the story of Ramón’s disappearance, Lucía receives a message from the organization Orgullo Obrero (‘Worker’s Pride). The message from Orgullo Obrero states that they have kidnapped Lucía’s husband and want two hundred million pesetas for his safe return. Of course the message also states that Lucía should not inform the police or she will regret it. Lucía calls García so that he can hear the tape and help her get Ramón back safely. Lucía and her neighbor Félix meet with García to listen to the tape and try to figure out the next step to take. As soon as Lucía and Félix arrive to meet with García, the inspector asks to hear the tape. After listening, García expresses that he has a doubt and proceeds to ask Lucía and Félix if he should have a cognac: it is, after all, New Year’s Day, but he is on duty. While they stare at him stupefied, he orders a beer saying that a beer is no big deal, irritating Lucía. She wants to know if everything Orgullo Obrero says is true: could they have really kidnapped him, who are they, and what will the police do now. García responds that he has to speak to some experts but that Lucía should not pay the ransom and that the police will know if she does. Lucía responds that she does not have any money and cannot do what the kidnappers ordered, to which García responds that she must not pay the ransom. This goes on for a few lines until García finally says that he has to leave and that he will be in contact with her. Lucía and Félix note that García is a horrible detective: “…de todos los policías del Estado, nos había tocado el más estúpido” ‘…of all the policeman of the State, we had gotten the dumbest’ (39). Lucía is aware that this representative of the Law that has been propped up into the position of the Other is not listening.

After Félix and Lucía arrive back at her place, Lucía receives flowers with a letter from Ramón telling her that there is money in a safety deposit box in the bank and to pay Orgullo Obrero. Lucía and Félix decide to go the next day to the bank to get the money. The next day starts with Lucía, in the third person, claiming: “Después de su conversación con el inspector García, Lucía Romero había decidido no contar nada a la policía sobre la carta de Ramón y el dinero de la caja de seguridad” ‘After her conversation with Inspector García, Lucía Romero had decided not to tell the police anything about Ramón’s letter or the money in the safety deposit box’ (41). It is from this moment on that Lucía begins her own investigation to find her husband,
realizing that García, the Law, is not going to be of any help. Lucía begins to act out and will continue to act out in this manner, a detective search, for the remainder of the novel.

**The Other is Missing: The Detective Story as a Quest for Knowledge**

In her feminist analysis, Postlewate refers to another event in the novel that also demonstrates Lucía’s hysterical subjectivity in a Lacanian approach. After having mishandled the money drop to the kidnappers, Lucía and her two new friends, Félix and Adrián, receive flowers with a note from the kidnappers. In the note, Lucía is told that if she should fail again, she will never see her husband alive. Postlewate describes Lucía’s reaction to this note as confused because Lucía believes that she has only acted in Ramón’s best interest the whole time. This, in turn, causes Lucía to re-evaluate her life and sense of responsibility for the events in it. She feels guilty and blames herself for her husband’s kidnapping and her parents’ failed marriage, along with many other unhappy events in her life. Postlewate notes that “this situation provides an example of how the events within the detective story not only foreground the narrator’s personal life but also force a re-evaluation” (135). But what is it that Lucía is forced to re-evaluate? She feels that she has been doing what is best for her husband and for everyone else in her life up until this point. However, she now feels a strong sense of guilt, typical of an hysterical subject, and must look back on what she has been doing. Lucía must re-evaluate her life – how she has been living her life and how her relationships have been maintained. She must reflect and decide if she has been a good daughter, a good wife, and, essentially, a good woman. Postlewate finishes by arguing that this structure and coinciding process “highlight the flaws of a patriarchal society and present a critique of the traditional roles of women” (135).

This chain of events, however, appears slightly different when viewed through a Lacanian lens. While the conclusion is viewed similarly, the ethical focus is different as only women can take this ethical pose (presented by Postlewate) as a model. At the same time, the feminist stance will understate the hysterical structures that are inherent in the psychoanalytic reading. This reading focuses on different complex behaviors and values which, although presented by Rosa Montero as an ethical model that Spanish women can follow, could theoretically be used by men or women.
Lucía’s reaction upon reading the note, which states that her husband will die if the kidnappers do not get the money, is of great concern. However, the concern, discomfort, and fear are not for the life of her husband; rather, she is afraid that everything is her fault – her husband’s kidnapping, her parents’ unhappy marriage, the inability to get the kidnappers the money, etc. This focus on herself in the face of her husband’s imminent demise shows a common trait of hysterical subjectivity, with the hysteric trying to maintain the focus on herself. As long as she is the object of desire, the attention stays on her, specifically the attention of any other who has stepped in for the Other. Postlewate states that these events cause Lucía to re-evaluate her life and put her personal life into focus. This is true, but it is because of her hysterical subjectivity that her private life is brought to the forefront; without the other present to fill in for the Other, the hysteric, Lucía, is compelled to search for him. Without an Other in her life, the hysteric is at a loss, and unless she can move beyond her hysteria, she must have another subject filling in for the Other, and that is why Lucía goes on her journey.

Lucía is again acting out here, demonstrating again that this hysterical subject is not being heard. In this case, Lucía throws a tantrum wondering if she is to blame for everything negative in her life, thus focusing the attention of her two friends on her. This scene sheds light on yet another reason why Lucía acts out and has her own investigation into the disappearance of her husband. As an hysterical subject, Lucía acts out in such a way because the kidnappers are not listening to her; the failed attempt at paying them means nothing. It must be noted that in this case Lucía acts out and prohibits jouissance, causing the kidnappers to demonstrate they are not paying attention and in turn forcing Lucía to act out again. She continues the investigation with the help of Félix and Adrián, misleading the authorities when she has to while still researching with her two friends. Modeling her investigation after Inspector García’s, Lucía finds sources that provide her with valuable information through her friends or accidentally; she is called upon by others who think she could provide them with information, unaware that they are actually imparting information that she desires.

This quest for information upon which Lucía embarks is modeled after a detective’s investigation, García’s to be exact. Postlewate observes the modeling of the investigation, marking the similarities between the detective story that Montero provides through Lucía and the detective stories found in the novela negra (black novel) that became popular in post-Franco
Spain. Postlewate is arguing that Montero is using her detective story as a way to highlight gender differences, specifically within the realm of an investigation. One way to see the difference is through detective novels in English which, according to Slavoj Žižek in *Looking Awry*, demonstrate two different styles: Sherlock Holmes and Philip Marlowe. Žižek discusses the difference between a Sherlock Holmes type detective, the classic detective, and a Philip Marlowe detective, the hard-boiled detective. The Sherlock Holmes detective is an obsessive subject, structuring his investigation in a very fixated and controlled manner. The Philip Marlowe detective follows a more hystericized path, becoming involved with the suspects, typical of the *novela negra*.

Marisa Postlewate, in her article “The Use of the Detective Story Framework as a [Pre]text For Self-Realization in *La hija del caníbal*,” notes the popularity of the *novela negra* in post-Franco Spain, remarking that it is modeled after the American hard-boiled tradition. Both types of detective story vary from the traditional tale employing detectives who are not obsessive nor in control of the situation, though they may think they are for most of the story. According to Postlewate, there are two main functions of the *novela negra*: “to solve the mystery and to present and/or try to correct the socio-political crisis in a given society” (131). This is a great difference between the *novela negra* (and the American hard-boiled tradition) and the classical detective story. There is only one main function in the classical detective story, and that is to solve the mystery at hand. Readers of this tradition will not encounter a social or political commentary, just a mystery. It must also be noted that men author the majority of detective fiction, with Spain being no exception. This is the difference that Postlewate analyzes and utilizes for her reading of Montero’s novel. The socio-political crisis that Spain has gone through is the dictatorship of Franco and the aftermath of his death, resulting in the crisis of subjectivity for the men and women of Spain. Postlewate’s classification of Montero’s novel as *novela negra* is yet another reason why a Lacanian reading works so well with the novel. The subjects in the novel, especially Lucía as the hysterical subject, are struggling to come to terms with desire, the Other, and the Symbolic Order.

Postlewate is attempting to demonstrate that Montero’s novel is in dialogue with the detective stories of the *novela negra* tradition. Montero’s novel serves as a model of the difference between women’s texts within the detective story genre versus men’s texts. Postlewate notes that the structure of the detective story functions as a “[pre]text in the female
protagonist’s search for self-realization” (131). That is to say, in the case of Montero’s novel, Lucía’s investigation is really her attempt to liberate herself from the laws and constraints of the patriarchal order. She is attempting to be independent, moving from the subordinate position of Ramón’s wife to being Lucía, the writer. From this reading of the novel, and from Postlewate’s analysis, it is easy to see how the detective story in La hija del caníbal is read against the novela negra. In post-Franco Spain, as previously noted, women are still struggling to find autonomy and their own positions within society. Having this reflected in Montero’s novel demonstrates the author’s commentary on the social and the political situation in Spain. Montero is “one of Spain’s most read and readable authors” according to Postlewate, and is therefore able to write a popular novel that is also a socio-political critique of Spain (132).

The socio-political critique is not the only similarity between Montero’s novel and the novela negra. Postlewate comments that the detective within the novela negra tradition is an accidental detective or a non-professional. Lucía fits in with this definition, following an hysterical line of reasoning, as is suited to her hysterical subjectivity, instead of the classical obsessive and logical reasoning of the traditional detective. There is, however, a point where Postlewate slips in comparing Lucía as a detective, referring to a traditional detective instead of one found within the novela negra. Shortly after discussing Lucía’s renewed sense of guilt upon reading the kidnapper’s note, Postlewate compares this to a detective story. The critic slips, comparing the protagonist with a traditional detective instead of the detective from the novela negra tradition as she has been doing throughout the article. Postlewate states that Lucía’s “sense of guilt highlights the negative effect of a relationality and it makes Lucía doubt herself – an uncommon trait in a professional ‘male’ detective who always appears to be in control” (135). This type of detective belongs to the classic detective story, a detective who is involved in an obsessive search for the truth, following the clues with logic and calculation. The detective of the American hard-boiled detective story or from the novela negra uses his intuition to solve the mystery and never really has control of the situation. Postlewate has been reading Montero’s protagonist against this last tradition, so upon commenting that the sense of guilt that Lucía feels is uncommon in the male tradition, she errs in the analysis, switching to a dialogue with the traditional detective story.

Raymond Chandler has been an important figure in the evolution of the detective story and is considered one of two authors known for the creation and refinement of the hard-boiled
detective with his character Philip Marlowe (the other creator/author is Dashiell Hammett and his detective Sam Spade). Chandler takes up the discussion of the hard-boiled detective novel versus the traditional detective novel in his essay “The Simple Art of Murder.” In his analysis, Chandler acknowledges what is known as the Golden Age of the detective story, calling it as such because most detective fiction still follows the English formula. He also disapproves of the critics who do not credit the hard-boiled detective as actually being a detective story. When discussing Dashiell Hammett, who was considered by the Detection Club to be the only “first-class writer [that] had written detective stories at all” in the period after World War I, Chandler has a lot to say about Hammett’s detective fiction (13). Raymond Chandler notes that Hammett is known for his hard-boiled detective fiction, but is dismayed by critics and readers who claim that Hammett did not write detective stories but rather hard-boiled fiction about life on the streets with a touch of mystery thrown in almost as an afterthought. He notes that some of these negative responses come from some “badly scared champions of the formal or classic mystery who think that no story is a detective story which does not post a formal and exact problem and arrange the clues around it with neat labels on them” (16). Clearly the hard-boiled detective story takes a much different route than the traditional or classic mystery, not relying upon carefully laid out clues and a stiff line of logic.

The hard-boiled detective story looks at the seamy underside of society, portraying crime and violence unsentimentally as the harsh reality that a true detective would face. Hammett’s Sam Spade and Chandler’s Philip Marlowe serve as exemplary models for the attitude of the hard-boiled detective who is cocky and flippant. The detective found in hard-boiled fiction, sometimes called noir fiction, works on his own and plays the role of the tough guy, displaying his machismo in his behaviors (smoking, drinking) and his hangouts (shady bars). This detective does not follow the rules and has no problem shooting a criminal if necessary. His downfall is his penchant for beautiful ladies who many times turn out to be the femme fatale of the story and the one truly in control of the situation and mystery that the detective is trying to solve. Though some critics classify hard-boiled detective fiction as noir, noir fiction can more accurately be called a sub-genre. The novela negra shares many similarities with the hard-boiled novel, but its relation to noir fiction is even more analogous, beyond the fact that both refer to fiction being “black.” George Tuttle provides insight into noir fiction in his online article “What Is Noir?” which is based upon an article he wrote for Mystery Scene magazine in 1994. Tuttle states that
in *noir* fiction “the protagonist is usually not a detective, but instead either a victim, a suspect, or a perpetrator. He is someone tied directly to the crime, not an outsider called to solve or fix the situation.” Tuttle also notes that the main characters are compounded by their self-destructive qualities, something that is especially noticeable within the detective.

The *novela negra* made its appearance in Spain in the 1970s, this detective fiction emerging without any significant model in Spanish fiction. In “Realism Revisited: Myth, Mimesis and the *Novela Negra,*” John Macklin notes that the modern Spanish detective novel tends toward the hard-boiled detective tradition. In an endnote, referred to after noting that the term *novela negra* has supporters and detractors, Macklin states that “this term follows the designation of *roman noir* given by French intellectuals to the novels of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Chester Himes, just as the term *film noir* applied to the American cinema, often based on the work of these novelists, in the 1940s” (71). Upon seeing this endnote, which is referred to on the second page of the article, the reader is already clued into the fact that the *novela negra* follows the line of hard-boiled/noir detective fiction, and not the traditional or classic tradition. Also important in understanding the *novela negra* tradition is how the mystery is solved – by logic and deduction or intuition and other means. Macklin affirms that in the *novela negra*: “the solution of the crime does not depend on real detection, for although there is the detail of the glove which implies that the death is not a suicide, what is discovered comes about through chance and information from old police files and contacts on the fringes of society” (58-59). This statement proves to be valuable in analyzing *La hija del caníbal,* as the majority and the most valuable of information comes from Félix’s underground friends.

Something interesting can be found in Macklin’s description of the roles that the women play in the *novela negra.* Macklin notes that “as one would expect” the women are often relegated to lowly roles such as prostitutes and strippers or singers and “long-suffering girlfriends” (59). While the reader can possibly relate Lucía from *La hija del caníbal* to a long-suffering wife, the majority of characters she meets are men. Since the role of the detective has been regendered by Montero, perhaps the author decided to regender the characters who are consigned to the subordinate and lowly roles in society. This seems to apply, as Macklin goes on to describe these feminine characters stating that “their depiction is seldom positive… Generally, they have a negative effect upon the hero, who is frequently knocked unconscious or disabled by the female villain’s henchmen” (59). Lucía is continually inhibited by men in the story, not only
by the group *Orgullo Obrero* but also by her husband, who is actually part of the group, and by García who is supposed to be investigating the crime. And then there is the scene where Adrián is knocked unconscious for trying to help Lucía and Félix when they are being robbed. Apparently, when Montero decided to regender the detective in the *novela negra*, she did not stop there. Montero regendered the villain, or the *femme fatale*, demonstrating a clear understanding of the *novela negra* tradition and making it her own.

Though the *novela negra* began its evolution shortly before the death of Francisco Franco, the detective novel in Spain did not become popular until the 1990s. The reasons behind this are also why authors such as Rosa Montero are providing models or ethical stances for their readers to adopt in post-Franco Spain. Renée W. Craig-Odders comments upon this detective trend in her article “Shades of Green: The Police Procedural in Spain.” Craig-Odders observes that just as the hard-boiled novel emerged much later in Spain than its North American counterpart, subsequent to the political and social liberalization that began in the late 1960s, the police procedural also appeared much later. The relative scarcity of the police novel in Spain also correlates directly to the long standing public perception of the paramilitary police system as the corrupt enforcer of fascist rule under Franco which was reflected in the negative portrayal of the police typical to the detective novels of the post-transition years. (103)

This perception is still noticeable in novels written in more recent years by authors such as Rosa Montero, Eduardo Mendoza, and Manuel Vásquez Montalbán. As previously discussed, in *La hija del caníbal*, Lucía discovers that Inspector García is involved in the crimes that her husband also took part in and does his best to stop her from finding her missing husband. G.J. Demko discussed the corruption of the police that can be found in Eduardo Mendoza’s novels in his “Landscapes of Crime.” Upon reading a crime novel by Mendoza, the reader will find a detective story that is violent and “depicts the police as corrupt and Spain as a second-rate country.”

The detective of the *novela negra* comes from the outskirts of society and from the dark underbelly of society. They are people who would never be found as a detective in the traditional detective story. The *novela negra* detective is an outsider, an other, who may accidentally become a detective in the story, but who always has some relationship with characters from the dark underworld. Demko also takes a moment to discuss the detectives that
can be found in Montalbán and Mendoza’s novels, and several other authors’ detectives. Montalbán’s detective, Pepe Carvalho is a rather popular character in Spanish fiction, but also embodies the traits of the novela negra detective. Demko observes these characteristics when discussing Carvalho as “a violent, former Marxist, former CIA agent with a call-girl assistant,” unmistakably different from the traditional detective as a good guy cop. Demko also discusses Eduardo Mendoza’s novela negra detective, one who noticeably exemplifies this type of detective. The unwitting detective in his novels is Ceferino, a mentally ill schizophrenic who is called upon by the police to solve the crimes that they cannot. There are examples of a good guy cop in the novela negra tradition, though they usually stand out against a corrupt police force. Demko notes this popular exception from “Between 1979 and 1983 Andreu Martín, a Catalan from Barcelona, wrote seven, hard-boiled, violent novels in a series entitled Círculo del Crimen (the Crime Circle). They are all police procedurals in which the hero, Javier Lallana, is the only honest cop among a corrupt force.”

Returning to Marisa Postlewate, Rosa Montero’s novel can be read not only against the tradition and characteristics of the novela negra, but also those of the feminist crime novel. Postlewate cites Sally R. Munt and her analysis of the feminist detective story in Murder by the Book?: Feminism and the Crime Novel. Munt discusses the feminist crime novel, and the traditional detective story, as having a thriller structure. Her description of the detective in the thriller/crime novel also coincides with the traits of the detective and his/her antagonist in the novela negra tradition: “the thriller hero is a liberal hero antipathetic to state bureaucracy and authoritarianism, and can thus be adapted by the feminist to incriminate its agents and representatives…” (198). This description of the protagonist in a crime novel can be seen in the behaviors and traits of Lucía Romero in her dealings with the two representatives of the State that she encounters: Inspector García and Judge María Martina. She and Félix openly comment on the inanity of the inspector, saying that they were given the dumbest detective of them all. After noting this, Lucía plays the part of the innocent, and completely ignorant, victim of a crime. She works against García and any investigation he is supposedly carrying out at the same time as Lucía and her two friends Félix and Adrián. Although Lucía is not openly antagonistic with Judge Martina, she does not proffer the information that she has on the kidnapping, mostly drawing out information that she desires.
The question now is: why the use of the detective story in _La hija del caníbal_? The reader can see that Montero is in dialogue with the novela negra throughout her novel, regendering the typical characters found in her version of this detective story. But why has Lucía, when Ramón disappeared, become a detective and followed the line of a crime novel? There are two reasons with which to answer this question: this investigation is a search for knowledge by the hysterical subject Lucía with several others filling in for the missing Other, and it is a subversive strategy on the part of Montero’s protagonist. The search for knowledge in which Lucía is involved is for more than just information regarding the location of her missing husband. Lucía also needs to find the truth – about where Ramón is, her relationship with her husband, and most importantly, about herself and her place in society. With this knowledge gained, Lucía will be able to accomplish two very different, but very important goals. Lucía will be able to make a move beyond hysteria; that is to say, she will come to terms with her involvement within the Imaginary and come out the other side (I will present this argument later). The other goal accomplished is also the end result of one of the reasons for the detective story within Rosa Montero’s novel. Lucía successfully restructures the Symbolic Order, which is the aim of the subversive strategy that she uses as an hysterical subject.

The Other is most felt in his absence, so when Ramón disappears, Lucía is desperate to find him and prop him up in that place again. During her search for her husband, there are three others that end up filling in for the position of the Other, providing Lucía with the knowledge that she as an hysterical subject seeks. The first other that is propped up into the position of Other is Inspector García providing her not only with information but also with a model upon which she designs her investigation. Judge María Martina also falls into the position of the Other, another representative of the State. These are two agents of the government who fill in for the Other which is very important in Lucía’s hysterical structure as she models her desire after the desire of the Other. While an underground figure does provide Lucía with some answers (Manoel Blanco), it is Li Chao who appears to hold quite a bit of information that Lucía finds helpful in her search for her husband. All of these others who Lucía props up into the position of the Other, are mere replacements of Ramón who was originally propped up into this role. In fact, the Other has been doubled with Ramón and redoubled with Inspector García – there are now two others standing in for the Other.
The Other’s Investigation as Paradox

The first reason for the use of the detective story, an investigation as a search for knowledge, is Lucía’s attempt to discover the location of her missing husband. Her investigation, as I will discuss shortly, is the hysterical subject acting out because the Other is deaf to her. In order to carry out her investigation, as an hysterical subject, she needs to model her desire on the desire of the Other. At this point in the novel, the desire of the Other is to find Ramón, not only Lucía’s husband, but also a man who works for the government himself. Inspector García, the agent in charge of the case, is therefore a representative of the State who is investigating another member of the State. The problem is that the investigation is pure self-referential speech on the part of the Other -- the Other is investigating itself. In other words, not only is the investigation paradoxical, but also the desire of the Other is a sham. Though García, standing in for the Other, demonstrates a hypocritical desire through his sham investigation, as an hysterical Subject, Lucía takes on this desire. Within the structure of hysteria, the subject takes on the desire of the Other as her own desire, effectively desiring through the Other. However, even though the desire of the Other in this case is a sham, the desire of Lucía is what she truly desires, as she believes that it is what the Other truly desires. Eventually, Lucía is able to destabilize the desire of the Other, in effect causing an hystericization of the Other.

Inspector García is an agent of the State, representing much more than just the police force for which he is working. The title of the novel becomes very important at this point, keeping in mind that the literal translation of La hija del caníbal is “The Daughter of the Cannibal.” Two fathers need to be mentioned: the Father of the Law, who is to be looked up to and respected, and the Primal Father, the Lawless Father, who is evil and the father of pure pleasure. As a representative of the State, Inspector García is also a representative of Francisco Franco who can be read as a cannibal, or indeed, the Cannibal. Through García, Lucía is able to take on the desire of the State, which it appears at first to be, at the most basic level, to find the location of Ramón. It is upon this most elementary desire that Lucía models her own desire, structuring her investigation into the disappearance of her husband on that of the State’s, even though that desire is a sham. With this model available, Lucía is not only able to gain information from underground contacts that she desires in order to find her husband, but she is also able to glean knowledge from Inspector García as he fills in for the Other. However, it is at
the end of the novel, when the reader discovers that García is in on the plot with Ramón, that García’s true desire is revealed: he wants to know what Lucía knows about the “kidnapping” and the group Orgullo Obrero. He also desires the information she has on what the State knows, the non-corrupt faction who is really trying to find out information on Ramón and his cohorts.

When Ramón first disappears, Lucía is unsure of what to do and where to turn, knowing only that she must inform the police. From the moment that the authorities are involved, Lucía is aware that she is dealing with representatives of a patriarchal state, one where women are hysterical. The officer tells Lucía that nothing appears odd, and she should just go home and he’ll turn up; these things happen in marriages quite often. Lucía wonders what things happen often, suddenly starting to feel a sense of guilt, as an hysterical subject is prone to do. She says: “El rubor me subió a las mejillas y me sentí culpable, como si la responsabilidad de la desaparición de Ramón fuera de algún modo mía” ‘A blush rose to my cheeks, and I felt guilty, as if the responsibility for Ramón’s disappearance was in some way mine’ (15). This is just the first, and very brief encounter with the Law that Lucía experiences, calling the police station the next morning. She is informed that there has been no news of her husband, and, at her insistence, Lucía is told that she can go and speak with the detectives in charge of missing persons. Lucía follows their suggestion and waits almost an hour before Inspector José García enters the room. Unfortunately for Lucía, García repeats the same thing as the police at the airport, almost verbatim. After she loses her temper and calling the police lazy, García, still looking bored claims that “Sí que le buscamos. Hemos seguido la rutina habitual. Todos los hospitales, todos los centros de primeros auxilios, todas las estaciones de tren y autobús. Y el aeropuerto claro. Además del depósito de cadáveres. No está.” ‘Of course we are looking for him. We have followed the normal routine. All of the hospitals, all first aid centers, all train and bus stations. And the airport of course. As well as the morgue. He is not there’ (24). Of course, keeping in mind that this investigation is a sham, one must note that Inspector García does not look in any place that would be related to Ramón. It is Lucía who looks in Ramón’s office for clues into his disappearance, and searches places not in the normal routine. Lucía spends the next few moments describing the inspector and the images she has called to mind before feeling nauseous and leaving.

Even though Lucía has already started looking into her husband’s disappearance, she returns to the police, even though it is only to model her investigation after theirs, and because
Félix says she should. The day after returning to the airport, the phone rings and Lucía hears a man leaving a message claiming to be from the group Orgullo Obrero, stating that they have her husband and they want two hundred million pesetas (nearly $1.6 million). Lucía plays the message for Félix who states that they need to go to the police, which the kidnappers of course have told her not to do. Félix reminds Lucía that everyone says that and that everyone knows that the victim will go to the police anyway, so they decide to see what García will have to say and what he will do. After asking for their advice on whether or not he should drink, Inspector García listens to the tape and informs Lucía and Félix that he has never heard of the group Orgullo Obrero, that Ramón has obviously been kidnapped, that he does not know if Ramón is alive and will remain that way, and finally, that if Lucía should pay the ransom, she will go to jail. Lucía becomes enraged asking how it is fair to arrest her, remarking that she cannot even pay it, she does not have the money. García continues to accuse her of wanting to pay the money, reminding her that she will be arrested, while she keeps saying that she does not have the money to pay the ransom. This scene is exemplary of the Other being deaf to the hysterical subject, causing her to repeatedly act out.

Lucía receives a message from Orgullo Obrero demanding that she buy a small Samsonite, return home to fill it with the money, and go back to the mall to “return” the suitcase where they will take the money. With Félix and Adrián in tow, Lucía waits in the returns line with Félix who promptly faints. When Félix comes to, Lucía looks to the place where he is staring and notices Inspector José García. She states that she saw:

el rostro pilongo e inconfundiblemente estúpido del inspector José García. El corazón se me detuvo durante una décima de segundo, y en ese tiempo pensé todo lo que tenía que pensar para la ocasión. Por supuesto, me dije, soy una idiota: ¿cómo no me iba a controlar la policía? Probablemente incluso tenía el teléfono intervenido. Era obvio que el inspector nos estaba vigilando, si bien todavía no se había dado cuenta de que le habíamos descubierto

the shriveled and undoubtedly stupid face of Inspector José García. My heart stopped for a tenth of a second, and in that time I thought about everything I had to think about in that kind of situation. Of course, I told myself, I’m an idiot: how would the police not control me? They probably even had the phone tapped. It was obvious that the inspector was watching us, that is if he still hadn’t realized that we had discovered him. (74)
Lucía has not only taken it upon herself to follow her own investigation, but she is also starting to think like a detective. She and Félix have spotted Inspector García as he spies on them, and she realizes that the police would of course have tapped her phone and possibly even set up a stakeout to see what she is doing. It appears that García is not only carrying out a paradoxical investigation of the state, but that he is mainly focusing his investigation on Lucía. Because Lucía has modeled her investigation, and desire, on that of the Other, Lucía and the State share the same desire, as is commonly found in hysterical structures. As an hysteric, Lucía will also try to get the State to provide her with questions or information, but she will never provide the same for them.

Lucía has found the cell phone that Ramón kept, and decides to call the last number that was called and see who it is. Lucía speaks to the man who answers: he says that he does not know any Ramón and hangs up on her. A minute later the man calls back and Lucía says that she is speaking for Ramón, that yes, he has told her everything, and that she would like to meet up with him. Realizing that she may have just set up a meeting with Ramón’s kidnapper, possibly even a killer, Lucía and her friends decide that the cops must be involved yet again. Inspector García is called and he finds this clue to be very interesting, telling Lucía that her investigation has gone well. “Muy interesante. Importante pista. Bien hecho. La cita. La llamada. Mañana iremos todos” ‘Very interesting. An important clue. Well done. The date. The call. Tomorrow we will all go’ (149). Lucía has just provided the State, García, with the information that he desires – what is it that Lucía has learned and now knows about the disappearance of her husband. Lucía has inadvertently provided the Other, García propped up into this position, with what he desires, in this case information. The reader discovers later in the book that the information that García has truly been desiring throughout the novel is the information that Lucía has on the disappearance of her husband and all the factors involved, proving that his investigation this whole time has been a sham. In this scene, García is pleased to see that she has learned something more, and it appears that he is happy that Lucía has done his job for him. However, when this man stands up Lucía, García calls her to the police station the next day to show her a newspaper article. A man has been shot and killed, and the inspector believes that is the man to whom Lucía has talked. When the reader learns that García has been involved with the crime since the beginning, one begins to realize that García killed the man or had him killed,
believing that he could provide information to Lucía that would lead Lucía to Ramón and be detrimental to his and Ramón’s criminal acts.

The Eiron as Ethical Stance

Sally R. Munt comments upon the personality traits of the detective in crime fiction comparing him to the detective in the feminist story. The reader must assume that when Munt is discussing these comparisons, she refers to what is considered to be the traditional or classic detective novel as just the detective novel and the feminist novel as a sub-genre of the hard-boiled detective novel or the novela negra. Munt states that “in establishing the formal compatibilities between the detective novel form and the feminist the description of the eiron seems to epitomize the feminist sleuth’s battle with the patriarchy” (197). This portrayal of the feminist detective as an eiron is a significant and insightful word choice on the part of the critic. Not only does the word eiron reveal something about the character of the feminist detective but it illuminates the traits of the patriarchy and the agents/representatives of the State, who play the eiron’s opposite, the alazon. The eiron and the alazon were characters common in Greek comedies and work well as titles for the characters that Munt discusses. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, an eiron is one who “pretends to be less intelligent than he really is, and whose modesty of speech contrasts with the boasting of the stock braggart or alazon”.

In modeling her investigation after that of the Other, Lucía has adopted the ethical stance of hysteria in order to restructure the Symbolic Order, just as the eiron is a mask to defeat the alazon. The eiron is a character that has adopted a mask of ignorance or stupidity in order to fool the alazon and prove that he is actually smarter than the alazon. Like the eiron to the alazon, the hysterical subject will attempt to gain a certain vantage point with relation to the Other, in the end forcing a restructuring. In both cases, a mask has been adopted in order to deal with this situation in which these subjects have been interpolated. Both ethical stances are provided by the authors for their audiences to adopt in the current political and social situation in which they find themselves. The eiron has typically been used in ancient Greek plays as an example for the masses, while the hysterical subject being used in this case is a stance available for Spanish women in the post-Franco era. Sally Munt's use of the word eiron in discussing the
psychoanalytic feminist crime novel demonstrates that the hysterical mask or model is just that - a mask. While the eiron is actually trying to outwit the alazon, the hysteric is attempting to restructure the Other, or the Symbolic Order.

Lucía has gotten her first glimpse into the police investigation of the disappearance of her husband, commenting that this first meeting was not a success. Lucía had gone to speak with someone to gain knowledge about what had happened to Ramón: the Other is now missing and needs to be filled once again or replaced. Disappointed and lacking knowledge she had hoped to learn, Lucía heads back to the home she shared with Ramón, beginning her own investigation into her husband’s disappearance. She models her search after the investigation of the police, specifically Inspector García, and has now become a detective herself. She has become an inspector in her own right, and will do what she can to provoke the Other into asking her a question or provide her with information. Lucía, knowing the importance of clues, enters Ramón’s home office to look around and see if there is anything that might suggest why he disappeared. In fact, Lucía does a very thorough “police investigation” when she enters the apartment, stating: “Miré y remiré por todo el cuarto antes de atreverme a tocar nada” ‘I looked and looked again around the room before I dared to touch anything’ (25-26). By modeling her desire on the desire of the Other, here modeling her investigation into the disappearance of her husband after the investigation of the State/García, she has done exactly what he has done – looked for her husband.

Finally, in her quest for information, Lucía finds a clue, learning that her husband had a cell phone that she did not know about. Upon encountering the bill for this clandestine phone, Lucía also notes that the majority of the outgoing calls are to international numbers. Again taking more action than she has seen the police do, she picks up the phone and calls several of the numbers listed. Upon listening, Lucía realizes that all of the numbers are for phone sex hotlines, understanding that she does not really know who her husband is. A short while later, Lucía hears a knock on the door; her neighbor Félix has come to listen and help in any way he can. She soon tells him the whole terrible story and draws him into the mix, getting him involved in the investigation. At his suggestion, he and Lucía head to the airport to look in the bathroom for any trapdoors, false walls, or other secret exits. Getting frustrated at finding nothing, Félix shouts an absurd thought (Lucía’s husband has been taken out in a wheelchair by a chaqueta roja (red jacket), and Lucía realizes the simplicity, and veracity, of this claim. Lucía has begun her
investigation into the disappearance of her husband because the State, the Other, is not listening to her. All they can say is that these things happen, that he will most likely show up, and that they have looked for him following protocol. As an hysterical subject, Lucía realizes that the Other is deaf and is pushed into acting out in the form of this investigation. She and Félix also realize that inspector Garcia is suspicious, and Lucía attempts to hide information from him at the same time that she tries to glean information from him.

After meeting with Garcia to discuss the message left by Orgullo Obrero, Lucía and Félix return home to find a note from Ramón explaining that he has put a great amount of money in a safe deposit box under both his and Lucía’s names. Lucía and Félix realize that they can now pay the ransom, really taking control of the situation, with Lucía’s investigation truly moving forward. She and Félix have decided not to inform the police of any of the developments in the disappearance of Ramón and will not do so in the future. Modeling her investigation on that of a State investigation, Lucía brings Félix along in the search for her husband, as if he is her partner. The two partners head to the bank to withdraw the money and take it back home, where they are attacked by men who try to steal the money. It is this scene where a third “investigator” enters onto the scene: Adrián, their young neighbor, helps to stop the thieves and gets injured. Félix and Lucía take him in, eventually trusting him so much (in three days) that they inform him of the entire situation. Lucía now leads an investigation into the disappearance of her husband with her two friends helping her when she needs it. With the help of her two neighbors and good friends, Lucía will be able to follow the leads that she feels are important and to take action while the police sit back and expect Ramón to just appear.

Lucía’s investigation becomes more discreet and clandestine, realizing that the police are trying to follow her to discern what information she has on the disappearance of her husband. Like the detective from the American hard-boiled tradition and the novela negra, Lucía turns to sources that work underground, on the outskirts of society. Though Lucía does not personally know anyone belonging to this sect, Félix has many associates that he met through his time fighting on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. This connection that Lucía has through Félix is an important one as Félix is now a part of the unwritten history, the losers of the Civil War and Franco, The Primal Father, was the winner. This investigation by Lucía has been an acting out against the State, and Franco is the evil Father, the ultimate Other, representative of the Symbolic Order that Lucía is trying to restructure. Inspector García has been propped up into
the position of the Other in its absence, and in fact is actually a redoubling of the Other. And although Lucía has been carrying on the investigation into Ramón’s disappearance on her own (with the help of her two friends), she turns back to García long after she has paid off the kidnappers and Ramón still has not appeared. Lucía seems to need to know the desire of the Other in this situation so that she can continue her investigation, having persisted in modeling her desire on the desire of the Other.

Although Lucía is inadvertently helping Inspector García by calling him and informing him of the man she is planning to meet, Lucía is also getting something out of this. When García informs Lucía that she has done a good job, he is confirming that Lucía has modeled her desire on the desire of the Other correctly. And Lucía and her friends are starting to realize that what García truly desires, is not what they have thought it to be. After they meet with him to discuss the killing of the informant that Lucía was supposed to meet, Félix notes that there is more to García than they originally expected. Félix says: “Tengo la sospecha de que no te puso la escolta para protegerte, sino para usarte de cebo y detener a Urbano si intentaba ponerse en contacto contigo… En realidad, no creo que tú hayas corrido nunca ningún riesgo” ‘I have the suspicion that they did not provide a guard to protect, but instead to use you as bait to detain Urbano [the informant] since he intended to get in contact with you… In reality, I do not believe that you ever were in any danger’ (152). It has become clear to the trio of friends that Inspector García is not interested in the investigation in the way they thought he was. Just as the eiron is able to defeat the alazon, Lucía as the hysteric is able to get what she wants out of the Other, in this case information. She and her friends have learned that Inspector Garcia is not truly investigating the disappearance of Ramón like they thought he was. Lucía is acting out, and she has learned that Inspector Garcia’s investigation is really a sham.

Both the eiron and the hysteric are ethical stances used as subversive strategies to defeat or restructure the alazon or the Other. While hysteria typically has been a feminine illness throughout history, that is not to say that there cannot be a male hysteric. Although it seems to be a malady thrust upon a woman, it can be accepted by the subject as the position into which she has been interpolated and then used to restructure the Symbolic Order. As discussed in Chapter Two, Pedro Almodóvar inscribed his characters, many times male, with hysteria. Brad Epps discusses Almodóvar's use of hysteria, especially in his male characters, and the undermining strategy being used by the director. Epps discusses the region wearing of hysteria
that Almodóvar presents in his article “Hysterical Histrionics: Entertainment and the Economy of Mental Health in *What Have I Done to Deserve This* and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*.” Epps discusses the transvestite Fabio’s declaration that he is an hysteric as more than just a casual comment. Epps states that it is “an hysterical, transvestite impulse in knowledge -- here, specifically, psychoanalytic knowledge -- which threatens the sure casting of subjects in terms of masculine power and feminine powerlessness” (198). Hysteria is used as a subversive strategy in Almodóvar's films merely because of a regendering of the role of the hysteric.

The current study is not the only one to relate the subversive nature of hysteria and the possibility of it being used to undermine the Symbolic Order. Brad Epps looks at the history of hysteria, adding his voice to those of many critics and psychoanalysts before him. “Hysteria, as I have indicated, involves a crisis of categories and classes, an errant diffusion of bodily signs and symptoms, that many critics have championed as a strategy of resistance” (202). The hysteric attempts to have the Other do her bidding and force a restructuring, rather than just submitting to the Symbolic Order and its boundaries. The hysteric is not only typically feminine, but the female is also typically hysterical, thoroughly a negative classification. Epps cites Hélène Cixous, *La jeune née* (“The Newly Born Woman”), to demonstrate how old hysteria can be viewed as resistant or subversive. Epps claims that Cixous has turned Dora, Freud's infamous hysterical patient, into a universal heroine when she states that “the hysteric is... the typical woman in all her force” (203). This would seem to suggest that it is not hysteria that is typically feminine, but that it is the feminine that is typically hysterical, and that this is what makes women the strong, feminine, and great forces that they are. To emphasize the subversive nature of the hysterical mask and strategy, Epps states that “Through Cixous, hysteria is essentialized as revolutionary femininity” (203). Indeed, Lucía uses a subject position into which she has been interpolated to her advantage, using hysteria as a way in which to restructure the Symbolic Order, and deal with desire and the Other.

**The Detective Story as Subversive Strategy**

Sally Munt discusses the feminist detective as running her investigation and behaving like an eiron, pretending that she is not as smart as a male detective. This mention of the eiron works
well against the discussion of Lucía’s hysterical subjectivity as an ethical stance. Both the eiron and the hysterical are masks that are being worn by the characters in an attempt to achieve a certain outcome. By adopting the term eiron to represent the female detective, Munt is also providing evidence for the psychoanalytic reading. Since Munt chooses the term eiron for the female detective, like Lucía, it demonstrates the mask that this detective wears and underlines the fact that the hysterical mask is just that, a mask. In fact, the hysterical mask that Lucía has assumed seems to reflect some of the traits of the mask of the eiron. As an hysterical subject, Lucía attempts to gain information from the Other, trying to get the Other to ask her what she wants and to supply her with information by acting out and feigning ignorance. The hysterical mask seems to include a bit of the eiron mask, both being mere ethical stances adopted by Lucía in an attempt to come to terms with desire and ultimately restructure the Symbolic Order. And in the end, the reader understands that Lucía’s hysteria is an ethical stance that she adopted, and in fact is an option for an ethical stance that she too can take.

Lucía becomes a detective of her husband’s disappearance at first unwittingly and then intentionally, realizing that she and her friends are the only ones really doing any investigating. At first she does not know much about what is going on, but through Félix’s underground contacts and the authorities sometimes letting her know what they know, she ends up knowing more than any figure of the State. However, when Lucía comes upon the figures of Inspector García and Judge Martina later in her investigation, she reveals nothing. Like the eiron, Lucía feigns ignorance about everything she knows regarding Ramón’s disappearance. It is through this contrived ignorance that the eiron is able to triumph over the alazon – by making him/herself appear less than s/he actually is. This is precisely how Lucía is able to discover her husband’s whereabouts and restructure the Symbolic Order. With the Symbolic Order successfully being restructured, the female detective Lucía, the eiron, has outmaneuvered the alazon. Munt has knowingly described the detective in the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel as an intelligent, intuitive, and most importantly, astute and canny investigator.

Even though Munt is analyzing novels in English, her critiques can very easily be applied to Spanish novels such as Montero’s, as Postlewate notes. Munt discusses the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel, a category that *La hija del caníbal* quite easily can fall into, as it supports a psychoanalytic reading such as the present study and a feminist reading that Postlewate executes:
The relationship between the three is somewhat circumferential; nevertheless it articulates a preoccupation with deconstruction/deciphering/destroying the sexism of a powerful cultural discourse concerned primarily with the construction of the individual. Crime fiction offers avenues of transference open to fantasies of destruction and resolution not available in the ‘real’. This fledgling sub-genre, then, with its fantasized feminist gestalts, is firmly positioned within the decade of identity politics that turned inward to ‘the self’ (168-69).

This sub-genre, of the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel, is a combination of features inherent in feminism and psychoanalysis which demonstrate common characteristics. The investigation of the female detective inevitably leads to a search for the self, which in Montero’s novel is readily observed and critiqued by feminism and psychoanalysis, though analyzed differently within each theory. Munt’s classification of the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel is indeed a way to categorize La hija del caníbal. Munt’s reading of the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel works well with Postlewate’s feminist reading and the current psychoanalytic reading, as both analyses can easily be read in dialogue with each other in a critique of the novel.

The American hard-boiled detective novel, noir fiction, the novela negra, the feminist crime novel, and the psychoanalytic feminist detective story are all versions of the same style of detective novel. As for the last style, Munt clarifies by stating that:

Psychoanalytic feminist crime novels appeared in the 1980s, a decade concerned with the self, thus fictions which explore character and identity in the locus of mystery and the key to the investigative hermeneutic can be seen as combining concerns from dominant culture and counter-culture (feminism), concretized in the crime form most sympathetic to women writers, the psychological thriller (206).

This style, the psychoanalytic feminist crime novel, is clearly unique from the classic detective story with its social commentary, unique detective (a woman), and thriller aspect. And unlike the traditional detective novel, all these styles employ detectives or people from the margins of society, mostly those who would never appear as a detective in the classic detective story, such as a violent ex-CIA operative, a schizophrenic mental patient, a boozer, or, as in Rosa Montero’s novel, a woman. Lucía, like the other detectives presented, has connections with characters from the margins of society, although her relationship is indirect, through Félix. She becomes the detective of the crime upon realizing the nescience of the representatives of the State. Like the
novela negra, Lucía is a detective in a society where the police are not only ignorant but also corrupt. The detective story of the novel does not faithfully follow logic, clues left behind, and reason as would that of a traditional or classic detective story. Instead, Lucía follows her intuition, recognizing that some of the clues (for example the letters Ramón supposedly received from Orgullo Obrero before his kidnapping which the judge shows her) do not make sense in the context of the crime. Lucía solves the crime her own way – with her friends helping her, interviewing characters from the underground society, following her instincts, and forcing García to take her, Félix, and Adrián to Ramón in the end when he attempts to kidnap her.

The detective story found in Montero’s novel, read in dialogue with the novela negra, is a subversive strategy on the part of the author to restructure the Symbolic Order. The novela negra has become popular in Spain, with the detectives found in these novels, the classic detectives, are almost always men. By placing a female character into the role of detectives, as she has done with Lucía, Rosa Montero is attempting to restructure the patriarchal norms within Spain's post-Franco society, and the novela negra tradition. Montero’s protagonist, Lucía, works well against the novela negra tradition; however, her choice is subversive, not only because the detective is female, but also because she has adopted an hysterical ethical stance. This hysterical structure, though typically seen as feminine throughout history, has been adopted by Spanish men in post-Franco society, struggling to come to terms with the Symbolic Order. The hysterical mask itself is subversive as it is an attempt to come to terms with desire and get what one wants from the Other, in effect restructuring the Symbolic Order. Montero’s use of hysteria in dialogue with the novela negra is the author’s way of subversively restructuring the novela negra and the Symbolic Order. Sally Munt describes a psychoanalytic feminist crime novel, a category into which Montero’s novel falls cleanly, providing a female detective in the search for autonomy and a way to come to terms with desire and the Other.

Rosa Montero grew up during Francisco Franco's dictatorship, working as a reporter until after his death, when she began to write fiction. La hija del caníbal was published just over twenty years after Franco's death, while Spanish people were still struggling to understand and live within the new society. Uncertainty about the corruption of the police and the government still lingered in the minds of Spaniards. There are still many women who are housewives and stay-at-home moms, more so than the European countries surrounding them. Men still hold most of the jobs, including the ones typically ascribed to men in the novela negra. The men in
Montero’s novel still hold some traditional jobs, such as García as the detective and Ramón as a government official. However, Montero regenders these roles as part of the subversive strategy of her psychoanalytic feminist crime novel, beginning with her female protagonist Lucía taking on the role of detective. We also see the role of the State being represented by a woman, who is not corrupt like García, in the character María Martina, the judge. Rosa Montero has rewritten the traditional roles, a strategy which undermines the typical novela negra reading. She has not only regendered roles of the detective and the State, but she has also restructured the symbolic order by having her protagonists interpolated into an hysterical subjectivity.

**Hystericization of the Other / Movement Beyond Hysteria**

The State is the Other with Francisco Franco as the fantasy figure that hides behind a façade of the State, the obscene figure hiding in the shadows. Ramón has been a doubling of the State as the Other, and Inspector García is a redoubling of the Other. Félix provides the reader with information about Francisco Franco in explaining the other side of the “official story” of Spain’s history and the Civil War. The reader’s first glimpse of Francisco Franco as the Other is when Félix relates the beginning of the Civil War: “… la asonada de Franco supuso para mí una profundo crisis de conciencia. Volví a sentirme ardiendo de furor anarquista, de solidaridad y de esperanza histórica” ‘Franco’s putsch meant for me a profound crisis of conscience. I again felt a burning anarchist furor, of solidarity and historical hope’ (195). Félix goes on to discuss the war, including the atrocities that occur on both sides, the Republicans and the Nationalists, Franco being the leader of the latter. Félix notes that the atrocities that have occurred on the part of the Nationalists are done so by a disciplined army with the blessing of the authorities. He continues by noting how people were treated after the war had ended: “Después de la guerra civil, todos los españoles fuimos clasificados por nuestra ideología en afectos al Régimen, desafectos e indiferentes. Los desafectos, como puedes imaginar, tenían una vida negra: o estaban en la cárcel o depurados, sus bienes habían sido generalmente confiscados y no podían encontrar trabajo” ‘After the Civil War, all Spaniards were classified by our ideologies towards the Regime, hostile or indifferent. The hostile ones, as you can imagine, had a dark life: they were either in jail or purged, their goods had generally been confiscated and they could not find work’ (242). Through his descriptions of Franco's first intentions up through the years following the Civil
War, Félix has provided the reader with evidence of Francisco Franco as the Cannibal-father, the ultimate Other in Spain.

As Franco is the Other, Lucía's husband Ramón is the doubling of the Other, and inspector García is a redoubling of the Other. Lucía, as an hysteric, feels desperate in the absence of the Other (Ramón), beginning an investigation and acting out against the deafness of the Other (García). Through the constant provoking of the Other, the hysterical pushes him to a point of hystericization. What the hysterical subject has been attempting to provoke the Other into asking her is what the truth is that she is trying to tell him, and it occurs at the end where the Other slips into a momentary hystericization and asks: “what do you want?” The moment of hystericization occurs when Lucía encounters Ramón and Inspector Garcia and their hideout in the country. It will spread from one other to the next, almost like a disease, until there has been a successful restructuring of the Other by an hysteric Lucía. This hystericization of the Other, or what is also called a restructuring of the Symbolic Order, is a subversive strategy by the hysteric. Despite the fact that the subject has been structured by the Symbolic Order, she takes the position into which she has been interpolated as a way to destabilize that structure. This subversive strategy is basically a feminist argument seen through psychoanalysis, as it is a way for the subject to destabilize the patriarchal order.

With a successful restructuring of the Symbolic Order, the hysterical has also been able to achieve what could be called a move beyond hysteria. This move beyond hysteria is a traversal of the hysterical's fantasy, as opposed to an identification with her symptom. This process begins with the scene where Garcia's men attempt to kidnap Lucía but are stopped by Lucía's friend Félix and his gun. Instead of being kidnapped by Garcia's men, Lucía and her friends forced the men to take them to the place where Ramón has been hiding. While Félix and Adrián wait for Lucía with the “kidnappers,” Lucía demands to see Ramón and is shown the way to his room. Upon entering Lucía notes that Ramón is haggard looking and still has not realized that Ramón is involved in the whole crime. Lucía immediately runs to Ramón and hugs and touches him thankful to see that he is alive and well, minus his left pinky finger of course. Although Lucía is not fully aware of Ramón's involvement, she does seem to realize that he has had some part in this, and now it is a Ramón, filling in for the Other, who is lying. Crying, Lucía asks Ramón: "¿pero en qué líos te has metido?” ‘Into what kind of trouble have you gotten involved?’ (302). Ramón's response seems so sincere that Lucía, although she has received information from the
judge Martina, believes him. Ramón says: “Te lo puedo explicar todo. Todo. Me chantajearon. Tuve que hacerlo. Me amenazaron con matarme, con hacerte daño. Tuve que hacerlo” ‘I can explain everything to you. Everything. They blackmailed me. I had to do it. They threatened to kill me, to hurt you. I had to do it’ (302). At the moment of this meeting, however, Lucía is still engaged in an hysterical structure, and attempts to provoke Ramón as the Other to provide her with the information that she desires.

Lucía is still clearly confused and is unsure whether to believe Ramón and feel bad for him or press for further details. Indeed, she ends up sleeping with Ramón with the kidnappers in the other room, realizing that it is in this situation that she has found Ramón the most attractive in the whole time she has known him. As soon as they are finished, Lucía reverts to asking Ramón questions about what is going on – and none of his answers make any sense to her. Finally she notices that Ramón is looking behind her and turns around to see Inspector García watching them, although he has changed his appearance and looks nothing like the detective who was supposedly in charge of the investigation into her husband's disappearance. And it appears that inspector García is actually interested in finally providing Lucía with the truth, telling Ramón to stop screwing her and tell her what is really going on. Ramón tells Lucía that he can explain everything however she turns around and tells him that she doesn't want to hear anything from him but the whole truth. It is García however, who tells Lucía the whole story of what has been going on the whole time, but it is Lucía who has the information that García truly desires. García realizes that Lucía has information that the judge María Martina has given her, information that may clue him in as to what the State knows about Ramón, García, and the other men involved.

It is in this theme that we see a momentary hystericization of the Other, beginning with García and continuing on Ramón. This occurs because as soon as García realizes that Lucía has the information he desires, the roles have reversed. In fact, the hystericization of the other is so strong that not only is García now asking Lucía a question, but he is acting out, as she appears to be deaf. This moment begins when Lucía says:

-Entonces lo que decía la juez Martina era verdad… -murmuré.
-¿Qué decía esa zorra? -preguntó García.
-Ahórrese las zafiedades, si no le importa.
-Vamos, tía, no te pongas finolis que no tenemos tiempo. ¿Qué decía?
“‘So what judge Martina said was true...’” -I murmured.

“What did that slut say?” -asked García.

“Keep your uncouth thoughts to yourself, if you don't mind.”

“Let’s go, woman, don’t get so uptight, we don't have time. What did she say?’” (305)

The reader can see that it is now García, in the position of the Other, who is getting frustrated with Lucía and who is not being heard. It is now García's turn to act out against the deafness of Lucía in an attempt to get Lucía to tell him the information that he desires. Lucía does give García some information though not everything she knows that the judge had told her. She tells the men that the judge knows a Ramón forms part of a corrupt group that includes various ministries and that García is also involved. The only response that Garcia has is that the slut is pretty wise and cunning, while Ramón wants to explain the whole situation to Lucía.

In desiring through the Other, Lucía has been able to model her investigation after the investigation of the State, finding her missing husband Ramón on her own. Although Lucía does not learn the truth behind the investigation of the Other until the end of the novel, there are some clues along the way that this investigation is a sham. And by having one representative of the State, the Other, investigate another representative of the State, the Other, is a paradox. When García asks if he should have a beer, when he appears to be following the three friends in the department store, when he threatens Lucía, and when the witness who could have helped Lucía find her husband and learn the truth ends up murdered, García's actions and investigation become more and more suspicious. On the other hand, Lucía has been able to gain information from him that Garcia did not realize he was providing her. For example, García tells Lucía that they have followed the normal protocol in searching the airports, hospitals, and other common places. Lucía notices that they have not searched the places that would be most fitting of an investigation of a missing spouse. The first place that Lucía searches is Ramón's home office, finding her first clue in a bill for a cell phone that she did not know Ramón had. When the Other truly gets involved, in the form of Judge María Martina, there are more clues about the disappearance of her husband that Inspector García never thought to do. In his office working for the government, Ramón has left behind letters that he received from Orgullo Obrero. All of these things cause Lucía to question García as a representative of the State, providing clues that his investigation is indeed a sham.
During his explanation of the whole situation to Lucía, there is a moment of hystericalization of Ramón. Before he begins, Lucía informs him that she does not want to hear any more lies. Ramón begins his story, interrupted by García several times, discussing how there are different types of people and how he falls between two different groups. García mocks Ramón during his whole story and Lucía just sits there and listens, almost moving her to forgive him. Then she remembers the fear, the anguish, and the lies and deceit, agreeing with him that he is a pig, but a pig with two hundred million pesetas. It is now Ramón's turn to feel that Lucía is deaf to his explanation, Ramón as the Other is now experiencing his own temporary hystericalization. Ramón keeps talking and keeps explaining to Lucía what happened and why, but she is not interested in his excuses. Lucía has not been listening to Ramón, and this pushes him to the breaking point, to hystericalization. After Lucía notes that he just keeps dramatizing things and that he seems to prefer being corrupt and rich to being innocent and not wealthy, Ramón asks the all-important question found in an hysterical structure. “Pues a lo mejor tienes razón. ¿Qué quieres que le haga, Lucía? Las cosas son así. Lo siento” ‘Perhaps you're right. What do you want me to do, Lucía? That's how it is. I'm sorry’ (307). Ramón as Other demonstrates his hystericalization with the key question “What do you want?” The hystericalizations of Ramón, as a doubling of the Other, and García, as a redoubling of the Other, reveal a successful restructuring of the Symbolic Order.

Although there has been a successful hystericalization of the Other, Lucía does not seem to be completely out of her hysterical structure. Just a few pages later, the reader learns that Lucía has still been lying while telling her story. Lucía states: “He mentido. Llevo escritas cientos de páginas para este libro y he mentido en ellas casi tantas veces como en mi propia vida” ‘I have lied. I have written hundreds of pages for this book and I have lied in them almost as much as I have in my own life' (310). The reader is therefore left to question if Lucía has indeed performed a successful restructuring of the Other. Indeed, the reader learns that Lucía still feels guilty, especially in the demise of her relationship with Ramón. “Soy yo la culpable, lo sé bien. Fue a mí quien se le derrumbaron la ilusión y el deseo” ‘I am the guilty one, I know well. It was my illusions and desires that were demolished’ (312). These statements by Lucía make the reader question whether Lucía has been able to accomplish a restructuring of the Other. However, a few pages later, it is clear that Lucía has indeed been able to restructure the Symbolic Order and make a move beyond hysteria.
Success of the Hysterical Strategy

Lucía has assumed an hysterical subjectivity and accepts it, using it as a strategy to get what she desires. Lucía has been desiring through the Other as a strategy not only to come to terms with the Other and desire, but also in order to restructure the Symbolic Order. It is a subversive strategy, presented by Rosa Montero as an ethical stance available to female readers in post-Franco Spain. It is the model that Spanish women can use to come to terms with desire and the Other, providing a subjective position that has not been taken up by the men. Montero speaks through Lucía in the end of the novel providing textual evidence of the validity of the hysterical model within post-Franco Spain:

Ahora que he liberado mentalmente a mis padres, yo también me siento más libre. Ahora que les he dejado ser lo que ellos quieran, creo que estoy empezando a ser yo misma. La identidad es una cosa confusa y extraordinaria. ¿Por qué yo soy yo y no otra persona? Yo podría ser María Martina, por ejemplo, la aguerrida juez con nombre de madre universal;… O incluso podría ser la escritora Rosa Montero, ¿por qué no? Puesto que he mentido tantas veces a lo largo de estas páginas, ¿quién te asegura ahora que yo no sea Rosa Montero y que no me haya inventado la existencia de esta Lucía atolondrada y verborreica, de Félix y de todos los demás? (335-36).

Now that I have mentally freed myself from my parents, I feel more free. Now that I have stopped being what they wanted me to be, I believe that I am beginning to be myself. Identity is a confusing and extraordinary thing. Why am I me and not another person? I could be María Martina, for example, the hardened judge with the name of the universal mother;… Or I could even be the writer Rosa Montero, why not? Given that I have lied so much throughout all these pages, who is so sure that I am not Rosa Montero and that I have not invented the existence of this feather-brained and verbose Lucía, of Félix, and of all the others?

Rosa Montero has spoken directly to the reader, providing evidence to the hysterical subjectivity of her protagonist Lucía is merely a mask, one that can be adopted by the reader. It is the culmination of Lucía's hysterical subjectivity, finally ending in the traversal of the fantasy. In other words, the protagonist has not only been able to restructure the symbolic order, but the
The author has also been able to provide evidence to the reader of the viability of the ethical stance of hysteria.

It is important to note here that the object is not lost, that it has not simply walked away. The object was lost at the beginning of the novel and is what caused the investigation that was undertaken by Lucía. It has been separated through the disintegration of the contours of fantasy space, thereby allowing a traversal of fantasy. Fantasy is the subject's way of answering a question -- it is the subject's response to the enigmatic desire of the Other, his/her way of answering the question about what the Other wants from him/her (Che vuoi?). The subject feels that the Other possesses the object of desire, object a – as in the hysterical subject, Lucía has desired through the Other in order to locate this object. To traverse the fantasy, the subject must acknowledge that the object of desire has fallen away from either him/herself and/or the Other.

According to Bruce Fink in *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*, “the traversing of fantasy leads the subject beyond castration” (195). Fink also discusses the act of the traversal of fantasy in *The Lacanian Subject* when discussing Lacan's reading of *Hamlet*. Fink posits that:

the traversing the fantasy can, not surprisingly, also be formulated in terms of increasing “signifierization” – a turning into signifiers – of the Other’s desire. Insofar as the subject finds, in this further separation, a new position in relation to object a (the Other’s desire), the Other’s desire is no longer simply named… When the cause is subjectified, the Other’s desire is simultaneously fully brought into the movement of signifiers… the subject finally gains access to the signifier of the Other’s desire (65).

Fink goes on to explain using Lacan's reading of *Hamlet*, explaining that it is during Hamlet's duel with Laertes that permits Hamlet to “realize that the king is but a stand-in for the phallus...” (65). Fink's explanation of the traversing of fantasy can be seen in Rosa Montero's novel *La hija del caníbal* when Lucía learns the truth about Ramón and Inspector García. In the end, it has become evident that Ramón is a mere doubling of the Other and García a redoubling – two men have been signifierized and hystericized.

Žižek states in *Looking Awry* that “The real dimension of the threat is revealed when we “traverse” the fantasy, when the coordinates of the fantasy space are lost via hysterical breakdown” (66). The current study is a willful and productive misreading of this quote by Žižek through Lacan, as the object a can fall away from the analyst, and it can also fall away...
from the analysand. And indeed, it appears that object $a$ has fallen away from the analysand, the hysterical subject Lucía. Not only has she directly stated the loss of desire for her husband Ramón, but she also expresses disgust and revulsion of an envelope that reminds her of him. “Les miré, aferrada aún al sobre color pardo y casi asfixiada de congoja. La piel de Ramón. Su carne de hombre mayor, músculos macerados por toda la vida ya vivida.” ‘I looked at them [Félix and Adrián], still clutching the brown envelope and almost asphyxiated with grief. Ramón’s skin. That flesh of an older man, muscles marinated by all of life already lived’ (309).

What the narrator describes is that object $a$ has been cut off, that the object of desire has fallen out of Ramón. This can be better understood by looking at Žižek’s discussion of the male detective of film noir and the femme fatale. The critic discusses the breakdown of fantasy space and a hystericization of the femme fatale. By understanding this process as Žižek relates it, discussing the traversal of fantasy made by the hysterical subject will be much more clear.

There is also the explanation of Anne Dunand who, in her article titled “The End of Analysis (II),” explains the Lacanian concept of traversing or crossing of fantasy. Dunand states that “the subject cannot be identified except by his or her particular link to the object. The so-called crossing of fantasy can be the awareness that such an indispensable object necessarily exists, for its existence determines subject in his or her relation to jouissance and to language” (253). By acknowledging the existence of this object, the subject is recognizing a lack in the Other. For the hysteric, however, the only way that the fantasy space is broken down is through a hystericization of the Other. What is necessary is for object $a$ to be separated from either the analyst, the Other, or the analysand, the hysterical subject. In this case, the hysteric has caused a breakdown of her object: the object is separated because words are gone. This occurs in the scene where García and Ramón are explaining all of their illegal activities to Lucía. “Ni una palabra más. No digas ni una palabra más. No quiero volver a verte. Desaparece.” ‘Not another word. Don’t say another word. I don’t want to see you again. Disappear’ (309). Lucía tells him that she does not want to hear another word, her fantasy has been broken down. It is in this moment of the novel where there has been a traversal of fantasy made by the subject, Lucía. Ramón, who had been a part of Lucía, the cause of desire for her; that part of her has died. She even states directly to the reader that this is the case: “-Se acabó -dije. Me sentí aliviada y un poco muerta” “It’s over,” I said. I felt relieved and a little dead’ (309).
In order for this hysterical subject to make a move beyond hysteria, to traverse the fantasy, there needs to be a breakdown of the coordinates of fantasy space, seen in the discussion by Žižek. When the coordinates of the fantasy space have been broken down, the traversal of fantasy can take place. Žižek discusses the breakdown of the fantasy space of the male detective in his book *Looking Awry* in which the reader can better understand the end of analysis. “The real dimension of the threat is revealed when we “traverse” the fantasy, when the coordinates of the fantasy space are lost via hysterical breakdown. In other words, what is really menacing about the *femme fatale* is not that she is fatal for *men* but that she presents a case of a purer, non-pathological subject fully assuming *her own* fate” (66). This is also true for Lucía in *La hija del caníbal*, although in the case of Rosa Montero’s novel, the hysteretic Lucía has caused the breakdown of her object. When Žižek says that the contours of fantasy space “are lost via hysterical breakdown,” in the case of Lucía and the Other, it should be read as a transitive loss. In other words, one could say that the contours of fantasy space are lost via the hysteretic breakdown of the Other. The breakdown of the Other is seen in the hystericization of the Other, specifically in Lucía's last encounter with Ramón. Lucía has pushed Ramón to the point where he finally asks her what she wants, becoming hysterical and broken down so that the coordinates of fantasy space have disintegrated.

Lacan was opposed to the kind of analysis where the analysand is to identify with the analyst’s desire. Žižek and Dunand explain the end of analysis according to Lacan, stating that analysis ends when object *a* separates from either the analyst or the analysand. With Lacan, it is important to remove or isolate object *a* from one of these two as s/he has been filling in for the role of the object of desire. At this point, it is necessary to note that a misreading of Žižek proves valuable, as he notes that object *a* has been separated from the subject when discussing *The Maltese Falcon*. A misreading of Žižek is possible because Lacan theorizes that object *a* can fall away from either the analyst or the analysand. In Rosa Montero’s novel, the “end of analysis,” or the traversal of fantasy, has come once object *a* has fallen out of the hysterical subject Lucía. The reader can see that this is the case when Lucía narrates that a part of her had died when she tells Ramón that she never wants to see him again: “No quiero volver a verte. Desaparece.” ‘I don’t want to see you again. Disappear’ (309). In other words, the part of Lucía that had died was actually her recognition of lack in the Other, and the traversal of fantasy due to the object *a* falling out. At this point, Lucía has indeed traversed the fantasy and Lacanian
analysis is over. There is no ethical judgment to be made, there is only the recognition of the end of analysis. And if Montero's, or Lucía’s, goal was to hysterize the Other, it has been accomplished – the Other as filled in by Ramón and García, has been hystericized, the contours of fantasy space have been broken down, and Lucía has traversed the fantasy making a return to her original, narcissistic identity, having changed along the way.

What happens beyond this moment when the hysteric has forced an hysterical breakdown of the Other, forcing a disintegration of the contours of fantasy space? According to Žižek, there are two possibilities for this moment – either there is a return to narcissistic identity or there is an identification with a symptom. Returning to Žižek's comments upon the femme fatale and the male detective, the reader can now understand the final position of Lucía in the novel. In *Looking Awry*, Žižek states that after this point, “When the woman reaches this point, there are only two attitudes left to the man: either he “cedes his desire,” rejects her and regains his imaginary, narcissistic identity (Sam Spade at the end of The Maltese Falcon), or he identifies with the woman as symptom and meets his fate in a suicidal gesture (the act of Robert Mitchum in what is perhaps the crucial film noir, Jacques Tourneur’s Out of the Past)” (66). Should the male detective, or in the current study the hysterical subject Lucía, return to his/her narcissistic identity, something has changed for s/he has indeed traversed his/her fantasy. In the case of an identification with the symptom, there is a moment of subjective destitution in which the subject will commit suicide. And according to Anne Dunand in *The End of Analysis (II)*, “The crossing of fantasy can be reduced to discovering that: recognizing the lack in the Other. It brings a subject to realize that the Other, albeit non-existent, requires his or her jouissance” (254). In other words, the fantasy has been crossed once the hysterical subject has recognized that the object of desire has been separated either from herself or from the Other.

In the end of the novel, the hysterical subject Lucía seems to be provoking her own questions, a move that signals a change from the typical structure of hysteria as she is no longer attempting to provoke the Other. As Lucía acknowledges a move beyond hysteria, though obviously not in those words, she also provokes this questioning one more time. This final questioning is her own, as she starts to ask the questions that someone else might ask upon hearing what she has had to say. Lucía seems to be provoking not only the questions that she wants to hear, but also asking them of herself. Upon first glance, this may suggest that Lucía is still struggling with the mask of hysteria, still stuck within its structures. However, she answers
those questions: “Pero no… Y además todo lo que acabo de contar lo he vivido realmente, incluso, o sobre todo, mis mentiras… Se acabaron los juegos en tercera persona: aunque resulte increíble, creo que yo soy yo” ‘But no… And what’s more, everything I have just related I have actually lived, including, or above all, my lies… Those games in the third person have ended: although it seems incredible, I believe that I am me’ (336). In this scene, Lucía has continued from the questioning of herself to answering her questions, marking a move beyond hysteria. She has at this point finally stopped using the mask of hysteria, having ultimately been able to make a traversal of the fantasy. In the end, Lucía has been able to make this final move and therefore drops the mask of hysteria that she has been using.

Throughout the novel Lucía has accepted her subjective position of hysteria and used it to force a restructuring of the Symbolic Order. The ethical stance of hysteria has allowed Lucía to desire through the Other in order to reach these final goals of a restructuring of the Symbolic Order and a traversal of fantasy. Lucía has identified the desire of the Other, finding the location of her missing husband Ramón and learning what the non-corrupt representatives of the State know about the illegal activities of the members of the made-up group Orgullo Obrero. With García filling in for the Other in its absence, Lucía desires through him in order to model her own investigation into the search for her missing husband. However, García is not the only representative of the State that Lucía is able to use in order to locate Ramón. When the judge María Martina steps in and has Lucía brought to her, Lucía is also able to gain information from her about the true events behind the kidnapping. Little by little Lucía learns the truth of why her husband has disappeared, only understanding the whole situation when she is able to question Ramón himself. And it is in this questioning of Ramón that Lucía is able to hystericize the Other successfully forcing a breakdown of the coordinates of fantasy space, allowing her to traverse the fantasy.

Lucía has lied throughout the course of the novel, demonstrating a symptom commonly found within hysteria. She has admitted on various occasions that she has lied, and indeed has been prone to lying her entire life. And as previously mentioned, Lucía admits towards the end of the novel that she has again lied to the reader, still marking an hysterical subjectivity. Indeed, she also mentions still feeling guilt for the events that have happened in her life and the problems that have arisen. She claims she's the one guilty of all the problems in the relationship, that it is her fault that events have turned out to way they have. Although Lucía appears to have been
able to force a restructuring of the Symbolic Order in dealing with García and Ramón, the reader is still unsure whether she has been able to make a move beyond hysteria upon learning that she is still lying. These two scenes, the hysteric’s questioning of herself and the claim of culpability, appear to suggest that Lucía has not been able to accomplish this move beyond hysteria, the traversal of fantasy. Knowing that Lucía has still been lying to the reader, it is hard to believe that she has actually traversed the fantasy and moved beyond hysteria. On the other hand, the reader is aware that she is now claiming to tell the truth, and indeed seems to be stating with veracity the events that her life is now taking. Even though there seems to be truth behind what Lucía is now telling the reader, the reader still has doubts. However, it is in the last chapter of the novel the reader is able to see that Lucía has indeed dropped the mask of hysteria.

For the first time in the relation of the events, Lucía has finally come up with her own questions and provided her own answers. Not only that, Lucía has dropped the mask of hysteria, has restructured the Symbolic Order, and is comfortable with this subjective position. She goes so far as to tell the reader: “De manera que estoy sola, y me gusta. Después de tantos años de convivir con Ramón recupero mi casa con la misma avidez con la que un país colonial se independiza del imperio. Ahora soy la princesa de mi sala, la reina de mi dormitorio y la emperatriz de mis horas” ‘So I am alone, and I like it. After so many years of coexisting with Ramón, I am regaining my house with the same eagerness that a colonial country would gain independence from the empire. Now, I am the Princess of my living room, the Queen of my bedroom, and the Empress of my time’ (326). Upon reading this statement by Lucía, one is able to see that she has indeed made a move beyond hysteria, and accepted her new subjective position. She has been able to accomplish this move and a successful restructuring of the Symbolic Order, merely by desiring through the Other, a symptom that is written into the structures of hysteria.
CHAPTER FOUR
PERVERSION AS SUBJECTIVE STRATEGY IN AMOR, CURIOSIDAD, PROZAC Y DUDAS BY LUCÍA ETXEBARRIA

*Amor, curiosidad, prozac, y dudas*, by Lucía Etxebarria, is a novel about the Gaena sisters that demonstrates the need for a strategy for women to implement in order to come to terms with desire and the suspension of the Master, when the Other is in abeyance, in post-Franco Spain. Ana, Rosa, and Cristina are protagonists in a desperate search for the Law and a way to deal with desire and the Other. As with Montero's novel, there has been little critical attention given to this novel in the ten years since it was published. A psychoanalytic, specifically a Lacanian, analysis is appropriate for this novel as its structures suggest such a reading. The critiques that have been published about this text focus mainly on gender roles and how the sisters represent the three different stages of occupational positions, sexuality, and gender mores after Franco's dictatorship ended (1939-1975). Most of the analyses of *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* focus on the roles the Gaena sisters fall into or the pop-psychology that the critics see the protagonists using. The review of these critiques will be fairly brief, with a somewhat more detailed discussion of Carmen de Urioste’s article “Las novelas de Lucía Etxebarria como proyección de sexualidades disidentes en la España democrática.” This article comes close to a psychoanalytic reading, highlighting structures of the perverse strategy found in Etxebarria’s novel, though not explicitly mentioning them as perverse.

“Pop, Punk, and Rock & Roll Writers: José Angel Mañas, Ray Loriga, and Lucía Etxebarria Redefine the Literary Canon” by Christine Henseler analyzes the works of Mañas, Loriga, and Etxebarria, noting the pop culture references and subversive attitudes and tendencies that these authors portray in their novels. Henseler describes *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* positively as a novel that is colloquial and has references to feminism throughout the text. The critic notes that this novel has been a success with Spanish readers, but that some critics find it to be superficial and trite. Henseler goes on to quote Akiko Tsuchiya who criticizes the novel as nothing more than a story of three self-absorbed sisters with predictable and inane crises whose ability to help themselves is lacking. The sisters attempt to display knowledge of psychoanalysis, but only really know information that could be gleaned from pop psychology.
books. Cristina and her friend Line even attempt to have an intelligent discussion based on the small amount of Freud they think they know and understand. According to Tsuchiya, it is evident from this scene that Etxebarria has at least read some psychoanalysis, although the feminist aspects are more apparent.

Henseler also analyzes Etxebarria’s technique of beginning each chapter with the subsequent letter of the (Spanish) alphabet. Henseler finds this method to be reminiscent of video clips, a technique which Henseler believes "serves to reconfigure gender identity within the popular cultural context of its narrative, whereas popular culture is more than just a series of superficial referents, it is a way of life" (699). The novel follows this pattern, similar to video clips, with the chapters being narrated by one of the three sisters with Cristina narrating the most. The reader also gets snippets of history in what would be a flashback in film as the sisters relate current events interspersed with events from the past. Each chapter is narrated in the first person with the narrative voice changing every chapter or every few chapters between the three sisters. The sisters narrate current and past events, weaving them together in such a way that the reader is continually moving forward and backward in time. This allows the reader to see and understand the perverse structure of a composite subject that has been decomposed into three through this technique of a video clip style narration of events. Henseler claims that the fragmentation technique that Etxebarria uses in this novel is used as a way to present a new construction of woman, done so using all three sisters. She then notes that this approach is to construct one woman -- as Etxebarria has formed a composite subject with the three Gaena sisters, each one lending her voice to the narrative.

Rafael Climent Espino analyzes the narrative voices and the spaces that the protagonists utilize in his article, “Espacio enajente y espacio reivindicativo en Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas de Lucía Etxebarria.” Climent Espino discusses all of the female voices and the spaces they inhabit in the novel, including the internal space of the mother of the Gaena sisters. Climent Espino analyzes the effects various spaces have had on the sisters and the roles that they will play in the different circles -- occupational, gender, etc. Climent Espino notes that the Catholic school that the sisters attended serves as an example of the traditional role that Spanish Christian women are told to follow, only presenting them with nuns as models. Indeed, Ana has accepted this model for her life, living as the supposedly happy and loving wife and mother. On the other hand, the space of the home has only provided negative examples for the sisters; for all that they
have seen is their mother as a traditional Christian woman but whose marriage failed. Not only that, but the father, who all of the sisters wanted to please, abandoned them and their mother. Due to this lack of a model, the sisters, who have searched for “su propio espacio sin acierto” ‘their own space without much success’ since adolescence, have been forced to “forjar sus propios mundos” ‘forge their own worlds’ (146). Climent Espino notes that Ana, as the oldest sister, finds her own personal space in the home as a housewife while Rosa searches for her space in knowledge, studying every night. The critic believes that Cristina is the most unstable with regards to a search for a personal space due to her attempting suicide, illegal drug use, self-mutilation, promiscuity, and so forth.

Climent Espino also analyzes each sister's definition of success, noting that both Rosa and Ana are unsatisfied with their personal spaces. The critic states: “las tres hermanas han llegado, por diferentes caminos, a un espacio de insatisfacción personal. Han conseguido metas que no satisfacen sus necesidades individuales” ‘the three sisters have arrived, through different paths, to a space of personal dissatisfaction. They have achieved goals that do not satisfy their individual necessities’ (148). Climent Espino believes that it is through their personal vices that the sisters attempt to escape these spaces of discontent. Throughout the novel, Cristina openly discusses her use of the drug Ecstasy, a drug that is commonly used to enhance sexual experiences of which she also takes part regularly. It is the reason, however, that Cristina uses the drugs that the critic finds interesting, as he notes that it is Cristina herself who explains why she does it. Cristina says that for her there are only two ways to live life, with the drugs or without them, or as she claims, “a pelo o anestesiada” ‘without anything or anesthetized’ (229). Cristina's sisters have also developed a certain attitude towards the drug use that has taken up part of their lives. Climent Espino notes that the space that Cristina has attempted to forge for herself has leaked into the spaces of her sisters. Like Cristina, Rosa and Ana have taken up different drugs in order to escape. Climent Espino does not mention what it is that the Gaena sisters are attempting to escape, but with the evidence of the perverse structure, his comments demonstrate that the sisters are trying to evade the real of death and the Symbolic Order. This critic has inadvertently hit upon evidence of the perverse structure within Etxebarria's novel. With each sister having her own drug of choice, used to escape their current situation, each of the girls now has the opportunity to follow a different pathway, a structure presented by Žižek in his discussion of perversion.
Inger Enkvist analyzes Etxebarria's novel as part of the young Spanish novel in her article, “Similitudes inquietantes: La sociopatía en la novela ‘joven’ española y la elaboración de la opresión totalitaria en la novela antiutópica.” Enkvist provides two important details for the current study, as they relate to Etxebarria’s attempt to provide an ethical stance her readers may adopt in dealing with desire and the Other in post-Franco Spain. Enkvist first explains that many of these authors have become reporters of their own behaviors and actions. More importantly, Enkvist notes that the readers of these “young” writers, including Etxebarria, seem to truly enjoy these works in which they find realistic elements, as they believe that they recognize the lives that they and their friends are living. Although Enkvist believes that most of the texts are relevant to the readers of post-Franco Spain due to the “realism” of the novels, there are some parts that are not necessarily reminiscent of their lives. For example, some of the characters maintain few social relations and cannot trust anyone, something the critic maintains is imperative in the world. And many times, there is no relationship with the members of the family, specifically, the mother and/or the father.

Enkvist then turns her analysis to what she calls the anti-utopian novel, noting that Etxebarria’s novels fall within this category. She states that in the anti-utopian novels, friendship, family, and love are considered antisocial and only appear in the narration of events as brief glimpses into a world seemingly unknown to the protagonists. Enkvist goes on to note that Etxebarria’s protagonists have friendship, family, and love available to all of them; however, the three sisters believe that they will find more enjoyment through drugs, alcohol, sex, and other vices. It is in the anti-utopian novel that promiscuity and the acceptance of drugs and violence are signs of adaptation, whereas that which makes the protagonists human -- friendship, love, thought, memory, and family -- is considered antisocial. The same exact values “son recomendados por la sociedad democrática, libre y rica y aun así los jóvenes protagonistas deciden, perversamente, buscar lo que los convierte en menos humanos” ‘are recommended by a rich, free, and democratic society, and even then the young protagonists decide, perversely, to look for that which converts them into less of a human being’. This is not Enkvist’s point of view; she continues on after this statement to mark the disparity between the classification of the anti-utopian novel and Etxebarria’s novel. The difference between Etxebarria’s novel and the anti-utopian novel is that in the latter, there exists the presence of Big Brother, or in a Lacanian sense, big brOther, who upholds and maintains the antisocial values. Other than this difference,
the acceptance of sex, drugs, and violence and the seeming rejection of family common to the anti-utopian novel make up a great part of *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*. The acceptance of all these vices and the trouble in dealing with family and the Other are the structures of perversion that the Gaena sisters demonstrate throughout Etxebarria's novel. Each sister chooses a different vice, opening up the possibility for the other sisters to follow multiple paths, should they not like the path they have chosen. Therefore, this antisocial behavior, which would be the “norm” in an anti-utopian novel in the presence of the big Other, in this case provides evidence of a perverse structure within the text.

Enkvist continues with the analysis of Etxebarria's novel, noting that the important themes of the novel include bad personal relationships, easy sex, drugs, violence of criminals, domestic violence, and contempt for others. Enkvist then comments upon the protagonists and their behaviors and attitudes demonstrating a link to the perverse structure of separation, but not castration and alienation. The critic believes that the protagonists of this novel are living their lives as if they have no future. It appears to her that the Gaena sisters are living as if there is no possibility of making something of themselves, of finding a path that turns out to be successful and desirable. While it is not specifically the future of the protagonists that is of interest in a Lacanian reading, the idea of living as if there are no boundaries falls within the definition of perversion presented by Lacan. The perverse subject has disavowed the Name-of-the-Father, thereby avoiding castration and is then able to keep him/herself out of the bounds of the Symbolic Order. In fact, the perverse subject will attempt to create his/her own boundaries in what is known as staging castration. Enkvist claims that culture and good personal relationships are essential to a human being and that through the novels of Etxebarria and other authors, the reader is taken on a journey to discover the human condition. What Etxebarria ultimately offers is an ethical stance for the Spanish women of the post-Franco era so that they may deal with desire and a suspension of the Master.

Carmen de Urioste notes the lack of models that women in post-Franco Spain have available to them in her article, “Las novelas de Lucía Etxebarria como proyección de sexualidades disidentes en la España democrática.” She analyzes the different forms of feminine sexuality that appear in Lucía Etxebarria's novels *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* and *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*. De Urioste comments upon the ethical stance that Etxebarria is providing her readers, noting the difference in the construction of her women characters. She suggests that
the author’s representation of feminine sexuality is distinct from the traditional heterosexual model, instead offering other models of sexuality in order to accept desire that is not compulsorily heterosexual. She also believes that this model can also help women to recognize an identity that has been censored, forbidden, or completely absent (123). De Urioste notes that Etxebarria, as other Spanish female authors have done, is providing a model for her readers that is not available to them otherwise. The critic discusses what she believes is Etxebarria’s historical and archetypical summary of the three biggest steps in feminine sexuality in twentieth century Spain. Etxebarria has provided “el singular modelo sociosexual heterosexual difundido por la cultura franquista de posguerra” ‘the singular socio-sexual, heterosexual model spread by the Francoist postwar culture’ (124). The older sister, Ana, is a traditional housewife; the middle child Rosa is a closeted lesbian; and the youngest child Cristina is sexually liberated.

De Urioste comments upon a line at the end of the novel that is also important in the Lacanian reading of perversion. Cristina asks the reader who can say in the end of the novel that the three Gaena sisters are not the same person. De Urioste notes that this question also has an effect on the sexuality represented in the novel: “Es decir, al finalizar la novela las tres hermanas se encuentran en una situación de desafío al heterosexismo compulsivo, el cual prohíbe cualquier alternativa sexual que se aleje de la práctica reproductiva” ‘That is to say, at the end of the novel the three sisters find themselves in a situation of challenging the compulsive heterosexism, which prohibits any sexual alternatives that stray from the reproductive practice’ (126). The Gaena sisters certainly lend credence to this claim by de Urioste as Rosa is a closeted lesbian and Cristina is very promiscuous although Ana appears to have accepted this “compulsive heterosexism” at first glance. But at the end of the novel, Ana leaves her husband and her traditional housewife position and winds up in a mental institution. At this point, she has become a part of a different group, willfully joining the ranks of single mothers and divorced women.

De Urioste analyzes the female protagonists that Etxebarria has used to form one group, stating that the women form a more or less homogenous and cohesive group that has been conditioned by biological factors as much as by social and historical limitations. The critic notes that the sisters’ conditioning has taken place with man always as a point of reference, and that is how they relate to the world. However, she also discusses Rosa’s lesbianism as a sort of subversive strategy against the heterosexual norm of society. De Urioste claims that the
destruction caused by the sisters’ subversive behavior starts with language, just as each chapter of the novel begins with the succeeding letter of the alphabet. In fact, she finds the word at the beginning of each chapter to be anything but empty of meaning, stating that it is a series of words that provides an exclusively female alphabet that the Spanish woman can follow. This vocabulary that de Urioste believes Etxebarria is creating for women alone serves as evidence that the perverse strategy that Etxebarria’s protagonists employ is meant for the Spanish women who read the novel. Not only are the words at the beginning of the chapters helpful for their readers, but also the different paths that the protagonists may take offer possibilities that Spanish women have not had previously. While de Urioste’s reading of Etxebarria’s novel discusses the different paths that the sisters choose, the psychoanalytic reading focuses on these options as the perverse strategy of dealing with society, desire, and the Other. In a Lacanian reading, the different choices of the sisters are seen as multiple pathways of a composite subject using perversion as a means to disavow forced choices and ultimately disavow castration, refusing to step in to the Symbolic Order.

The Sisters Will Not Choose: The Disavowal of Forced Choices as a Structure of Perversion in Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas

Lucía Etxebarria presents three sisters living in post-Franco Spain who form a composite subject, which in turn provides the Spanish reader with a model of how to deal with desire and the Other. As subjects, Cristina, Rosa, and Ana form a composite, perverse subject, dispersed, disavowing castration and forced choices in order to avoid stepping into the Symbolic Order. The declaration of a single yet composite subjectivity by Cristina on the last page of the text can be explained by Žižek’s analysis of perversion in The Plague of Fantasies. Žižek discusses the possibilities of a perverse subject, naming four such possibilities that include many persons in a single body, many persons outside a single body, many bodies in a single person, and many bodies outside a single person. Žižek describes the structure of many bodies in a single person, stating: “this version is again ‘pathological’ in so far as many bodies immediately coalesce with a single collective person, and thereby violate the axiom ‘one body – one person’. Take the fantasy of aliens, ‘multiple bodies, but one collective mind’ …” (140). Similar to this structure
of aliens that Žižek discusses, the three Gaena sisters represent three personas or masks that form one composite subject.

Through examples from the text, this chapter will demonstrate an ethical stance of perversion as a model for the reader in order to come to terms with desire and the absence of a limit in the Other. The problem with perversion as a model is that the subject is trapped within this structure. In fact, it seems that a move from perversion to neurosis once the subject has reached adulthood is impossible according to Bruce Fink. This is the difference between the ethical stance provided by Rosa Montero and the one offered by Etxebarria – Montero’s protagonist successfully moves beyond hysteria (which is a kind of neurosis), while Etxebarria's protagonists are stuck in perversion (Bruce Fink notes in A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique that the perverse subject will be unable to leave the structure). Lucía Etxebarria is as well known as Rosa Montero primarily among Spanish women readers, although she has not been writing for nearly as long as Montero. Etxebarria has also been at the center of controversy since the publication of her first novel Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas. She has been accused of plagiarism twice and was found to have indeed copied works by Antonio Colina for her novel Estación de infierno. When Etxebarria was accused of plagiarism of Colina’s work, she was also accused of having copied sentences from Prozac Nation in Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas. Her position and behavior within society may be a reflection of the ethical stance she provides her protagonists, but it is both unnecessary to an analysis of her works and impossible to deduce. However, it gives one the impression of the reaction of some readers of her novels and may change the reader's perception and acceptance of the perverse ethical model presented.

Etxebarria's novel provides a space where the reader can see perversion as an ethical stance for a subject to take in dealing with desire and the Other. Evidence of a perverse structure can be found throughout the whole novel, with each sister providing her own experiences. In order to avoid stepping into the Symbolic Order, the perverse subject has disavowed castration, but then finds that she needs boundaries that the Symbolic Order would have provided her. It is to temporarily set a boundary that the perverse subject will continue to stage castration and attempt to create a set of rules for herself. Bruce Fink discusses the perverse subject in A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, noting that this position, as opposed to neurosis and psychosis, is determined by the subject’s disavowal of the Name-of-the-Father.
"The mother’s lack has to be named or symbolized for the child to come into being as a full-fledged subject. In perversion, this does not occur: no signifier is provided that can make this lack *come into being at the level of thought*, easing its real weight” (178). Fink then explains how this signifier is not available to the perverse subject. The perverse subject has not foreclosed the Name-of-the-Father like the psychotic, who has not undergone alienation, nor has s/he repressed it like the neurotic, who has achieved separation.

Disavowing forced choices, the Gaena sisters are in fact disavowing castration. The sisters disavow forced choices of sexuation, motherhood, and occupation, with the ultimate disavowal being that of death. Žižek discusses the strategy of perversion as can be seen in the example of cyberspace in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*. Žižek states that cyberspace is the ultimate example of the disavowal of death, as can be seen in the example of a video game. A player can always win an extra life or hit the reset button should something go wrong in a game or s/he does not like the path s/he has taken. The person who is shy and keeps to himself during the day, working as a computer programmer, can arrive home and become a great warrior who is respected by men and loved by women and never loses a fight. Žižek states: "what the perverse scenario enacts is a “disavowal of castration,” a universe in which, as in cartoons, a human being can survive any catastrophe; in which adult sexuality is reduced to a childish game; in which one is not forced to die or to choose one of the two sexes" (36). The Gaena sisters seem to be living in their own virtual reality, where they disavow forced choices, disavowing death and, ultimately, castration.

Just as soon as the novel begins, the narrator who is at this point the youngest sister Cristina, reveals information about the three Gaena sisters that demonstrates the different choices they have made. As a composite perverse subject, currently decomposed into three sisters, they have made different choices. Cristina informs the reader of her need to see a psychiatrist and the conclusion that her promiscuity is a search for her missing father. She then discusses her sister Rosa who is also seeing a psychiatrist, most likely for the same reason – their absent father. It is also revealed that Rosa is taking Prozac due to a problem with serotonin reuptake, in other words, depression. Cristina only briefly mentions her oldest sister Ana, and it is only to leave the reader with the impression that Ana has some major issues affecting her life. The reader can infer from these statements that the absence of their father has affected the paths followed by the sisters. Cristina attempts to explain the variations in the sisters’ lives demonstrating that each of
them has chosen a different route, whether intentional or not, but in the end comes to the conclusion that they are not that different. Consequently, these routes that the sisters have followed, while quite varied, highlight structural similarities.

Within the perverse scenario, the disavowal of sexuation is a corollary of the disavowal of castration, and the youngest sister has no qualms about sharing anything and everything that she has done sexually with anyone who happens to be in her vicinity. The reader has discovered that Cristina is the narrator (the first narrator), the youngest of the Gaena sisters, a young woman who is not only sexually active, but is also willing to share her exploits with anyone around. Cristina is the first of the sisters to reveal the direction she has gone with regards to her sexual life. And she is the first to admit that her sexuality is one of a promiscuous heterosexuality: “Y bueno, mis hermanas se meten mucho conmigo por promiscua y devorahombres, pero ¿qué quieres que te diga? Soy como soy […] yo soy así y me gusta…” ‘And so my sisters argue with me a lot for being promiscuous and a man-eater, but what do you want me to say? I am how I am […] that's how I am and I like it…’ (24). Cristina is quite clear about the pleasure she takes in having many sexual relationships with many different men. However, she is the only sister to follow this route of this promiscuous heterosexuality.

Cristina moves on with the discussion of sexuation, mentioning and seemingly judging the choice of her sister Ana with regards to sexuation. Ana, like Cristina, has chosen a path of heterosexuality; however, she has chosen monogamy and is married to a man named Borja. Cristina tells the reader about Ana’s choice in sexuation while also describing the sisters’ relationship: "Admitámoslo: a sus ojos, yo soy un putón. A los míos, ella es una maruja” ‘Let’s admit it: in her eyes, I am a whore. In my eyes, she is a Suzy Homemaker’ (21). The two sisters quite clearly have very strong and open opinions about the sexuation of each other, which only leaves the middle sister Rosa, and her choice in sexuation. Rosa discusses her own choice in sexuation, at the same time acknowledging the perverse subjectivity of the sisters by noting the validity of each sister’s choice. Rosa then turns to the inability of Ana and of Cristina to understand the imaginary law that the other sister has chosen to follow. Though both Ana and Cristina are heterosexual, a similar choice in sexuation, the decision to follow a path of monogamy or promiscuity is markedly different, demonstrating another disavowal.

However, it is not until the next chapter that the reader really starts to develop an idea as to Rosa’s choice of sexuation. Rosa begins the chapter by referencing a study published in 1987,
Dress for Success by John T. Molloy. Rosa is thirty years old and is a business executive who lives by herself and subscribes to the rules laid out in this book. The passages that she quotes from this book inform the savvy businesswoman that she should act like a man in order to be successful. The mention of this book may seem to suggest alternative sexual beliefs and gender roles in Rosa’s personality. While there is no confirmation that Rosa is a lesbian at this point in the novel, the reader may be suspicious based on her apparent agreement with Molloy and an interaction with her sister Cristina (in the previous chapter, a sleazy man has entered the bar and Rosa pretends to be Cristina’s lesbian lover to get him to leave). Rosa also discusses Ana’s choices in sexuation, expressing clear disapproval of Ana’s decision to dedicate herself to being a housewife instead of finding a job after school. However, in the end, Rosa feels she cannot condemn Ana for her decisions stating explicitly that she cannot judge Ana as her life is no better or worse than her own. She is the only sister who recognizes the validity of each of the choices in sexuation that the sisters have made.

The next disavowal that the Gaena sisters have made demonstrating the decomposed perverse structure is that of marital status and motherhood. Of the three Gaena sisters only the oldest, Ana, has married, having done so at a young age. She is also the only sister to have a child, a son named Borja who is still an infant. Rosa states that she is thirty years old and discusses the fact that she is alone in such a way so as to give the reader the impression that she is not content with her solitude. She mentions only two relationships of importance to her – one with a young girl with whom she shared an infatuation in school and one with a woman that she has known more recently. Cristina makes it clear that she does not in any way wish to get married at the present time. She discusses the many men that she sleeps with only mentioning one relationship, Iain, the man she most recently had a relationship with which just ended. Therefore, among the Gaena sisters exists a sister who is married with a child, a sister who is alone but appears to want a partner in life, and a sister who, although she desperately misses her ex-boyfriend, is generally content with the single life.

The final disavowal that the Gaena sisters make is in regards to the abstention of vices, one that all three sisters take part in throughout the whole novel. However, it appears that Ana, though clearly displaying issues which the reader could attribute to anxiety or possibly even depression, does not mention or exhibit any drug use, legal or otherwise. In spite of this seeming lack of vice, at the end of the text when Ana appears to have lost her sense of boundaries, the
reader learns that Ana has been doing more drugs than anyone would have guessed. Even her sisters seem to think that Ana has refrained from taking a vice until they discover the truth at the end of the novel. Cristina informs the reader about what Ana had been doing: “Ana había pasado los últimos meses metiéndose tranquilizantes y minilips, o sea, que la cosa, vosotros me entendéis, no iba de que Ana hubiese acabado en el loquero a cuenta de una mera depresión. Mi hermana la pija, la niña modelo, la santa madre y esposa, en una cura de desintoxicación” ‘Ana had spend the last few months mixed up in tranquilizers and pep pills, or in other words, so that you understand me, Ana didn’t just end up in an insane asylum just because of depression. My sister the snob, the model child, the saintly mother and wife, was in detox’ (257). Ana comes across as the only sister to have abstained from choosing a vice almost until the end, only offering up evidence to the contrary after her decision to leave her husband and enter an insane asylum. It appears that the Gaena sisters, as this composite perverse subject, are continually in a search for jouissance, when they are in fact establishing various imaginary laws in order to limit jouissance.

Rosa also appears to have no great vice except for her use of the legal, prescription drug Prozac. Rosa does occasionally drink wine, finally proving its place in her life as a vice on her thirtieth birthday. She enters a bar and decides to drink as many glasses of wine as birthdays that she has celebrated. While the plan was to finish thirty glasses of wine, she cannot remember how many she ended up drinking that day. These two sisters have completely different vices, neither of them choosing to abstain although Rosa takes a prescribed medication and drinks alcohol (both legal drugs), while Ana is taking tranquilizers and pep pills, neither of which has been prescribed for her (and should certainly not be taken at or near the same time). Finally, Cristina discusses her vice, which is also the most controversial of the vices present, Ecstasy. Cristina’s dependency on the street drug Ecstasy is different from her sisters’ choices in vice because there is no theory under which it is considered legal. Her use of the drug is excessive, as she even uses it after situations that would have the casual user panicking and quitting. Cristina and her friend Line have been caught by the police with Ecstasy on them and saw their friend Santi, who was also doing drugs, die from an overdose. Although Ana is using drugs in an illegal fashion and Rosa is drinking too much alcohol, Cristina is the only sister to make the choice of a completely illegal vice.
While there is no mention of a connection between the sisters’ ages and the choices that they have made in their lives, there may be significance in the specific choice that was made by each sister. Ana grew up during the last ten years of Franco’s dictatorship, Rosa was alive for a few of those years, and Cristina was only born a year before Franco died. Their societal concerns and pressures were strikingly different, with the eldest seeing the repression of the Franco era and the immediate aftermath of his death and the youngest growing up in the years when Spain was exploring avenues previously censored and forbidden. This may explain why Ana was so quick to marry and has lived so many years as a housewife and mother. Rosa has gone into the workplace and is an executive, a position not allowed for women during Franco’s reign. And Cristina works as a bartender, recognizing it is a job that leads nowhere, this job even more out of the ordinary for women during Franco’s dictatorship and shortly thereafter. The choice of vices that the three have made may also be a reflection of the society they lived in and understood. Ana hides her drug use, drugs that could be used as medication, but which were generally not accepted by society. The same could be said about Rosa’s Prozac use, though it has become more acceptable and she is not abusing them. Cristina, on the other hand, is firmly implanted in Generation X, a punk generation that rebels against the ideals of the previous generations. She admittedly uses Ecstasy as much as possible, and makes no apologies for it.

The disavowal of forced choices that the Gaena sisters take part in reflect another structure discussed by Žižek in *The Plague of Fantasies*. Again using cyberspace as an example of a perverse structure, Žižek discusses Multiple User Domains technology, which is shortened to MUD (134). Of those Multiple User Domains technology, Žižek states that for the subject, “playing in Virtual Spaces enables me to discover new aspects of ‘me’, a wealth of shifting identities, of masks without a ‘real’ person behind them, and us to experience the ideological mechanism of the production of Self” (134). This is only what the perverse subject experiences with each staging of castration. As critics have suggested, the Gaena sisters form a composite perverse subject that, throughout most of the novel, has been decomposed into the three sisters. What they are doing, how they are behaving and acting within the structure of perversion, is similar to this example of cyberspace that Žižek provides. By disavowing the forced choices a neurotic subject would have to make, such as the forced choices of sexuation, marriage, and abstention from vices, they are able to live outside the boundaries of the Symbolic Order at the same time avoiding the real of death. In *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime*, Žižek describes the
situation precisely when he notes that cyberspace, like perversion, is unencumbered by the usual constraints of the Real and that it abides by its own boundaries (36). The pervert exists outside of the Symbolic Order having disavowed castration and avoided separation. Throughout the novel, the sisters have demonstrated their unwillingness to make the forced choices and follow the Law throughout the novel.

The different choices that the sisters have made with regards to sexuation and their jobs are apparent only about a fifth of the way into the novel while other disavowals have appeared throughout the rest of the text, establishing Etxebarria’s use of the perverse subjective strategy as an ethical stance for the Gaena sisters. As Žižek has noted, the perverse subject, by disavowing forced choices, has successfully disavowed castration. Žižek, in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway*, states: "the pervert's universe is the universe of the pure symbolic order, of the signifier's game running its course, unencumbered by the Real of human finitude" (36). That is to say that the perverse subject has available to him/her everything that the Symbolic Order has to offer, without being subjected to its limiting Law. One must remember that the perverse subject has encountered the Name-of-the-Father, and therefore the Law, but has chosen to disavow it. This disavowal, however, is not an unconscious move on the part of the perverse subject. On the contrary, the very thing that the pervert disavows, castration, is in fact acknowledged by the perverse subject as having been disavowed. Disavowal, however, is only one aspect of the perverse structure that the Gaena sisters display.

**The Other Is Missing: The Suspension of the Master**

Throughout the novel, the Gaena sisters take turns discussing their father and the role that he played in their life, demonstrating the importance of his presence when they were young. All three sisters have certainly shown that their father is in the role of Master, the Other, in their lives. Ana and Rosa both remember their father as clearly preferring their younger sister Cristina to them and express the belief that he loved her more. Rosa even goes so far as claim hatred toward Cristina for being the daughter that their father loved the best. The two oldest sisters also express hatred for their father with regards to what he did to them and their mother. Neither of the two appears willing to forgive him at all, nor would they be willing to allow him back into their lives. Cristina, the sister favored by the sisters’ father, also discusses him the least of the
three women. In fact, until the end of the novel, her only statements regarding her father are to note that her promiscuity may be due to his leaving. Finally, Cristina reveals to the reader her feelings about her father and the day he left the three sisters and their mother. She explains that although she was only four years old, she understood what was happening and that her world was destroyed that day. As a child, she felt that she would never have another man who would love her or play with her the way that he did. By the end of the novel, all three Gaena sisters have provided details that demonstrate the powerful effect their father and his departure had on them. All of the sisters were devastated when their father left, although the feelings in later years have varied. Ana reveals that she understands it is not Christian to hate someone, but she will not forgive him or allow him to return to her life. Rosa does not outwardly express any thoughts related to the possibility of their father returning, indicating only hatred and anger toward him. And Cristina seems to offer the least in the way of how she feels about their father now, only mentioning how she felt the day he left.

As previously mentioned, the youngest sister, Cristina, discusses her father very rarely in the text, only three times throughout the novel. Although she was most definitely the favorite of the Gaena sisters’ father, she does not truly discuss her relationship with him until the end of the text. It is at this point that Cristina reveals just how much the absence of their father had on her: “El mundo se destrozó para mí cuando nuestro padre nos dejó. Yo sólo tenía cuatro años y la gente cree que aquella Cristina no se enteró de nada, pero sí que me enteré. Me enteré de todo, perfectamente. Me enteré de que la persona que más quería en el mundo se había marchado” ‘My world was destroyed when our father left us. I was only four years old, and people believe that that Cristina did not understand anything, but I did understand. I understood everything, perfectly. I understood that the person that I loved the most in the world had left’ (238). Other than this declaration of sadness, love, and devastation, Cristina has only mentioned her father in passing, such as when she is discussing her drug use and sexual activities. She wonders, as her psychiatrist suggested, if her promiscuity is in fact a search for a father figure because of his departure from her life. Not once does Cristina express any feelings toward her father that are in any way negative (or for that matter positive) except for despair at his leaving.

Cristina’s older sister Rosa on the other hand, remembers their father mostly in terms of how he hurt their mother and the three sisters, only briefly discussing him in a positive light. An interesting comment by Rosa remarks upon his departure and how she claims to have known
before him that he was going to leave. She never expands upon this statement, only stating that she knew it was coming, perhaps offering the reader the possibility of a suspension of the Master prior to his leaving. Rosa also discusses how their father spent his days, commenting that it was not normal for a father to spend the morning drinking, the afternoons napping, and the nights bingeing like he did. She continues noting his behavior when she claims that the family never knew when he would return, though it was usually not for dinner. These statements as to his daily behavior also seem to support the fact that there was a suspension of the Master, their father as Other, before he left permanently. The day their father left, Rosa arrived home to their mother crying and their father gone (which was nothing new), but all of his things were also gone. She states that at that moment the world caved in, comparing it to a building that has been dynamited. Rosa asserts that she hated their father but claims that her hatred was a response to his making the sisters different from the other girls at school who had both a mother and a father. Although Rosa espouses anger and hatred, she also claims to have missed him, and then contradicts herself, claiming she does not miss him very much because in her memory, when he actually was around, he was almost always focused on Cristina. She even wonders if his affinity for the youngest daughter was because he adored anything Mediterranean, including the characteristic dark hair and dark eyes, which only Cristina inherited from him. Rosa discusses her emotions and the Gaena sisters’ father more than Cristina, but does not refer to him quite as much or as vehemently as their sister Ana.

The eldest sister Ana provides the most information and remembers the most about the sisters’ father as she was old enough to remember more when he left. The majority of Ana’s recollections of their father focuses on the times that she spent with her father and everything she remembers about him. The emotional effect of the absence of her father is evidenced even during the positive memories, including when Ana comments upon their mother’s family but states that she does not know much about their father’s family. She remembers her father as a happy man and as the most important man in her life, stating that she loved him dearly, but will never forgive him for leaving. She even reflects upon the day that she married and how her father was not there to give her away, leaving her devastated. It is when Ana is alone at home, when her son Borja is at daycare and her husband Borja is at work, that she thinks about her father and his disappearance, and it is clear in every memory that she has that his absence has had a very strong effect on her. When she is by herself, Ana remembers the day he left, when
she was just twelve years old, and knows that he will always be special to her as a father is to a 
daughter. On the other hand, she will never let him back even though he would like to be part of 
his life again: “[…] ni ahora querría ver a mi padre aunque él sí quisiera” ‘[…] nor would I now 
want to see my father although he would like to’ (175). What is most surprising and notable 
about this statement is that Ana claims that the sisters’ father would like to enter the picture once 
again when neither of the other sisters mentions this fact, further supporting the suspension of the 
Master in this novel. Whether the other sisters know that their father would like to be a part of 
their lives or not is impossible to determine. In any case, in Ana’s discussions of their father, it 
is evident that she has the strongest feelings of anger, betrayal, and hatred toward him and seems 
to be the only one who considers the absence and/or presence of their father in the present or 
future.

Although the suspension of the master has a negative effect on the perverse subject, it 
does open a new avenue of possibilities as well. In *The Plague of Fantasies*, Žižek, after 
discussing fan rewrites of television shows, states that said rewrites "presuppose the suspension 
of the function of the Master on account of which -- potentially, at least -- there no longer is a 
‘definitive version’. The moment we accept this break in the functioning of the symbolic order, 
an entirely new perspective on traditional ‘written’ literature also opens up" (152). Žižek’s 
relation of the suspension of the function of the master, a break in the functioning of the 
Symbolic Order, to literature helps to explain what it is that Etxebarria’s protagonists are 
modeling. The perverse ethical stance described by Žižek provides the Gaena sisters the chance 
to rewrite any of the forced choices that they don't like. It is because of their father’s departure 
that they have adopted this ethical stance of perversion and that they are able to rewrite the path 
they have taken. This also opens up the possibility for them to follow a different path, including 
one provided by another sister. In other words, when there has been a suspension of the Master, 
the text can be changed for there is no longer an ultimate version, and the sisters have made use 
of this advantage by adopting a perverse mask. The sisters can therefore follow the path that 
they want, having disavowed multiple forced choices, and continue to disavow forced choices.

At first glance it appears as if the anxiety that comes with making a forced choice would 
be relieved if the Other were to be taken out of the equation. However, this is precisely what 
does not happen with the suspension of the Master, the Other. Žižek discusses the suspension of 
the master in *The Plague of Fantasies* and the unexpected effect that this event has on the
perverse subject. "One should bear in mind here that the main function of the Master is to tell the subject what he wants -- the need for the Master arises in answer to the subject's confusion, in so far as he does not know what he wants" (153). When the perverse subject is left to fend for him/herself without the presence of the all-important Other, s/he does not know what to do, does not know what s/he desires. The perverse subject, in this case the Gaena sisters, actually needs the Other, the Master, to impose the law and tell him/her what s/he wants. Žižek continues to ask what would happen in the face of the decline of the Master, at a time when the subject is constantly asked what it is that s/he wants. Žižek suggests that the response is quite the opposite of what might be expected of the perverse subject. It is in the absence of the Master, when s/he is not there to inform you of what it is you truly desire, that there is no choice. It is in the Other’s absence that the perverse subject is completely dominated by the Other and that all choice disappears and is replaced by façade of choice (153). It is therefore clear that the perverse subject is in a precarious position upon the suspension of the Master, which in fact leaves him/her in desperate need of the Other. Throughout Etxebarria's novel, there is much evidence that the most traumatizing and powerful event in the lives of the sisters is when their father left them. The perverse subject has experienced a partial father, in other words, a failure or partial failure of the paternal function. In the case of the Gaena sisters, the paternal function became completely absent due to the father leaving and causing a suspension of the Master.

Because the suspension of the Master has turned out to be permanent in the case of the Gaena sisters, the adverse effects brought on by this situation have continually plagued them. Žižek states that "the suspension of the Master, which reveals impotence, in no way gives rise to liberating effects: the knowledge that ‘the Other doesn't exist’ (that the master is impotent, that power is an imposture) imposes on a subject, an even more radical servitude than the traditional subordination to the full authority of the Master" (158). This reveals even more about the underlying motives behind the perverse subject’s disavowals and actions. When there has been a suspension of the Master, the perverse subject is even more in need of the boundaries and the law that the Other could provide him/her. For the Gaena sisters, their father is the ultimate Master, and facing his suspension, they have carried on with the perverse structure that they have been utilizing as an ethical stance.
A Law of Their Own: The Perverse Subject's All-Powerful Other

It is important to note that the perverse subject, though s/he has disavowed the Name-of-the-Father and effectively disavowed castration, is still in need of a law. Castration provides relief from the anxiety of being caught in the Other’s jouissance; it provides separation that is anxiety relieving. Bruce Fink notes that separation “may be anxiety producing in certain respects (the object becomes lost or falls away at the moment of separation), but is generally relieving at a more profound level – that is, at the level of being” (174). Therefore, the Gaena sisters’ efforts at achieving separation by staging castration are in fact attempting to have the paternal function propped up to get temporary relief. In other words, the Gaena sisters as perverse subjects have been exposed to the Name-of-the-Father, the paternal signifier, but they have disavowed it. Disavowal is the key to the perverse structure for it is only because of the pervert’s disavowal that everything occurs the way it does.

As a composite perverse subject, the Gaena sisters have disavowed the one thing that would allow them relief from the jouissance of the Other. Due to their disavowal, they must find another way to deal with this unending jouissance since they have disavowed the paternal signifier which would demonstrate the lack in the Other. Without the Name-of-the-Father at their disposal, the three sisters, being the composite perverse subject that they are, are left to devote their time and energy to keeping the Other in a position of power, or as Feher-Gurevich states “making sure that the mother remains phallic, with the child identified as her object of desire” (201). As a composite perverse subject, the sisters have gone through the process of alienation but not separation. There has been a division in the Other (the mOther, primordially) so that the perverse subject fills the role of the object lacking in the Other. On the other hand, the pervert has not come into being as a desiring subject that is separate from the Other. This is the state that Feher-Gurevich is referring to when she notes their need to keep the mOther phallic, although she suggests that there is a choice that would allow the perverse subject to find a solution to the lack in the mOther. The disavowal of castration means a disavowal of the Symbolic Order, a refusal of the composite perverse subject to enter into it. Just as the Gaena sisters, a composite perverse subject, have been exposed to the Name-of-the-Father, so have they had contact with the Law, in both cases choosing to disavow it and leaving them in a position which results in their exposure to the unending jouissance of the Other.
The position that the composite perverse subject, like the Gaena sisters, is stuck in is one of anxiety and misery due to the ever-present jouissance of the Other, represented for the sisters by drug use, sex, alcohol, etc. The pervert is then left to seek out a means to end the anxiety that s/he is experiencing since s/he has disavowed the only answer to his/her problem, castration. Feher-Gurevich then explains what the next course of action for the perverse subject is in this situation: they will defy any law presented to them, above all else the Law, with the hopes that they will find a law that will enable him/her to not only keep the Other in a position of power but also present a stronger reality than that of the deceptions of the Oedipal fantasy of his/her youth. However, there is a slight hitch in the perverse subject’s plan to encounter a new law that s/he can live by and follow. Feher-Gurevich explains the issue and the solution that the perverse subject finds: “because this law cannot be dictated by the signifiers of the desire of the Other, perverts are forced to create a law of their own making, a law that appears to them to represent an order superior to the one accepted by the common run of mortals” (202). The structure that has therefore been set up in place of the Symbolic Order by the perverse subject is one of his/her own creation, or in some cases laid out by someone else. This new law is one that the perverse subject will follow as an alternative to the Symbolic Order that s/he has chosen not to enter.

When viewing the different worlds that the Gaena sisters live in, the fact that they form a composite perverse subject must remain at the forefront. Viewed separately, Ana, Rosa, and Cristina are just three different neurotic subjects living their own lives related only by blood. It is the weaving together of the different lives and paths of the sisters to create one single life lived with multiple routes and possibilities for change that make the composite subject perverse. There are clues throughout the text, as well as the direct declaration by one of the sisters, that the three of them are in fact the same subject. The ethical stance that Etxebarria is providing the reader is one that maintains the use of many masks for a single person. Etxebarria also creates a unique structure to her text, one that maintains a cohesive singular narrative while at the same time providing distinctive information about each of the three sisters. It is the breakdown of chapters ordered by the Spanish alphabet instead of numbers that gives the structure of the novel its distinctiveness as well as providing a new order which marks the sisters as following their own paths but as a part of a group. Each chapter begins with the subsequent letter of the alphabet and a word or a group of words beginning with that letter. The words that are chosen for each chapter relate to the theme of that chapter and sum up the content and the perspective of
the specific protagonist narrating and acting out the events. This structure gives cohesion to the multiple narrators by establishing a narration of a composite subject decomposed into three personas. By choosing this format for the novel, Etxebarria has made an attempt, conscious or not, to provide an ethical model to the women of post-Franco Spain. Although the content within the chapters follows different paths, the sisters’ lives are merged into one narrative.

Cristina’s alternative order is the first and most prevalent that the reader encounters since she is the narrator for the majority of the text. The order that Cristina has created and follows is one that is comprised of sex with multiple partners. Immediately there is a description of the protagonists’ childhood, and Cristina notes that “a nosotras nos quedaba la opción de ser monjas y de considerarnos Hijas de María” ‘we were left with the option of being nuns and considering ourselves Daughters of Mary’ (17). However, shortly after she finishes the explanation of what this would entail, Cristina states “ya desde entonces empezaba a barruntar en mi cabecita la idea de que no me apetecía mucho ser virgen” ‘since that moment an idea began to form in my little head that I did not feel like being a virgin’ (18). Cristina delves right in and describes the alternative that she has chosen to the Symbolic Order, and Etxebarria also provides evidence of the composite perverse ethical model that she is presenting for the Spanish woman reader. The author titles the first chapter “A de atípica” which would be translated to ‘A for Atypical’ (it should be noted that the adjective “atípica” in Spanish is in the feminine form). This chapter title immediately alerts the reader that something about the characters, plot, or any other aspect of the novel that will be read is not typical or perhaps not normal. Once the reader has passed the chapter title, the narration starts almost in medias res with Cristina narrating about a sexual experience that she just had with a relative stranger, going into detail about the sex that she had with this man. This is of course only one sexual experience that is related throughout the text, but as more chapters accumulate under Cristina’s narration, it becomes clear that her world, her alternative to the Symbolic Order, is ruled partially by sex.

Although sex is not the focus of the next chapter, it does demonstrate the importance of different men in Cristina’s life. The narration begins “B de bajón,” or “B for Relapse” (All of the chapter titles in Spanish follow the Spanish alphabet with words providing a glimpse into the theme of the chapter which all begin with that letter of the alphabet. To maintain the original meaning, a more precise translation has been provided rather than attempting to keep the letters all the same) or perhaps “B for Depression,” with memories of old boyfriends. Perhaps a better
understanding of the chapter can be gleaned by reading it under the title of “B for Relapse.” This title does indeed work for this chapter as Cristina falls back into a routine that was first seen in the previous chapter where she reminisced about her sexual experiences and the relationships she had with the men. There is special focus on her ex-boyfriend Iain, who is a major contributor to the imaginary law of sex that Cristina has set up for her life instead of following the Symbolic Order. This near obsession with Iain and sex leads to a revelation by Cristina’s friend Line as they continue discussing sex and eventually mention Freud. Line discusses his theory of sublimation, stating: “yo de lo que hablo es de lo de la sublimación esa. O sea, que si toda la energía que concentramos en el sexo, que en nuestro caso es mucha, la empleásemos en otra cosa, nos haríamos ricas. Tú, por ejemplo, si has decidido dejar de follar, puedes ponerte a escribir una novela” ‘What I am talking about is that of that sublimation. In other words, if all the energy that we concentrate on sex, which in our case is a lot, was employed on something else, we would be rich. You, for example, if you have decided to stop fucking, you can dedicate yourself to writing a novel’ (97). This, however, would require a change in the order or the law that Cristina has set up in her life, and it is clear in her reaction that this is not acceptable. Cristina’s life is overrun by sex and there is absolutely no interest in change.

On the other hand, sex is not the only alternative that Cristina has found as a law different from the Law that she and her sisters have disavowed. The use of illegal street drugs, Ecstasy to be specific, has become a substitute to the Symbolic Order along with sex. Evidence of this alternative world, as well as her tentative forays into the real world, appear in the narration of the fourth chapter which begins right in the middle of one of her drug binges. She explains “pero este estado de cosas no puede durar mucho … te toca volver al mundo de los vivos” ‘but this state of things cannot last long … you have to return to the world of the living’ (36). She continues to state that “por un instante regreso a la realidad” ‘for an instant I return to reality’. This scene demonstrates the importance of Ecstasy in Cristina’s life, but this is not a story of a junkie but of a young woman who has found a replacement for the Law that she has chosen to disavow. Like the law of sex in her life, Ecstasy establishes its place in Cristina’s life as a law early on in the text and continues throughout the whole novel. Cristina’s drug use is presented throughout the course of the novel, which is also evidence of its establishment as an imaginary law for her. Ecstasy becomes the norm for the people that surround Cristina whether they are friends or the people that she serves in the bar.
The first time that the reader learns of the Cristina’s drug use is in the chapter “D de deseo y destierro,” or ‘D for Desire and Displacement’. Not only is there Cristina’s description of what she is seeing and feeling while high on Ecstasy, but there is also evidence of how it is a normal part of her life. She describes the men that come to her bar as people seeking Ecstasy to avoid their solitude, although they always leave alone. This description of the men in the bar paired with her regular use of Ecstasy marks her perceived normalcy of the alternative order she is following. It is evidence of a world where the use of illegal drugs is common and helps with the common woes of the everyday person, fitting in with the “Displacement” in the chapter title. The drug use by Cristina reaches its peak in the chapter “S de susto” ‘S for Scare’, when Cristina and her two friends Line and Gema are stopped by police and searched. The police find pills that turn out to be fake and let the women go, although the three women think the police just wanted the drugs for themselves. This alternative that rules the lives of Cristina and her friends is quite different from that of the norms of the Symbolic Order, the Law. Instead of receiving a scare (in other words, the signifier is disavowed), as the chapter title suggests, the three women return to the streets, apparently high and believing that the only thing bad about their night is that their Ecstasy is now gone. This should have been a major event which would be a catalyst for castration allowing for Cristina’s entrance into the Symbolic Order. Instead, Cristina continues with her imaginary law as part of the composite perverse structure the Gaena sisters have chosen, making another disavowal in order to avoid castration and the eventual positioning within the Symbolic Order so that she may continue following the alternative order she has chosen.

More credence is lent to choice of multiple paths within the composite perverse structure displayed by the Gaena sisters when Cristina comments upon the path of homosexuality. When discussing the sisters’ attendance at a catholic school, she states: “Quisiera resumirlo así: había dos reacciones extremas. O se estaba realmente loca por los hombres, o una acababa relacionándose con un mujer” ‘I would like to summarize it like this: there were two extreme reactions. Either one was truly crazy for men or one ended up in relationships with a woman’ (134). This is one of Rosa’s two choices of an alternative order, one that is markedly different from any of those followed by her sisters. This law that Rosa has set up dates back to her childhood when she was in school and governs her life for many years though not quite as strongly as drugs and sex rule Cristina’s life. This substitute law is apparent in the first chapter that Rosa narrates among the various descriptions of her life and job in “F de frustrada.” It is
only a brief mention of the beginnings of her homosexuality, but it is clear that this is an alternative she is going to follow. Rosa states: “Pero a pesar de la sobreabundancia de machos entre los que elegir, yo seguía sin sentirme particularmente atraída por el sexo opuesto” ‘But in spite of the overabundance of males to choose from, I continued not feeling particularly attracted to the opposite sex’ (66).

The choice for a path of homosexuality becomes more defined and detailed later in the text as Rosa narrates more about her childhood and her experiences with relationships and sex in “M de melancolía y mustia.” It is in this chapter that Rosa describes the girl she met in school who came to be the only person she ever felt a great love for and to whom she connected with like no other. The sadness Rosa describes at never meeting someone as special and remarkable as the girl from school relates well to the chapter title of “M for Melancholy and Gloomy.” Cristina also continues to support the validity of homosexuality as an alternative order when relating the homosexuality of her friend Gema, stating that she knew from the beginning that Gema was a lesbian and never thought anything of it; indeed, she does not understand the issue that people make out of this preference. Although this is not the path that Cristina has chosen, as one persona of the composite perverse subject that the Gaena sisters make up, she acknowledges the possibility of another order than the one that she has chosen which in turn provides more evidence of the plausibility of Rosa’s alternative. Therefore, one persona has chosen an alternative order of homosexuality and another persona recognizes the validity of it.

Homosexuality is not the only alternative that Rosa has established as a substitute to the Symbolic Order. Rosa has chosen to focus her life on her work and make work her life, choosing it as a substitute to the Law which would have her not just working, but spending time on various activities in her free time or involved in a relationship. This alternative order is noted by Rosa’s younger sister Cristina in the dialogue between the two in the bar where Cristina works (Rosa responds by critiquing Cristina). Upon hearing that Rosa has stopped by after having left work at ten p.m., Cristina quickly responds by saying “joder, tía… Eso no es vida, qué quieres que te diga” ‘shit, girl… That is not life, what do you want me to say’ (43). Rosa explains that “tampoco es vida la tuya” ‘yours is not a life either’ (43). Although Cristina thinks that Rosa’s alternative is horrible, it is a viable option, one that is evidently important. The significance of this substitute can be observed in the first chapter that Rosa narrates, beginning “F de frustrada” discussing how to dress for success in business, repeatedly citing John T.
Molloy’s book *Dress for Success* which tells women to dress and act like men to become a successful executive. Rosa notes that she spends twelve to fourteen hours in the office; comparing the amount of time she is there to the most exploited laborers of the nineteenth century, at the same time that she explains the joy she gets in her work, dressing for the job, and behaving like an executive. It becomes evident that the alternative order that she has chosen may have its issues but that she is happy with it and perhaps even addicted to it.

This substitute order for the Law is cemented in the next chapter that Rosa narrates which is titled “J de jeringuilla” or “J for Syringe.” This chapter provides evidence of the imaginary order of work that Rosa has chosen while also comparing it to the substitution of drugs for the Law, similar to the one that Cristina has chosen. Rosa presents a theory which is a comparison of her imaginary law to that of the drug addicts that inhabit the park. Rosa recognizes the validity of the many paths and alternatives to the Symbolic Order that one can choose: “A veces contemplo a esos chicos y chicas de edad indefinida y me digo, Rosa, creo que lo que hacen con su vida no es peor que lo que tú has hecho con la tuya” ‘Sometimes I contemplate the guys and gals of an undefined age and I tell myself, Rosa, I believe that what they are doing with their lives is no worse than what you have done with yours’ (102). Rosa has been enslaved by her job as it is taking all of her time and running her life just as the youths are confined by the drugs that they are taking. In the chapter “T de triunfadores” Rosa continues citing Molloy’s book about success and noting that she is alone but that she is successful, making ten million pesetas a year (about seventy-five thousand U.S. dollars in 1997) and owns a BMW. At this point in the novel, the substitution of a career as her imaginary law instead of the Symbolic Order is well established, although it is not necessarily what she wants anymore, as will be discussed later.

The oldest sister Ana has an order established that is not directly evidenced until almost the end of the novel. Similar to Cristina, Ana has found a substitute in drugs, though she uses legal drugs, but in an illegal and addicted manner. She immediately begins “V de vulnerable” with a description of all of the drugs she takes and what her life is like following this order. The fact that drugs rule her life is evident just three lines into this chapter, providing a detailed example of their importance as her choice of order. Ana explains her steady progression into this alternative to the Symbolic Order, at the same time noting that things cannot and are not always the way she lives. She states:
Seguí tomando tranxilium una semana o así, y me pasaba el día medio dormida, pero me
daba cuenta de que, por mucho que lo desease, no podía pasarme la vida durmiendo, …
entonces recordé unas pastillas amarillas que había tomado durante una temporada … En
su momento las había dejado porque me parecía que me excitaban demasiado, pero
entonces pensé que eran exactamente lo que me hacía falta.
I continued taking Tranxilium for a week or so and spent the day half-asleep, but I
realized that, as much as I wanted to, I could not sleep my life away, … then I
remembered those yellow pills that I had taken for some time … [that] in some moment I
had dropped them because it seemed that they excited me too much, but now I thought
that they were exactly what I was missing (228-29).

The majority of the chapter then is Ana’s discussion in detail as to why these pills have become a
necessity in her life. The drugs she depends on have taken over her life, and she has chosen to
follow this order for quite some time now. However, like Rosa and her choice of an order
consisting of her career, Ana makes a concerted effort to demonstrate she is ready for a change.

Although the Gaena sisters as a composite perverse subject have disavowed castration
and therefore the Symbolic Order, they still want and need a law. In Judith Feher-Gurevich’s “A
Lacanian Approach to the Logic of Perversion,” it is noted that the perverse subject will stage
castration in order to keep the Other in a position of power and to create a law that s/he can
follow. Feher-Gurevich states that the pervert’s

[…] only recourse will be to defy whatever law presents itself to them, transgressing this
law in the hope of finally discovering an order of reality stronger and more stable than the
lies and deceptions that organized the psychic reality of their childhood. Perverts will
therefore need to enact a scenario that will enable them to expose such deceptions, in
order to impose a law thanks to which the Other can remain all-powerful (202).

The perverse subject stages castration in order to create a law that s/he can submit to since s/he
has not taken his/her place within the Symbolic Order. All three of the Gaena sisters are
attempting to prop up the paternal function in an attempt to have such a law articulated. Because
their father was either weak or inadequate and was therefore unable to provide them with the
paternal signifier that would provide separation, the three women needed to have the paternal
function propped up by someone else. The Gaena sisters have established different alternatives
to the Symbolic Order cementing their subjectivity as both composite and perverse, providing themselves with a law that they have chosen.

## Quasi-Hypertext Rhizome: Etxebarria’s Structuring of the Novel as Reinforcement of Perversion

Žižek discusses the hypertext rhizome and cyberspace as places of perversion, stating that cyberspace is indeed “the realm of perversion at its purest” (36) in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch’s Lost Highway*. Žižek begins by stating that cyberspace, and especially virtual reality, is in fact the perverse structure. He describes perversion at its most fundamental level, explaining that it is a defense against the Real of death and sexuality. In other words, perversion is the disavowal of a limit, primarily the disavowal of castration. The latter is what makes the perverse subject perverse and relates to his or her perception of lack in the Other. The pervert disavows the fact that lack causes desire. Castration takes place when the subject abandons all attempts to be the lone object of desire for the Other, which also requires the subject to give up *jouissance*. Therefore, in disavowing castration, the perverse subject also affirms *jouissance*. Žižek states this clearly: "what the perverse scenario enacts is a ‘disavowal of castration’, a universe in which, as in cartoons, a human being can survive any catastrophe; in which adult sexuality is reduced to a childish game; in which one is not forced to die or to choose one of the two sexes" (36). In Etxebarria’s novel, the Gaena sisters also disavow the forced choices of motherhood, marriage, and refraining from vices. By permitting her protagonist sisters to form a composite subject, Etxebarria is implementing a perverse strategy. Through the disavowal of castration, the Gaena sisters are also able to disavow the forced choices that would come with that. Žižek’s discussion of cyberspace as exemplary of perversion helps to demonstrate the Gaena sisters’ ethical stance of perversion. Just as the perverse scenario allows the subject to avoid death, cyberspace too allows the player to keep going with multiple lives and a reset button, as it were.

Slavoj Žižek moves on to declare the hypertext rhizome as exemplary of perversion. The hypertext rhizome does not favor one ordering of a text over another. This means that there is no predetermined order to the text, and the reader is lured in multiple (and conflicting) directions. The reader must accept that s/he is lost in this complex network of numerous pathways and
connections. Because there is no predetermined outcome to the text and there are many routes, the text can have a multitude of readings as well as numerous interpretations. Rather than causing anxiety, this confusion of routes and lack of closure or a final destination are actually reassuring. This closure that is lacking is more that of finitude, or death, and is important to the structure of the hypertext rhizome according to Žižek. On this point, Žižek states: “the very lack of the final point of closure serves as a kind of denial which protects us from confronting the trauma of our finitude, of the fact that there our story has to end at some point. There is no ultimate irreversible point, since, in this multiple universe, there are always other paths to explore, alternate realities into which one can take refuge when one reaches a deadlock” (37).

The Gaena form a composite perverse subject which allows for this quasi-hypertext rhizome classification. The opportunity exists for each to follow the path of either of the other sisters, or other paths in general. The reader follows the narration and its change in directions and the following of different routes carefully, attempting to make sense of the chaos and confusion that results from the rapid change of narrative voice, the flashes between past and present, and the many different paths presented by the composite perverse subject of the Gaena sisters. And although the Spanish alphabet provides a semblance of order to the novel, the text could indeed be read in a multitude of different orders resulting in a variety of interpretations. The confusion of various pathways and the possibility of reading the text in many different ways provides some evidence to support the classification of a hypertext rhizome. However, its structure does not entirely lack closure or finitude. It is therefore more accurate to classify the text as having a quasi-hypertext rhizome structure.

The Spanish alphabet that Etxebarria has employed as a means to structure the text, at least in appearance, does not necessarily have to be read in alphabetical order. In fact, this structuring of the novel with the alphabet could be explored differently by treating the letters themselves as the rhizome. The reader could reorder the text completely creating a completely different reading than the one provided by the author. The reader could order the chapters in such a way that all the chapters that each sister narrates are read together rather than following the narrative as it is, jumping back and forth and back and forth among the three sisters. If the letters of the alphabet are treated as a rhizome themselves, any number of readings could be completed leading to varied interpretations. Indeed, should a different order place the chapters narrated by Ana before those narrated by Rosa, the mysterious phone calls received by Rosa...
(which the reader learns at the end of the novel are made by Ana) would take on a new meaning. The reader could also take the words provided at the beginning of each chapter and perhaps erase one or more of the words, or perhaps replace them with words that would provide structure to the new narrative order created.

The Spanish alphabet forming the structure of the novel is not the only clue to the composite perverse subjectivity of the Gaena sisters. There is evidence that they are all living under an imaginary law that is different from its Symbolic counterpart, although each is not necessarily living under the same order as the other. The imaginary laws that are set up by the Gaena sisters are based on the various disavowals they have made. There is jealousy and imitation among the three of them with attempts by one to follow the path chosen by another, demonstrating further the composite subject that Ana, Rosa, and Cristina make up. And finally, at the end of the novel Cristina provides proof of the composite subjectivity that the Gaena sisters make up. Cristina is in fact the narrator for the majority of the chapters, including the first five and the last three chapters to the text. Ana and Rosa each narrate a total of five chapters and never two in a row. Although the narration varies between the three sisters, due to the composite subjectivity that they form, the story flows as if narrated by one person, easily following the different paths that each sister takes. Because the narration moves between three sisters, there is also a variation in the order that each of the sisters has been following. In fact, if the reader follows the narration of one sister, the chapters that she narrates can be read in any order. For example, Rosa narrates chapters F, J, M, P, and T, which provide information about the alternative order she follows. To be more precise, these alternative orders are the imaginary laws that the perverse subject establishes in order to establish a limit to the Other’s jouissance.

**Doing Things Over Again: The Perverse Strategy as a Way For the Subject to Start Over**

The Gaena sisters have set up various orders parallel to the Symbolic Order that they have disavowed. Pursuant to their disavowal of castration, it is in the nature of the perverse subject to prop up his/her own law, a structure inherent to the perverse subject. What this composite perverse structure does is allow the subject to start over, to follow a path different from the one that she has chosen. In other words, this structure not only allows the perverse
subject to change her mind, but it allows the pervert to never make the choice in the first place. This is similar to the situation that can be seen in the film *Run Lola Run* in which Lola must get her boyfriend money before something terrible happens; i.e. she helps him rob a bank and then is killed or he is killed by the ambulance she is in trying to reach him. The film only ends when the negative endings are replaced by the only possible positive outcome with Lola and her boyfriend getting the money and surviving any twist of fate. This is the type of structure into which Ana, Rosa, and Cristina have been interpolated. The Gaena sisters are establishing their own paths to start over that, as a composite perverse subject, will allow them to follow a new adventure.

The youngest persona of the composite perverse subject provides the key piece of evidence that the perverse subject is aware of his/her position within an imaginary structure and that there are other imaginary structures that s/he may position him/herself. It is in Cristina’s final revelation that she recognizes not only these possibilities but also the fact that the sisters indeed form a composite perverse subject. She states: “Desde niña alguien (mi madre, o Gonzalo, o las monjas, o todos, o el mundo) había decidido que éramos distintas … y si por nuestras venas corre la misma sangre del mismo padre y la misma madre, ¿quién asegura que somos tan distintas? ¿Quién nos dice que en el fondo no somos la misma persona?” ‘Since I was a child, someone (my mother, Gonzalo, the nuns, everyone, or the world) had decided that we were distinct … and if the same blood from the same father and the same mother runs through our veins, who is so sure that we are so different? Who can tell us that deep down we are not the same person?’ (267). This statement describes the awareness of the sisters that they are not multiple neurotic subjects related only by blood but that they are different masks of one composite subject who is outside of the Symbolic Order. It is recognition of the imaginary structure in which the subject resides and of the opportunity to enter into a different imaginary law.

The three personas of this composite perverse subject are found within various alternative orders and all three also recognize that there are other imaginary structures. Both Rosa and Cristina are aware of the possibility of following a different order, although it appears as if the only consideration of changing orders is made by the persona of Rosa. Rosa’s narration also exhibits the understanding of this viable change in structure after pondering the alternative that Ana has followed: “En fin, yo no tenía nada que criticar a Ana. No podía decir que la vida de ella fuese mejor ni peor que la mía” ‘In the end, I could not criticize Ana. I could not say that
her life was either better or worse than my own’ (67). Even though Rosa does not actually move out of one imaginary structure into another, this statement demonstrates the understanding that this possibility exists for the perverse subject. The youngest sister also provides evidence of the perverse subject’s knowledge of an order separate of one in which she is living. In the last chapter Cristina explains the understanding that she has as one persona of a composite perverse subject of the validity of the various orders that are open to the perverse subject as a whole. There is evidence of Cristina’s recognition of the multiple imaginary structures that exist for the pervert. The oldest sister Ana, on the other hand, not only acknowledges the alternative orders, but she also is the only persona of the subject to follow through with the option available to the pervert to change from one order to another. Ana’s description of how she perceives an alternative order to her own substitution provides strong documentation of the pervert’s recognition of the imaginary structure in which she is found as well as any others that she may want to follow instead. Indeed, Ana states explicitly the desire to change her alternative to one she sees regularly: “Acurrucada en el sofá me invento otra vida, otro nombre, otra personalidad. Imagino que no me he casado. Y que he estudiado, que he estudiado una carrera seria, […] Me imagino que soy como mi hermana Rosa” ‘Curled up on the couch I invent another life for myself, another name, another personality. I imagine that I am not married. And that I have studied, that I have studied a serious profession, […] I imagine that I am like my sister Rosa’ (230). And though she may not move to this particular order, she is the only persona to actually begin the transition to a different imaginary structure.

In the last chapter of the novel, there is a scene which details Ana’s decision to follow a different path and Rosa’s reaction to this event. Cristina and Rosa discuss the situation and comment on Ana’s decision about when she woke up one morning and followed her normal routine, that is until she told her husband that she wanted a divorce. The conversation between the two reflects the change in route that Ana has chosen to make, leaving her life as a married woman that in turn leads to her entering a mental institution. After the two sisters have left the mental institution where Ana is staying, Rosa explains the phone calls that Ana made to her to Cristina. Rosa says to Cristina: “qué quieres que te diga, si Ana ha decidido dejar a su marido, si ésta es la primera decisión que ha tomado en su vida, si es la primera vez que se atreve a ser ella misma, ajena a las imposiciones de los demás, ten por seguro que no seré yo quien intente disuadirla” ‘what do you want me to say, if Ana has decided to leave her husband, if this is the
first decision she has made in her life, if it is the first time she has dared to be herself, beyond the impositions of others, be certain that it will not be me who intends to dissuade her’ (266). Rosa recognizes the possibility, indeed the actual selection of a different route within perversion in her explanation of the position in which Ana currently placed herself. Ana seems to have made a bold and daring choice to change her life, and indeed it may be difficult for a young woman who was alive for part of Franco’s rule and society to decide to end a marriage. On the other hand, the decision to start over and to move in a different direction than she currently is heading is significant and a strong example of the perverse structure. Rosa’s reaction to the varying choices that Ana has decided to make also provides evidence of the sisters’ composite perverse subjectivity.

The last conversation in the novel includes several references to the composite perverse structure in which the sisters live. The two younger sisters have learned many things about each other and their older sister including Ana’s phone calls playing *La hora fatal* that she admitted to making. The different personas within the composite perverse subject are demonstrating the decision to choose a different order than what they currently know. Rosa has seen an example that the persona of Ana has provided as her older sister and uses that decision as a model of their composite perversion and the possibilities within this subjective structure to make a change for herself, as a different personality of the composite pervert. At this point, Rosa reveals her mode in the Gaena sisters’ composite perverse structure, specifically regarding the possibility of starting over and following a different path than the one that she has been following. Rosa states:

-Porque ahora también ha llegado mi momento, y creo que me toca admitir cosas que he estado negándome, creo que debo hacer los mismo que ha hecho Ana, y recuperarme a mí misma. Reconocer ante el mundo que no me gusta mi trabajo, que no me gustan los hombres, yo qué sé… lo que decida que debo reconocer. Recuperar a la niña valiente que era y que dejé de ser cuando crecí.

Because now I have also arrived at my moment, and I believe that it is my turn to admit things that I have been denying to myself, I believe I should do the same thing Ana has done, and recover myself. Recognize before the world that I do not like my job, that I do not like men; I don’t know… what I decide I should recognize. Recover the brave girl that I was and that I stopped being when I grew up (267).
Like her older sister, Rosa has come to a point where she does not like the choices she has made, appearing to want a new start. In fact, Rosa appears to discover the point where her path went in a direction contrary to that which she wanted and believes that starting anew at that point could lead to happiness. This is similar to the recognition that Ana makes towards the varied alternative orders, but in Rosa’s case she does not actually make the final decision to change.

The multiple acknowledgements by the subject in *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* provides evidence of the multiple imaginary structures that exist for the pervert. Then again, the composite perverse subject of the Gaena sisters does not just recognize the various alternatives, one of the personas, that of Ana, in fact begins the transition from one alternative to another. This movement duplicates the structure that Žižek mentions in *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch’s Lost Highway* when he uses cyberspace as an exemplary representation of perversion. As in the example of cyberspace and the film *Run Lola Run*, the Gaena sisters use what is available to them as a composite perverse subject. Perversion allows the subject to start at the beginning and attempt for a different resolution than the one at which s/he has already arrived. The perverse subject has the opportunity to do what s/he wants – back up, start over again, follow any of a multitude of paths all because s/he has disavowed castration. The Gaena sisters have provided many examples that demonstrate the structures that Žižek and Fink describe.

**Trapped in Perversion: A Successful Ethical Stance**

The Gaena sisters have been modeling perversion throughout the text and have accepted their subjective position. This ethical stance has worked well for Ana, Rosa, and Cristina, providing them with the opportunities to have a law propped up for them and to follow different paths. Indeed, Ana and Rosa plan to start over and choose a different route with different choices at the end of the novel. Though Cristina has not mentioned a desire to do the same, she has been successfully created her own imaginary structures. Though all of these details demonstrate the success of the perverse strategy as an ethical stance for the Gaena sisters, it is a structure that they are stuck in and will remain in. Looking at the two structures on the surface, neurosis and perversion seem like complete opposites with the neurotic refusing to partake in the Other’s *jouissance* and the pervert (some of them) attempting to become the object of the Other’s
desire. However, through the discussions of Žižek, Feher-Gurevich, and Fink as well as the evidence provided in Etxebarria’s texts, this position of the perverse subject is just a façade. While it seems to be a comprehensive and almost destructive search for satisfaction or pleasure that the pervert takes on, this behavior disguises what is really an attempt to bring about a law that actually restrains this *jouissance*. Although the perverse subject has refused to give up *jouissance* by disavowing castration, the endless *jouissance* becomes too much and the perverse subject wants an end to it. Fink makes this point clear: “The pervert’s will to *jouissance* (pursuit of satisfaction) encounters its limit in a law of his own making – a law he makes the Other lay down, stipulate, mandate (even if, as in the case of sadism, the sadist himself plays the role of the Other and victim simultaneously)” (192). This setting up of the imaginary law, of an alternative order, is in fact the staging of castration seen in the sisters’ choices in drugs, sex, etc.

The perverse subject, as Fink goes on to note, finally gets relief from *jouissance* out of this staging of castration that comes with having a law provided for him/her. It is a behavior that should require the pervert to give up *jouissance*, but, as luck would have it, provides the pervert with satisfaction as well. The Gaena sisters again serve as a prime example of this attitude in the various events of the novel. Cristina gets off on discussing and partaking in the various sexual encounters that pepper her narration of the novel. It is also evident that her drug use is of great importance and enjoyment. Ana continues to stage castration over and over with Rosa on the telephone, playing *La hora fatal* for her, each time being hung up on by Rosa. The Gaena sisters have adopted a composite perverse subjectivity as an ethical stance and have proven throughout the text their willingness to disavow forced choices, ultimately disavowing castration. They have made these disavowals so that they would not experience separation, then discovering that said separation would provide them with relief from the anxiety experienced with limitless *jouissance*. This then leads them to stage castration that provides them with satisfaction and a law that will put a limit on *jouissance*, even though it is only temporary. Throughout the text Ana, Rosa, and Cristina have accepted the position of a composite perverse subject and used it to their advantage.

Finally, at the end of the novel, the sisters appear to be happy and pleased with the decisions they are making. Ana starts the chain of events that both proves the existence and effectiveness of their perverse strategy and also provokes the other two sisters into starting anew or recognizing the validity of their stance and the sisters’ choices. Rosa is inspired by Ana’s
decision to start at the beginning and follow a different path than the one she has chosen of housewife and mother. She also learns that it is not her soul but Ana who has been making La hora fatal phone calls to her. Rosa then decides to start over as well, returning to the child that felt she could do anything she wanted, the child she was who was happy. This turn of events regarding her two sisters has Cristina contemplating her own position and the relationship shared by the Gaena sisters. She realizes that there is a change in her sisters, a change in the way they are living so that they can follow a new path, as in the example offered by Žižek when discussing cyberspace. Cristina has a revelation after hearing her sister Rosa talking about their sister Ana, finally realizing with certainty that indeed the three of them are the same person. She provides more proof and power to this statement when she ends the narration by saying: “No os lo he dicho todavía: mi madre se llama Eva. Pero espero que nosotras seamos hijas de Lilith” ‘I still have not told you everything: my mother’s name is Eve. But I hope that we are the daughters of Lilith’ (267). Lilith is the ultimate phallic mother, the one who does not want her child, the subject, to learn the Name-of-the-Father and achieve separation. By mentioning Lilith, and her hope that the sisters as a composite perverse subject are her daughters, Cristina is directly expressing the desire to remain in perversion, where the sisters can disavow forced choices, disavow castration, and follow a different path whenever and if they so desire.

The figure of Lilith seems to function as a signifier of the perverse structure. This idea that Adam had a wife before Eve is mentioned as early as the fourth to sixth centuries in the Genesis Rabbah. However, the idea that Lilith is Adam’s first wife is exclusive to The Alphabet of Ben Sira, a text believed to be written between the eighth and tenth centuries by Ben Sira (Sirach). The belief in Adam having a wife before Eve comes from an interpretation of a line in the Book of Genesis 1:27-1:28: “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them; and God said unto them: ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the earth’ (17). It is not until a later passage that Eve is created; in Genesis 2:22 woman is created from one of Adam’s ribs. Lilith is formed out of the clay just as God made Adam, and it is because of this that Lilith claims she and Adam are equal which causes her to refuse to submit to him. Lilith flies off and refuses to come back to Adam despite threats from God conveyed through three angels sent to retrieve her.
This description of Adam’s supposed first wife Lilith depicts a maternal figure who is not bound by the father which makes sense in the description of the Gaena sisters as a composite perverse subject. Important to this structure is the symbolic father who is not a real person rather a function which is that of imposing the Law. The symbolic father’s role is to intervene in the imaginary dual relationship between mother and child. His role is fundamental in the structure of the symbolic order and is also referred to as the Name-of-the-Father. It is the Name-of-the-Father that either forces the subject into neurosis, or is disavowed by the subject, leading him/her into perversion. Lilith is the ultimate phallic mother, the one who does not want her child, the subject, to learn the Name-of-the-Father and achieve separation. Instead, the subject is relegated to the structure of perversion where s/he has access to the Symbolic Order and has achieved alienation. The Gaena sisters have formed a composite perverse subject and have demonstrated their acceptance of this position into which they have been interpolated. Cristina then questions who is to say that she and her sisters are not one and the same person, after all, they share the same mother, father, and blood. This comment demonstrates the awareness of the composite perverse subject that the Gaena sisters form. Coupled with Cristina’s comment that she wishes all the sisters were the daughters of Lilith, these statements are direct evidence that the Gaena sisters (or at least one of them) have been interpolated into a composite perverse subjectivity and that they accept this structure.

Not only does Lilith represent the maternal figure not bound by the father, but she is also a figure of demand. The Lacanian definition of demand corresponds to need which in turn will lead to desire. Dylan Evans, in An Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Analysis, explains the Lacanian concept of demand using the example of a child and its mother explaining that the baby cries (the cries are his demand) so that his mother will provide food (food is his biological need). But there is a negative side effect to this need being filled, because it is provided by another which takes on another meaning as proof of the Other’s love. Therefore, demand ends up with a double function of articulating a need and also a need for love. This is when desire enters the picture as there are needs which are articulated by demand and which may be satisfied; however, the craving for the Other’s love is both unconditional and insatiable, meaning that it will never be satisfied. There is then some need left over after the subject’s demand has been satisfied, and it is this left-over that constitutes desire (35-36). The perverse subject fits into this scenario because s/he is bound by the demand of Lilith, the phallic mother. The perverse subject will
position him/herself as the object of the drive. As the object of the drive, the perverse subject has positioned him/herself as the means of the Other’s *jouissance*. With Lilith keeping the perverse subject bound by her demand, and Cristina, the youngest of the Gaena sisters, proclaiming her wish that the sisters were the daughters of Lilith, Cristina is placing the Gaena sisters within the repetitive circle of the object of drive which will continually circle *jouissance*.

By mentioning Lilith and her hope that the sisters as a composite perverse subject are her daughters, Cristina is directly expressing the will to remain in perversion, where the sisters can disavow forced choices, disavow castration, and follow a different path if and when they so desire. The Gaena sisters may actually be the daughters of Eve, but by wishing to be the daughters of Lilith, the composite perverse subjectivity into which they have been interpolated is also a subjectivity that they have accepted. This mask or ethical stance that they have adopted has allowed them to disavow everything that causes anxiety or is a forced choice for the neurotic subject. It allows them the possibility to place themselves into the position of the object of desire of the Other while still maintaining distance from *jouissance*. With Lilith binding them with her demand, they are trapped in her *jouissance*, constantly staging castration in order to limit it.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This study has explored female subjective strategies in post-Franco Spain as presented by Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria. It began with a look at the strategies of hysteria and perversion found in the films of Pedro Almodóvar, whose works are much more widely known and studied. Through the characters presented in Almodóvar’s films, the hysterical and perverse structures are demonstrated and explained so that in the less known and less studied works by Montero and Etxebarria they can be better understood. Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* presents the reader with Lucía Romero, an hysterical subject attempting to restructure the Symbolic Order. Etxebarria introduces three sisters in *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*, inscribing in them a composite perverse subjectivity that allows them to deal with forced choices, castration, and the Symbolic Order. The current study employs the theories of Jacques Lacan as they have been applied in studies by Bruce Fink, Paul Verhaeghe, Judith Feher-Gurevich, and Slavoj Žižek. With this foundation, a psychoanalytic reading of these two novels is possible and explores possible subjectivities for women living in post-Franco Spain.

Jacques Lacan explains the structures into which each subject can be interpolated, expanding upon and clarifying psychosis, perversion, and neurosis as originally laid out by Sigmund Freud. Lacan’s theories provide the framework for the current study; the subjective structures he describes provide the authors with the possibility of an ethical stance for their female readers. Lacan states that subjects are constantly in a struggle to come to terms with desire and the Other, with some subjects attempting to deal with the Symbolic Order by refusing to step into it and others hoping to move beyond it. Montero and Etxebarria’s protagonists model these two approaches presented as successful subjective strategies. Since there has been so little analysis done on Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* and Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*, an analysis of Pedro Almodóvar’s films helped set the stage for the current reading. Analysis of Almodóvar’s films demonstrates a tendency to place men in the position of subject, whether he is perverse or an hysteric. There are of course exceptions to this in his films, but it is in his male characters where the structures of hysteria and perversion are the strongest and most evident.
The hysterical and perverse subjective strategies employed as a means for the subject to come to terms with desire, the Other, castration, and their own subjective position has been effective. Considering critical discussions of Lacan and his theories as well as the application of said theories to literature and popular culture, the search for autonomy and identity in Montero and Etxebarria’s novels takes on a different meaning: the women protagonists in these novels are attempting to position themselves in relation to the Other. Lucía’s journey in *La hija del caníbal* begins as a reaction to the missing Other and continues as a search for a replacement for the Other as a result of her hysterical subjective strategy. In *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*, the Gaena sisters create and follow multiple paths using their composite perverse strategy. Although the protagonists in Montero and Etxebarria’s novels employ two very different subjective strategies, they are striving to reach the same goal – a position that helps them come to terms with and relate to desire and the Other. They are successful in their respective strategies, finding their place with regards to the Symbolic Order.

Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria have published two very different novels that have the same goal in mind – to provide a model with which Spanish women can come to terms with desire and the Other in post-Franco Spain. Both authors have written novels whose protagonists model an ethical stance which allows the reader to adopt the subjectivity presented as a sort of mask. Rosa Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* is the story of a woman, Lucía, who searches for her missing husband even though many obstacles are thrown in her way. Lucía demonstrates an hysterical subjectivity and the symptoms and structures inherent within it. As an hysteric, she has strategies available to her so that she can deal with the missing Other and desire. The strategy of hysteria proves to be successful for Montero’s protagonist as she has not only found her husband but she also was able to effectively restructure the Symbolic Order. Lucía Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* is a very different story about three sisters, Ana, Rosa, and Cristina Gaena, relating the events of their lives and how they have become who they are. The Gaena sisters form a composite perverse subjectivity that has enabled them to come to terms with the suspension of the Master and castration. This composite perverse strategy is also successful for the sisters and even allows them to start over and follow a different path than the one that they have been living on up until this point in their lives. Even though the subjective strategies of Montero and Etxebarria’s protagonists are very different, both prove to be successful.
Limitations of the Present Study and Direction of Future Research

There are many points of interest that have stemmed from the novels and their authors and the psychoanalytic reading of post-Franco works that have not been fully developed in the current study but would provide insightful and valuable research to the field. The first item that would provide information into the subjective strategies would be including analysis of the films that have been based upon Montero’s *La hija del caníbal* and Etxebarria’s *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*. Although both films credit the authors as co-writers, the directors of the films and the other co-writers are male. This could lead to changes in the symptoms, structures, and even the success of the subjective strategies that the female protagonists are modeling. While it is unlikely that the ethical stance of hysteria or perversion would change completely to another one, it is quite likely that the actions, structures, and even the outcomes would change due to the male directors and co-writers. By studying the films and the differences from the texts they are based on, information could be gleaned possibly demonstrating a variation in the subjective structures and indeed the success of the strategies. The film based on Etxebarria’s novel *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*, is directed and co-written by another Spaniard, Miguel Santesmases. There is a possibility of a change when analyzing Montero’s text and the film version, *Lucía Lucía*, because it is filmed in Mexico by a Mexican director and co-writer, Antonio Serrano. An analysis of the movies and their similarities and differences from the texts could provide valuable research into the variations in how men and women see the new society and the ensuing struggles in post-Franco Spain.

The next point that must be mentioned has to do with the authors and their works, as the current study focused only on *La hija del caníbal* and *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas*. Analyzing the other works of Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria would provide more information as to their use of subjective strategies to come to terms with post-Franco society. This could provide especially intriguing and informative evidence in the case of Rosa Montero as she was first published a year after Franco’s death. Etxebarria’s first publication is the novel analyzed in the current study, marking a twenty-year difference between the two authors beginnings in writing. This could provide a quite different look into the struggles faced by Spanish women with Montero providing evidence of the drastic change that came with Franco’s death and then both she and Etxebarria marking the common struggles still faced in more recent
years. Future study of other novels by Montero and Etxebarria could also demonstrate a change or a continuum of success for subjective strategies employed by the authors. The various texts published by Montero and Etxebarria could also demonstrate a variety of subjective strategies, not just varying degrees of success and failure. With more attention to the authors’ other works and the subjective strategies presented within them, there is a possibility that their texts may present a variation in strategies and their outcomes.

Future research would provide a broader understanding of the struggles faced by Spanish women in post-Franco Spain as well as demonstrating whether or not there is a belief that different subjective strategies can be successful. There is great interest in detective fiction in Spain as can be seen in the popularity of Montero’s *La hija del caníbal*. This is also evidenced in the success of writers such as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán and his protagonist Pepe Carvalho, Eduardo Mendoza and his unconventional detective Ceferino, and Andreu Martín and his hero Javier Lallana, among many other writers. Unfortunately, the majority of detective fiction employs a male detective as a protagonist, leaving very few works to research. Indeed, Lourdes Ortiz, the first Spanish woman author to write detective fiction, wrote a novel with a woman detective that was not received well and was therefore her only detective novel. Although it may not be possibly to research female subjective strategies in detective fiction in Spain, the *novela negra*, it would be beneficial to research the differences in subject positions and the success of the outcomes as presented by women authors and those presented by men. The distinction in the gender of the author could end up demonstrating a drastic difference in the subjective strategies that their female protagonists model as an ethical stance. It could also provide quite a different outcome at the end of the novel, with the protagonists’ strategies failing miserably or anywhere else on a continuum of complete success and total failure. Future research would therefore provide valuable analysis into the difference in the application of a subjective strategy and the success of said strategy based on the gender of the author who has written the text.

Further research could also provide valuable insight into the subjective strategies and the outcome, whether successful or not, of female protagonists based on when the literature is written. This study has focused solely on two women writers from post-Franco Spain who have not published anything until after Franco’s death. Analysis of novels published during Franco’s reign versus those published after his death could very well show a striking difference not only in the ethical stances modeled by the protagonists but also the success of each stance. Since there
was such strong censorship during Franco’s dictatorship, the literature during this time was dark, violent, and many times published outside the country. After Franco died, there was an explosion of the arts, including literature, where Spanish writers took to expressing their newfound freedoms and the ability to write what they want. By studying the works of authors who have written during Franco’s reign and after his death, subjective strategies of the female protagonists could vary greatly. Society during Franco’s time was quite different than in the years after his death and the literature may reflect the position in which woman may find herself. The subjective strategies that are presented could also vary according to the year of publication. Not only is a study into the difference in subjective strategies and their success based on whether the texts are published during or after Franco warranted, but further examination into works by authors who published during both time periods would prove especially valuable.

Another possibility of future research would be comparing the subjective strategies and the coinciding success rates of male protagonists compared with female protagonists. A study of this magnitude would take a lot of time and study but could provide insight to the difference of subjective positions among men and women both during Franco’s reign and after his death. Due to the inferior position of women during the years of Franco’s dictatorship, the ethical stances provided to various authors’ protagonists as subjective strategies could very well demonstrate a similar trend depending on the gender of said protagonists. Not only could the male protagonists have quite different subjective strategies but the success rate of the strategies could also differ from those of female protagonists. While studying the gender of the protagonists, it might also prove helpful to note the gender of the author that is interpolating the protagonists into their subjective positions. To keep the scope of this type of study manageable, analyzing the subjective strategies portrayed by male and female protagonists among a few chosen authors, including Montero and Etxebarria’s contemporaries, would be ideal. By comparing both male and female protagonists and the subjective strategies into which they have been interpolated by each author, there may be a striking difference between how male and female protagonists are presented, the subjective strategies that they find themselves in, and the success of the strategies. However, due to the drastic changes in Spanish society since Franco’s death, they may not be a great difference in the subjective strategies presented for male and female protagonists.

While this study has employed a Lacanian analysis to La hija del canibal and Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas, there are other literary theories that could also be applied to these
works as well as any other works by Montero and Etxebarria. These texts could lend themselves nicely to any number of critical theories providing a glimpse into much more than just the subjective positions used as an ethical stance by the protagonists. Both Montero and Etxebarria’s novels could easily be analyzed under a feminist critical theory, and indeed both texts have been studied within this approach in at least one critical article. By analyzing these novels with a different approach, different information and evidence of Spanish twentieth-century society could be demonstrated. For example, a critic analyzing Montero and Etxebarria’s novels under the theory of hermeneutics applies an understanding of the cultural and social forces that have influenced the text at hand. Indeed a hermeneutic perspective would be quite useful to future research of these novels in an attempt to gain further information of the influence that a post-Franco society has on its many authors.

The main idea of this project has been to detail examples of female subjective strategies in post-Franco Spain and whether or not they are successful. Though depicting very different strategies (Montero’s protagonist uses an ethical stance of hysteria and Etxebarria’s protagonists employ a composite perverse subjectivity as their ethical model), the female protagonists have indeed been able to come to terms with the Symbolic Order in the society created after Franco’s death. Reading these novels using different critical approaches and/or comparing them to other novels written during Franco’s reign and after his death would provide much more evidence into the validity of these subjective strategies as well as any others and is definitely part of further research needed. It is hoped that this analysis of these novels through a Lacanian lens has not only contributed to the field of post-Franco literature and provided some valuable insight into female subjective strategies in post-Franco Spain but has also garnered interest into further research.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kristin A. Kiely was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1979, but was raised in Cincinnati, Ohio by her parents, Martin and Carolyn Cohn. She began her undergraduate degree at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in August of 1997, specializing in Environmental Science. However, she soon realized that her true love was Spanish, not science. Kristin graduated from Miami University in 2001 with a B.A. in both Spanish and Psychology.

Shortly into her tenure as an undergraduate, Kristin discovered that Academia was a good fit for her and decided to continue her education in the hopes of attaining an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Spanish to eventually become a University Professor. Under the tutelage of Dr. Kenneth J. Wireback at Miami University, she completed her Master’s thesis, “El efecto del género del hablante en la aspiración de /s/ en el español de Barranquilla, Colombia.” She graduated from Miami University with an M.A. in Spanish in 2003.

Kristin continued her education at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida beginning in July of 2003. She focused on Contemporary Peninsular Literature and has a minor in Literary Theory, with an emphasis on Lacanian psychoanalysis. Kristin completed her dissertation, “Female Subjective Strategies in Post-Franco Spain as Presented by Rosa Montero and Lucía Etxebarria,” with the guidance, support, and direction of her two advisors, Dr. Brenda Cappuccio and Dr. Robert Romanchuk. Both her dissertation and her doctoral degree were completed in 2008.

Kristin currently lives with her two cats, Isis and Seti, in Florence, South Carolina. She is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at Francis Marion University. Kristin truly enjoys everything about the university, and looks forward to examining and publishing more about literature and film during Franco’s regime and post-Franco.