Genealogies of excess: archetypes, intertextuality, and the lesbian body in the poetry and prose of Maria-Mercè Marçal

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Genealogies of Excess:
Archetypes, Intertextuality, and the Lesbian Body in the
Poetry and Prose of Maria-Mercè Marçal

by

Melissa J. McCarron

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Abstract

The writing of Maria-Mercè Marçal, as evidenced in this dissertation, merits in-depth critical study. The poet’s fame, earned by winning numerous literary prizes and honors, the frequent citation of the *divisa* to *Cau de llunes*, the translation of her poetry into song by popular songwriters of the late twentieth century, and her premature death at age 45, have led to a somewhat romanticized, sympathetic view of her work in literary criticism. This dissertation represents the primary stages of an emerging project that aims to be the first full-length manuscript study (published in English, Castilian or Catalan) of Marçal’s writing in its entirety. Its primary divisions - into archetypal re-workings and poetic structure, studies of place and space, intertextuality, and the body - provide a framework within which the complexities of Marçal’s work as a whole may be presented in an organized manner and examine her quest to problematize the “writing” of lesbian desire. From Lacanian and Foucauldian theories of sexuality (predominating in Chapter 1), rhizomatic systems of interrelatedness (most visible in Chapter 3’s intertextual genealogies), eccentricity (most relevant to the study of space in Chapter 2), this dissertation provides a multi-faceted study that considers questions of nation, language and sexuality in Marçal’s portrayal of an eccentric lesbian subject. Culminating in Chapter 4, “Theorizing the Body,” this dissertation concludes by developing theoretical framework through which the more philosophical elements of her writing may be effectively understood. Emerging theories of “queer ecology” (Gaard 1997, Sandilands and Erickson 2010, Stein 2010), enable the present study to circle back to Marçal’s earliest, most consistent preoccupation – political activism, particularly that which challenges injustices and abuses directed toward women and the LGBTQ communities;
in effect any minoritized group that challenges and therefore poses a risk to heteropatriarchy. Marçal creates a complex network of theories of the body that embrace the interconnectedness and “openness to excess” (Grosz 1995) inherent to queer ecology and her attempt to surpass, subvert and exceed pre-established discursive frameworks and presents a literature that “embraces deviation and strangeness,” “sexual pleasure and transgression” and “resistance to heteronormativity” (Sandilands and Erickson 39).
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Introduction

The writing of Maria-Mercè Marçal (1952-1998) embodies a complex network of linguistic, sexual and political becomings. The *divisa* of her first published collection, *Cau de llunes* (1977), alludes to the young poet’s emerging political consciousness: “A l’atzar agraeixo tres dons: haver nascut dona, de classe baixa i nació oprimida. I el tèrbol azur de ser tres voltes rebel” (15). Echoing Tales de Mileto (Aguado 12), the verse became emblematic of her entire poetic and activist career. Another facet of this consciousness, the encoding and decoding of the lesbian body, emerged with the advancement of her literary career. Marçal’s writing evidences a continued preoccupation with the visibility (or lack thereof) of the literary lesbian, culminating in the publication of *La passió segons Renée Vivien* (1994), a polyphonic novel in which a twentieth-century screenwriter, nameless narrators and the verses of Renée Vivien contribute to a kaleidoscopic rendering of the British-born poet embodying *fin de siècle* excess and decadence.

This dissertation provides a study of Marçal’s *oeuvre*, beginning with her revisions and re-appropriations of archetypal symbols and poetic verse forms, extending to her complex contemplations of space and place and her development of an intertextual genealogy of woman writers and artists as she challenged the invisibility of the lesbian body in art and literature. The final chapter provides an overview of the poet’s theorizing of the lesbian body throughout her career and concludes with an alignment of Marçal’s preoccupation with affirmative futurity with recent theories of queer ecology, which prioritize interrelatedness and “highlighting, subverting, and transforming heteronormative…relations” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 6).
Chapter 1 begins by tracing the appropriation of archetypal poetics and symbols in Marçal’s early poetry, a project that demonstrated her erudition of poetics and medieval verse form as well as the beginnings of her contemplation of the lesbian body and notions of the gaze. Archetypal symbols such as the moon, witches and salt were central to Marçal’s emerging political, literary and philosophical consciousness. *Cau de llunes* (“Lair of Moons”) (1977), for example, evidences the poet’s challenging not only of masculine canonical influence through epigraphs, dedications and intertextual echoes but of psychoanalytic notions of woman herself wherein woman represents little more than a reflection of masculine light. The moon, an admitted “obsession” of the poet, allows the her to extend her re-workings of the symbol to a pre-Christian, pagan tradition, where a cult of ancient moon goddesses implicates masculine naming of feminine pluralities. “De Artemisa a Diana” (*La germana* 130), for example, presents an explicit example of the poet’s critique of patriarchal naming as she embeds her own name (“mar” and “sal”) into the poem’s verses and, further, into her contemplation of the evolution of Artemis/Diana’s name.

Marçal also acknowledges the presence of the moon in canonical poetry of Spain as she cites García Lorca and simultaneously brings light to the darkness of the Franco regime. Chapter 1 also includes an analysis of the political references in the collection, including the death of Franco and the alignment of his death with the events of September 11, 1974, in Chile. The political and literary referents are explored in light of citationality (following Butler) as the young poet examines how to effectively inhabit patriarchal language in order to challenge the limits it presents.
The fifteen sestinas of Terra de mai (1982) are examined in light of the rigid structure of the verse form and the simultaneous portrayal of female-female eroticism. The work is a completely innovative text presented in terms of an antiquated, almost archaic form, and it is the first collection of Catalan poetry that expresses the theme of lesbian desire (Julià 35, Diaz Vicedo 38). The form and content of Terra de mai are indicative of the paradox often seen in Marçal’s work, one that questions the dichotomy of limits and infinity, presence and absence. The collection offers limitless possibility within an oppressive and rigid structure as it calls to mind (and subverts) the inside/outside dichotomy so crucial in so-called lesbian or homosexual literature.

The archetype of the cave serves as an introduction to Marçal’s contemplations of space. The cau of Cau de llunes conjures a chora-like enclosure, first evoked in Plato’s Timeaus and later “inhabited” by Kristeva, Irigaray, Butler, and Derrida. Chapter 2 traces the chora’s resonances in Marçal and through likening it to Plato’s ek mageion, presents a reading of her poetry in which her divisa captures both the exclusion and inevitable mutual influence of male and female writers and subverts the literary canon while providing a space within which fellow women’s voices may be read and in turn heard. Domestic space is also explored in Chapter 2 in terms of the linguistic and social consequences of the Franco regime, where Catalan was often relegated to domestic spaces, which simultaneously functioned as a microcosm of political order in which a male head-of-household was ruler.

The city of Barcelona and urban space in general plays an integral role in Marçal’s contemplations of space. Fin de siècle Paris provides a useful lens through which the life and movement of Renée Vivien reflects the movement of the lesbian body
in Marçal’s poetry and prose. Drawing from cultural studies of Sally Munt and Elizabeth Wilson, where the lesbian body is likened to a *flaneuse*, “lesbian flanerie” is introduced as a potential vehicle through which the complexities of the lesbian body in Marçal may be understood in urban theoretical and gaze-centered frames. The chapter concludes with a study of the space of the opera house as represented in *La passió segons Renée Vivien* and a series of paintings by American Impressionist Mary Cassatt, one of which was chosen by Marçal to adorn the cover of the novel. The study aligns the excessiveness of the operatic voice (as read primarily by Hélène Cixous, Terry Castle and Teresa de Lauretis) with that of the lesbian body and cinematic renderings of the gaze. These ekphrastic intertexts serve as a point of departure for detecting a number of subtle references to voices of other Catalan women writers of the twentieth century.

One of Marçal’s strategies in combating the invisibility of the lesbian body in art and literature was the development of an intertextual genealogy of woman writers and artists spanning time periods as diverse and disparate as their geographical and linguistic provenances. Chapter 3 presents a study of intertextuality in Marçal’s writing and alludes to the possibility of a “lesbian intertextuality,” where, following Marks (1979), patriarchal literary authority is questioned in light of what it excludes, what lies in the shadows, and the effects of centuries of silencing voices, bodies and sexualities. Following Butler’s reading of *Antigone*, Marçal’s genealogies are explored as a lesson on “the limits of intelligible kinship” (*Antigone’s Claim* 29). Antigone represents neither kinship nor its radical outside”; her name represents opposition (*anti*) to that which generates. Extending this to kinship, for the purposes of this study, that which generates will be linked with feminine (*anti*)genealogies, consisting of subtle allusions and
embedded references to and citations of writers and artists such as Frida Kahlo, Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, Sylvia Plath, and Rosalía de Castro. As lesbian poetics have been described in terms of “what is not said” (Collecott 1999), and more broadly, lesbian literature as “what has never been” (Zimmerman 1981), a network of coded “linguistic zeros” (Stimpson 1997), it is a question of assuming authorship, or rather denying authorship through kinship; in other words, exploring “what sort of kinship it might be” (Antigone’s Claim 9). The intertextual echoes included in Marçal’s writing illustrate the issue of reading lesbian literature: How to read texts we have been taught to skip over? How to read the absences, the spaces, the gaps, the fragments? How to recognize the presence of the silent? Bonnie Zimmerman titles her work on lesbian feminist criticism “What Has Never Been” and defines the lesbian text as “the creation of language out of silence” (41). The stance of lesbian critics “involves peering into shadows, into the spaces between words, into what has been unspoken and barely imagined” (41). At the same time, it is important to recognize what is defined:

The task is to refigure this necessary “outside” as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome. But of equal importance is the preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent boundaries of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity. (BTM 53)
Butler addresses the question of the in-between of the in-between, the outside of the outside, “the elsewhere of…elsewhere” (BTM 52) and determines that darkness, or unreadability, need not be treated as a “sad necessity of signification” (53).

By tracing the theories of lesbian desire implicit in Marçal’s poetry and prose, Chapter 4 explores the creation of a system of embodiment that weaves together poetry, theory and praxis, confronts patriarchal discourse and does not exclude the poet’s own personal, biographical context. Marçal does not simply propose a new feminine, or lesbian, essence, but offers a vision that recognizes multiplicities and fosters proximity. Her work is one in which multiple theories of lesbian embodiment are problematized as she figures and “re-figures” corporality. The notion of “re-figuring” desire stems primarily from Elizabeth Grosz’s “Refiguring Lesbian Desire” in which Grosz describes her project as an experiment with ideas “to see how far they can go, what they enable us to rethink, to recontextualize, to see in a different way – a kind of excessive analysis, one that goes beyond a well-charted terrain” (69). A constant re-figuring of desire culminates in Marçal’s late poetry and her novel facilitates an intertextual polyphony of poetic voices and artists and kaleidoscopic re-examinations of poetic voices.

Chapter 4 traces the silencing of the lesbian body in a number of theoretical texts most relevant to Marçal as well as her treatment of sexuality and the body. A brief literary review highlights the original problematic of “writing the lesbian” and illuminates Marçal’s portrayal of lesbian poetic embodiment and her solutions, which include an opening of corporeal theoretical possibility and a subsequent transition into a corporeal theory in line with current renderings of queer ecology that engages with qualities of interrelatedness and multiplications of difference (Morton 275). The
evolution of the body in Marçal is explored, more or less chronologically, and it is shown how this evolution may be read as one moving from performative to queerly ecological citationalism, based upon the concept’s probing of “the intersections of sex and nature,” in order to demonstrate “an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 5). The remainder of the chapter will in some respects embody the structure in its web like depiction of the body in Marçal’s writing; a depiction in which bodies are apparitional and interconnected as they enable transformation, openness to new readings, “connections, assemblages, and becomings” that “form central concerns for many queer and nature writers,” and the limitless possibilities offered by nature for models and metaphors (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 39).

Returning to the poet’s first collection, the calligramme of clOš / Solç similarly encodes corporeality within the poetic (Cau de llunes 35). The body, cos in Catalan, haunts her language as a first person affirmation, soc (“I am”) echoes and inverts the spectral body portrayed in the calligramme. A permanent resident of the solç, the furrow, the in-between, Marçal’s poetic voice equates her geographical pertenence, her “home,” as the liminal space between landscapes and codes. This eccentric position is an affirmative one; it does not impede Marçal’s poetic voice from expression, but fosters, even privileges, multiple perspectives.

The clOš/Solç dichotomy may also be traced throughout her contemplations of space; the seemingly binary pairing of “enclosure” and “furrow” echoes a Deleuzian smooth (nomadic) and striated (sedentary) space as it opens a gap for the becoming
lesbian body. The limits suggested by clOṣ are undermined by the Solc and the possibility of subversion. The body, embedded within the calligramme, haunts the process of enclosing and movement. In her discussion of the eccentric subject and its relevance to lesbian discourse, de Lauretis analyzes the resistance of the word “lesbian” to dominant conceptual schemes and proposes a subject that, much like Marilyn Frye’s “lesbian,” Adrienne Rich’s “disloyal white woman” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s mestiza, assumes a displaced, dis-located, dis-affiliated, dis-engaged position, a position that enables their subjects to “see things that cannot be seen from within” (181). Marçal’s solc both dis-engages and re-engages her “power as a perceiver” and asserts an “unusual knowing…a form of consciousness…not primordial, universal, or coextensive with human thought…but historically determined and yet subjectively and politically assumed” (Figures 181). The poet considers her liminal position as one of privilege, a position from which she is able to re-affirm, re-possess and deploy a gaze that belongs only to her.
Chapter 1

Moon, Witches, Salt and Blood: Archetypes and Poetic Form

If the Queen’s looking glass speaks with the King’s voice, how do its perpetual kingly admonitions affect the Queen’s own voice? Since his is the chief voice she hears, does the Queen try to sound like the King, imitating his tone, his inflections, his phrasing, his point of view? Or does she “talk back”…? (Gilbert and Gubar 21)

Gilbert and Gubar’s 1979 “Infection in the Sentence” was one of the first contemporary scholarly works in the United States to illuminate women writers’ anxiety towards the impossibility of becoming a precursor, an impossibility of creating (23). Through rejecting Bloom’s sexist anxieties, the authors were among the first contemporary scholars to address the approaches taken by women writers as they “re- vision” (see Rich, “When We Dead Awaken”) “not…her (male) precursor’s reading of the world, but…his reading of her” (24). Their work positions feminist writing as a re-writing of pre-existing stereotypes deployed by patriarchal language and contributive to patriarchal society. Alternatively, many self-identified feminist writers (consciously or not) have attempted to re-write and recuperate subjectivity as they employ the patriarchal archetypes to which they have been reduced. In France, l’écriture féminine represented an attempt to dislodge the feminine voice from patriarchal language altogether and a refusal to acknowledge the patriarchal foundations of that language itself. The work of Maria-Mercè Marçal may be identified with these broad terms and strategies at various points in her career.
Many writers and theorists who identify as feminist point to re-appropriating archetypes in canonical literature as a revisionary tactic; not one of simple inversion but of questioning previous definitions, concepts and belief systems. This may be understood as a way of incorporating past literary and popular traditions within contemporary thought and brings to light often negative implications and portray them in a way that gives a more accurate vision of women’s subjectivity within literary language. When she appropriated Alice’s interrogation of Humpty Dumpty, Teresa de Lauretis reminds us that language and metaphors “need not be thought of as belonging to anyone” and that “one must be willing to…formulate questions that will redefine the context, displace the terms of the metaphors, and make up new ones” (*Alice* 3). Like many women who produce cinematic works and question the sexed gaze, part of the woman writers project is “the construction of another frame of reference, one in which the measure of desire is no longer just the male subject…what is…at stake is not so much how ‘to make the invisible visible’ as how to produce the conditions of visibility for a different social subject” (*Alice* 8-9).

Marçal employs a number of archetypal figures and symbols in her poetry as she revisions the “primitive” as having a profoundly generative capacity. This concept is in opposition to what Jung understood as synonymous with “Idea” in Platonic usage, as “supraordinate” and “pre-existent to all phenomena,” a prototype that functioned essentially as an empty shell (*Aspects* 103). This generative quality is linked with women’s capacity to reproduce as well as the capacity of Marçal’s poetry to produce new meaning within an established system of representation. Her archetypal re-workings
criticize the harm done to women’s socialization as well as recuperate a vision of the “primitive” as feminine.

This chapter examines a number of archetypes re-worked, re-interpreted and (re)presented in Marçal’s poetry and how her treatment of each of them through time contributes to the evolution of a unique literary imaginary. This imaginary conveys, much along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari’s simulacrum a logic capable of grasping Baudrillard's failing world of representation as an effective illusion the demise of which opens a glimmer of possibility. Against cynicism, a thin but fabulous hope--of ourselves becoming realer than real in a monstrous contagion of our own making. (Massumi 1987)

Three of these symbols, the moon, salt and blood, have been named and identified as the “core” archetypes appropriated by the poet (Sabadell-Nieto 2007, Fernàndez 2004). This chapter approaches these archetypes and expands upon the list of archetypes, including witches, fairies and the symbol of the medusa. All of these symbols are omnipresent in Marçal’s poetry and prose. For this reason, analyses of and/or references to these symbols are not limited to this chapter; for example, in addition to serving as a fundamental metaphor in Marçal, the medusa is a concept impossible to ignore in any discussion of l’écriture féminine (Cixous 1997, first published in 1975). Additionally, the medusa inherently involves discussion of reflection and petrification, also relevant to the poet’s appropriation of the moon. The dragon (el drac) represents another facet of her archetypical re-workings and is explored in another chapter for two reasons; first, it is more present in her prose than in her poetry, and second, it is one of the best mechanisms to explore Catalonia as nation and language. For these reasons, the archetype of the
dragon will be discussed in Chapter 3 as it facilitates my explanation of Marçal’s employment of intertextuality. Marçal’s use of the archetypal cave is particularly complex and a discussion of this will be reserved for Chapter 2. This overlapping of themes and symbols lends itself to Marçal’s work as interwoven, recurring symbols and spaces parallels the evolving use of more distinguishable symbols in her earlier work to more complex weavings of archetypes into her later poetry and narrative.

The Moon Archetype

The following analysis of the moon archetype in Marçal’s poetry takes as a point of departure feminist appropriations of psychoanalysis-based theories of the gaze, which in short, posit that woman exists as the object of the masculine gaze. She is seen and does not see; she is consistently seeing herself as seen by a masculine other. She is constituted as the ground of representation, the looking glass held up to man [yet] doubly bound to that very representation which calls on her directly, engages her desire, elicits her pleasure, frames her identification, and makes her complicit in the production of (her) woman-ness. (de Lauretis 15)

Lacan’s gaze, though, is a source of pleasure. Marçal’s contemplation of the gaze (much like Irigaray with Freud) acknowledges that woman, as that which is seen, may be equated with pleasure as much as being a subject (seer) would be pleasurable. Marçal, particularly through her use of the moon as archetype turns the reflection inward upon itself and portrays a powerful archetype in which an answer to de Lauretis when she asks, “What happens…when woman serves as the looking glass held up to women?”, or
further, what happens “when women look into Perseus’ shield while Medusa is being slain?” (*Alice* 6-7) may be detected.

The moon is historically understood in terms of its passivity, its reflective capacity, its malleability and life-rhythms. Archetypically, the moon imparts no light of its own and is a symbol of knowledge acquired through reflection (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 669). While the sun represents the more positive aspects of life existence, the moon is “generally taken to symbolize darker, more mysterious and negative influences” (Pickering 198). It has been interpreted as a sinister presence (Tresidder 137) as its malevolent power is said to have been harnessed by witches and other sorcerers “so that they may employ it towards their own nefarious ends” (Pickering 198). More than simply passive and weak the moon is violateable, victimizeable, and always a potential, and feminine, recipient.

The lunar cycle has long been linked to the human menstruation, erratic (animal) behavior and the widely known folk belief that “those who gaze too long at the full moon risk becoming ‘lunatic’, that is, mad, and will henceforth be subject to attacks of insanity whenever the moon is full” (Pickering 198). These associations facilitated notions of female instability and fragility throughout the ages and augmented understandings of women as passive subjects, weak (and potentially hysterical) in the face of natural, lunar forces and outside influences.

In the early stages of Marçal’s career, “la lluna ve a ser l’element femení, l’entroncament amb un món màgic que ensem significa cavi, pas del temps” (Marco and Pont 127). Her first collection, *Cau de llunes* (Lair of Moons), frames her poetry within a space of safe refuge and reflective light. The moon is present throughout her poetic career.
and represents a re-appropriation of an archetypical symbol frequently associated with sexist, anti-feminine connotations. She offers the rather explicit example of the moon, a commonly treated symbol, a convenient one to appropriate, but she does it not simply through inversion, but through recalling pre-Christian, pagan, rural, popular beginnings: “La lluna, imatge associada al femení, al món rural, una mica com una força còsmica” (unpublished interview with Anna Tarrés i Vallespí, 1992).

A multiplicity of ancient goddesses is associated with the moon and a number are present in Marçal’s poetry. These goddesses, including Isis, Ishtar, Artemis, Diana (or Hecate) and Tanit, display their own inherent pluralities as many of them absorb characteristics of others or offer new, distinct versions of myths associated with them. Diana, for example, a minor Italian woodland goddess, was later associated with the Greek Artemis, who in her own right, “had absorbed elements of the Greek moon cults of Selene, lover of Endymion, and Hecate, representing the moon in its funerary aspect” (Tresidder 136-37). The cult of moon goddesses is inherently plural and lends itself to feminist re-interpretations and (re)presentations. As Adrienne Rich points out, “Prepatriarchal religion acknowledged the female presence in every part of the cosmos” (OWB 95). Marçal’s inclusion of these goddesses implicates this masculine driven plurality and highlights their identities as reflections of patriarchal authority, as malleable, adaptable inventions lacking any sort of agency. Their names serve as one of the more visible manifestations of patriarchal naming in which the feminine subjects become intangible, identifiable through what has been assigned to them.

The period between moons is particularly relevant to the following analysis of Marçal’s poetry. The absence of the moon, also known as the black moon is “linked to
notions of the intangible, the inaccessible, and to the overwhelming presence of absence (and the converse), as well as of a hyperlucidity which agonizes by the very intensity of its strength (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 673-4). The power of the black moon is as intense as it is immaterial. It has been associated with Lilith who has also been considered in the power she exerts over sexual organs and sexuality. Associated also with the zodiac sign of the Scorpio, she becomes particularly relevant to Marçal as the poet dwells on her own astrological identity as Scorpio and the sign’s alignment with the dragon slayed by Sant Jordi, patron saint of Catalonia.¹

Federico García Lorca is the only Castilian poet cited by Marçal in her works. This is notable in light of her tendency to explicitly and implicitly (intertextually) cite influences as well as poetry and art she admired. The notable and persistent presence of the moon in his poetry offers a particularly Castilian and twentieth century relevance to a reading of Cau de llunes, a work saturated with classical poetic convention. The darkness of much of García Lorca’s poetry may be contrasted with the multiplicity of moons alluded to in Marçal’s title. In shedding light García Lorca’s life, she also suggests the darkness of his death. Marçal aligns his oppression as homosexual with her linguistic oppression, calling to light the illegality of homosexuality and that of minoritized languages. A shadow of Franco is subtly outlined in Cau de llunes; “Traduït d’Alceu” (33) for example, but more crucial to Marçal’s project is the highlighting not of the character of Franco, but the darkness wrought by his regime and the solidarity expressed in her first collection.

The poet has defined the moon as an ongoing obsession in her writing (Llengua abolida 8). Her moons experience their own lunar phases and cycles and with the passing
of time, they embody the evolution of her poetic voice and present her revisions of the archetype. In *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich notes that the moon is continually changing and visible in many different forms, “while the sun presents itself in one single, unvarying form,” and suggests that this “may account for the kinds of human perceptions which would be powerfully drawn to one or the other” (115). Marçal’s poetic voice presents the moon, and as will be shown later in this project, the lesbian body, in varying forms as she negotiates not only her complex relationship with poetic tradition, but with patriarchal language itself.

Rich notes “that with the advent of solar religion, the Great Mother, in her manifold persons and expressions, begins to suffer reduction; parts of her are split off, some undergo a gender change, and henceforth woman herself will be living on patriarchal terms, under the laws of male divinities and in the light of male judgments” (*OWB* 115). In her first collection, *Cau de llunes*, Marçal pays tribute to a number of poetic influences. All of these influences, cited in epigraphs, dedications or indirectly within the poems themselves, are male. The poems of *Cau de llunes*, then, are in a sense reflections of masculine poetic knowledge, archetypal moons to canonical suns. Marçal herself noted that at the time she began to write poetry she was “absolutament immersa en un context poètic masculí” (“Sota” 193) and understood the irony in that all of the poems, with clear feminine/feminist connotations, “tenen com a punt de referència el masculí” (193). In fact, the only influence “no directament masculina era la de la poesia popular, anònima, que a mi em venia per via materna…” (194). These observations, made later in her career are not necessarily indicative of the poems themselves. Her lunar point of departure may be considered more subversive than she implies in her extra-
textual analyses as the title implies a refuge from these influences despite their close proximity.

*Cau de llunes* is a collection of varied verse form including long meter, hendecasyllable, alexandrine, couplets and a Sapphic versed poem, “Xera.” The variability of form is evidence of the multiple influences and erudition of the young poet. The work, as intellectual as it is, echoes local and popular influences, particularly those of rural Catalonia. In her description of *Cau de llunes* Lluïsa Julià describes it as

Una exploració en què les formes clàssiques, la riquesa de l’estrofisme i la varietat de items…no estan renyides amb el joc i la màgia del mot, la sorpresa semàntica i una certa mística del llenguatge que cal relacionar amb simbolistes com Rimbaud i Mallarmé. (*Contraban de llum* 17)

*Cau de llunes* is at once a light hearted, experimental and affectionate work rooted in Catalan (particularly rural) popular culture (transmitted through the poet’s mother) and a classical work that highlights the influence of a canonical male poetic tradition. The title, in addition to these influences, evidence a decidedly rural perspective and conjure pagan traditions of the past, traditions in which pre-patriarchal moons were a source of feminine creativity. In a 1984 interview, Marçal reflects on her arrival to Barcelona and her intellectual insecurities upon meeting her poetic contemporaries;

Cuando conozco a esa gente me coge un complejo impresionante, porque tenía la impresión de no saber absolutamente nada; es entonces cuando comienzo a oír por primera vez el nombre de Foix, el de Brossa, el de Barta, el de Alfaro. Y es que de lo que había sido la literatura catalana antigua, pues ni idea tampoco. Me acuerdo que compré enseguida una antología, creo que de Moles, sobre ocho siglos de
literatura catalana. Fue un golpe muy fuerte para mí todo eso, que incluso me produjo una especie de afasia. (*Pamiela* 16)

“Corrandes de lluna” (*Cau de llunes* 60-61) presents the lunar phases in a purely Lorquian atmosphere. The five short stanzas of the poem portray a moon’s influences over a lover’s “song.” The section represents the poet’s contemplations of presence and absence, darkness and light, polyvocality and univocality, personal and collective, questions that continue to predominate in her literature are already visible in this work.

Another poem from *Cau de llunes* is illustrative of the beginnings of Marçal’s illumination of a *clivella*, a spatial “in-between,” emphasized as *fissuras* in *La passió segons Renée Vivien* for example. Her tendency to highlight what remains in darkness is detectable while her strategy simultaneously highlights an echo of Castile through a subtle reference to an “olive moon.”

*Lluna, lluerna,*

d’atzeituni,

*clivella*

*la nit de cor*

*de xarol!* (*Cau de llunes*)

**Witches and the Fairy Tale Genre**

The figure of the witch represents “ésser diabòlic, dolent…associada al mal / irracional / inversió de l’ordre” (*Caixa* 13). In what appear to be personal copies of drafts of the introduction to *Llengua abolida* Marçal notes, “la bruixa – apareix sovint: imatge infantile estereotypada” (*Caixa* 13). Significantly, in these comments the poet notes that “conèixer i arribar a dominar el català” is an “act of rebellion” (“acte de rebel lió”) (*Caixa*
13), conceptually aligning her appropriation of Catalan with that of the witch archetype. Her description of the witch as “infantile” and “stereotyped” is a nod toward the profound influence of popular culture and fairy tales in her writing and the notion that witches are figures upon which others impose definitions, judgments and names. According to a number of scholars, the very definition of a witch in fact, “comes entirely from the persecutors” (Matalene 576). Popular culture, in addition to representing a voice of lower social and economic class than the dominant ones, represents a voice generally transmitted orally, frequently through women and fairy tales.

The witch is a frequent figure in the European fairy tale tradition. Though in most printed fairy tales, female protagonists predominate, “like the patriarchal society that produced them,” they “limit female agency to the quotidian” (Soliño iii), or designate them as monstrous witches. Female figures are seldom portrayed in positive relationships with each other and if mothers are not dead, “they are so evil that part of the pleasure of the text comes from destroying them” (Soliño 9). Fairy tales are particularly influential in any discussion of young female writers as they, as readers, are offered “stifling images of femininity meant to initiate girls into a bourgeois ideal of subservience, passivity, and – most damaging for the budding female writer – silence” (Soliño 9). Their didactic nature results in a reading of these fairy tales as lessons and shaped patriarchal consciousness. Though Marçal’s re-appropriation of fairy tale icons is not novel within the European literary tradition. The order of the Kaffeterkreis (Coffee Circle) for example, formed by girls and women of the Berlin aristocracy and emerging bourgeoisie, was actively engaged with the fairy tale tradition as they reversed many gender patterns found in the Brothers Grimm where “women were systematically punished for speaking out.” Instead
of witches and evil stepmothers, the women write of female mentors who guide girls through puberty by sharing their knowledge and positive magic (21).

Fairy tales are key to understanding Marçal’s appropriation of witches in that they are often simultaneously inside and outside of culture (iii Pref.) According to Hutcheon, parody offers a perspective on the present and past “which allows an artist to speak to a discourse from within it, but without being totally recuperated by it” (iii in Solíño). Hutcheon, either echoing or prefacing de Lauretis, refers to parody as “ex-centric.” Zipes has written on the bourgeois values of behavior exhibited in fairy tales and Christian moral principles, which were “oriented toward male hegemony and patriarchalism (Zipes 63). Solíño noted that the “more sexism they showed, the greater their success” (21).

The fairy tale as a tool of indoctrination was surely familiar to Marçal as fairy tales offered models and female archetypes to which the Franco regime and the Sección Femenina of the Falange could subscribe. Carmen Martin Gaite documented the use of fairy tales in children’s periodicals as tools of indoctrination (Usos amorosos, first published in 1987). Marçal’s bruixa is an answer to the cult of the self-sacrificing mother, la perfecta casada, aligning a fairy tale-like feminine “evil” with feminine passivity.

“Sal oberta”: Salt and Blood

Salt is one of the world’s first international commodities of trade and its production was one of the first industries and therefore led to the first state monopoly (Kurlansky 12). In its solid form, the mineral was traded, utilized as money, and it inspired trade routes that contributed to the building of empires, alliances and revolutions (12). Highly valued throughout history, salt was searched for and fought over until the
advent of twentieth century geology (12). Like most regions of the world, Catalonia is not absent from the history of salt; Cardona, a famous mining town, houses a well-known salt mountain. A historical irony is brought by the value placed on something so common, “for something that fills the ocean, bubbles up from springs, forms crusts in lake beds, and thickly veins a large part of the earth’s rock fairly close to the surface” (12). The hidden presence of salt is only one aspect relevant to Marçal’s poetry; the history of salt is emblematic of the subjectivity of economic value and even recalls present day military conflicts over the earth’s substances. The historical, often patriarchal and military connotations of salt are in stark contrast with its symbolic associations, many of which involve fertility and sexuality. It is precisely for these reasons it was so coveted.

Salt is as corporally ever-present as it is earthly; the human body loses salt through sweat, tears, blood, urine and semen, and partakes in a constant process of replenishment. This type of corporal salt is fluid; it is a salt that flows and seeps, ever-present and invisible. It exists within the structure of other substances and it uses them as transport. It is this characteristic of salt that Marçal writes of in *Sal oberta* and in the sestinas of *Terra de mai*. This salt and the bodies from which it seeps, is not a commodity or monetary token. Marçal’s salt flourishes outside of this structure and is purely feminine. This salt is not seen; it is felt, tasted, touched and transferred. In an unpublished interview with Anna Tarrés i Vallespí (1992), Marçal elaborates on her concept of salt and explains:

La sal és una mica la idea del mar. La sal en llibertat, no tant la sal domèstica, encara que també la idea de la sal com a quotidiana, necessària. En la quotidianitat tancada en un saler, en el mar l’apoteosi de la sal. L’origen de la
vida des del meu punt de vista està molt associat amb la idea de l’aigua i del mar, simbòlicament. La sal també té la connotació de cosa positiva – riu – no sé d’on ho he tret. (8)

The collection entitled *Sal oberta* opens with a *divisa* that recalls the healing powers of salt and the corporal notion of the wound.

Sal oberta a la nafr: que no es tanqui!

Que no em venci, cap àncora, vençuda

pels anys, i per l’oratge, i per la ruda.

Que cap posit d’enyor no m’entrebanqui!

Heura al velam! Sal viva a les parpelles

per albirar l’enllà, com un desert

obert de sobte en un deliri verd!

Que l’escandall encalci les estrelles!

Sal oberta i, en reble, cel obert!

Deixar senyal de sal on l’ona manqué

que m’assaoni llengua, nas i orelles!

Sal oberta a la nafr: que no es tanqui!

Sal que m’embranqui, en temps d’hora batuda,

pel gorg lunar on tota cosa muda! (*Llengua abolida* 175)
The opening verse of the sonnet brings to light the purpose of the collection and in turn Marçal’s most basic definition of poetry, placing salt on an open wound. The healing power of the salt, stinging and painful, will be exercised in and frames the poetry that ensues. The wound depicted in the divisa, articulated with the word nafra carries with it particularly violent connotations (as compared to the less severe ferida) (Julia Manzano 189).

Open salt is placed in contrast to a wound that does not close: “Sal oberta a la nafra: que no es tanqui!” The open/closed binary, so prevalent in Marçal’s poetry is presented here in violently corporal terms. The vulnerable, painful sensations stimulated by an open wound carry with them images of blood, fluid and inflammation, and present a vision of a corporal interior. Although the placement of salt on a wound intensifies the stinging pain and prolongation of its openness, the verse articulates the pain before healing. Marçal herself has alluded to the notion of poetry as a wound; according to the poet, poetry is lligada a la ferida, o la mancança com un intent segurament i.llusori de no tancar-la. És com un procés continu de voler parlar a través de la sang. La cicatriu, a vegades, es també la muda...La ferida és una obertura entre l’interior i l’exterior, que comunica dos mons. A partir d’aquí, doncs, es pot establir un diàleg. (interview with Jordi Muñoz 175-6)

The divisa of Sal oberta calls for the painful healing process, not the opening or closing of the wound, but the stinging process of corporal healing: continued life through pain. The divisa’s poetic voice depicts the moment of being faced with a choice and stresses that she does not want to be anchored by other possibilities: “Que no em venci cap ànora, vençuda pels anys, i per l’oratge, y per la ruda.” “Ruda” is employed as a
reference to the poetic voice’s choice in terminating a pregnancy, understood in this particular poem as “Heura al velam!” The poet’s use of the plant reinforces the proximity of her decision; she resists the temptation to close the wound and live in silence and instead chooses to heal the wound through salt and foster a life for Heura (“ivy” a vegetal being), “en un deliri verd.”

The healing mineral will heighten all senses and will season “llengua” (all she tastes in addition to her poetic language), “nas” (all she smells) and “orelles” (all she hears). It will maintain the openness of the wound so that silence is made impossible. It is a salt that will give voice to the poetic body, as well as to Marçal (Julià has noted the parallel between –çal and sal). The *divisa* frames the ensuing collection through a melding of body and poem, in healing through speaking. Marçal’s salt maintains the secretion of the wound and prevents congealment, a theme that continues through *La germana* and culminates in *Desglaç*.

Salt is particularly relevant to her erotic poetry and that which speaks of the birth of her daughter. The first sestina of *Terra de mai*, “Solstici” includes the poet’s first allusion to “open salt” (*sal oberta*): “Tot és un daltabeix de sal oberta” (*La germana* 12). Salt appears throughout the erotically charged work as sweat, in water and as an element of the sea. The aforementioned verse ends the fourth stanza of the sestina. The next stanza begins with a reference to “Castells de mar en festa…” (12), subtly aligning “mar” and “sal” in a characteristic trope of inscribing her name into her poetry, in this case, inscribing it into an erotic encounter between two women. Further, the title of the work portrays a play on the name of Marçal’s first female lover, Mai, which also translates as “never.”
The biblical significance of salt is also a large part of its archetypal image. The story of the wife of Lot (Genesis 19:26) is particularly relevant to any discussion of the female gaze. Lot’s nameless wife was turned into a pillar of salt for her forbidden gaze at the city of Sodom and is significant in a number of mythical (re)tellings of the story.

In “La dona de Lot” (Raó de cos 27), Marçal questions the multiple versions, biblical and poetic, of the myths surrounding Lot’s wife. An epigraph states that the poem deals with “Sobre un vell tema repress per Anna Akhmatova.” The poem opens as a multi-faceted mythic collective, alluding to the re-telling of a myth that has been retold infinite times and will be re-examined once again. Marçal translated much of Akhmatova’s poetry into Catalan bringing a more literal reading to translating the myth through time periods, generations, genres and languages. Marçal translates and dissolves temporal, spatial and linguistic boundaries.

In “Lot’s Wife (Лотова жена)” Akhmatova writes of the risk Lot’s wife took in one last gaze at her home, the city of Sodom. An acknowledged loss, yes, and the poetic voice asks, “but who still mourns the breath of one woman, or laments one wife?,” questioning historical memory and the interpretation of female loss. She ends with an affirmation of her own memory and states, “my heart can never forget, how, for one look, she gave up her life.” In addition to affirming her own memory and her own role in the myth of Lot’s wife, Akhmatova affirms through her poem that her readers will not forget either; she conveys the myth, posits her questions and leaves the responsibility of answering to the reader.

Marçal’s poem begins with an un-cited verse of Akhmatova’s translated into Catalan “L’home just va seguir l’emissari de Déu gegantí i resplendent per la muntanya
negra,” furthering the notion of collective re-tellings. By not explicitly naming Akhmatova as the author of the verse, Marçal makes a subtle statement regarding authorship and myth. Another appears midway through the poem, again, not cited. Within Marçal’s poem, the verse, “No és massa tard, encara. Encara pots mirar,” refers to the voice speaking to Lot’s wife, the voice that urged her to gaze upon the city she was leaving. In this case, yet another voice is attributable to the words reflected in the verse. The verse can be traced to the original myth (as well as its various re-interpretations and languages), Akhmatova’s Russian and temporal contexts, and contemporary Catalan (as well as the reader of the contemporary Catalan) providing a kaleidoscopic view of the myth through the use of verse.

The story of Lot’s wife does not pertain to any particular language or culture; in the sense of llengua as “tongue,” it refers to her ability to tell the story. Her voice is not heard aside from through other tellings of her story. Lot’s wife is a body without the ability to communicate. She is linguistically and communicatively paralyzed by the “rígida camisa de força de la sal.” She is nameless and nominally paralyzed: “cap Veu coneix el teu nom.” Her identity is constructed from the outside; as Marçal would later say of Renée Vivien, she is a like a blank screen upon which others construct her.

Lot’s wife is also corporally paralyzed; turned to a pillar of salt upon her gaze, her body remains “ebri de pluja i sol.” This moment is frozen, solidified in history, suffocated by the “duresa mineral” of the salt. The paralysis of Lot’s wife simultaneously offers the freedom to write her history: “La pantalla és en blanc.” She is whoever her authors would like her to be; she is defined and gazed at by others. She is “Other” as she
gazes out over the sea upon infinite possibility and others reflect upon the infinite
mythical and poetic versions of her life.

Marçal facilitates the dissolution of the pillar of salt into a sea of questions and re-
examinations. Lot’s wife as a pillar of salt is not a monolithic paralyzed sculpture but a
sum of infinite questions. The constant movement and salt of the sea that “reverbera la
història sense història” is contrasted with her “perpetual gesture”; Lot’s wife represents
all women who dare to gaze and suffer the stultifying consequences. The responsibility to
answer the question “Quin era el Nom de la dona de Lot...?” rests with the reader.

Marçal’s poetic voice sees herself and other women reflected in Lot’s wife and in
Akhmatova’s poetry. The poem conveys a reverence for Lot’s wife as it acknowledges
and celebrates her rebellion; it converts her from object to subject. Her defiance in the
face of masculine domination is worthy of respect. Julià has aligned the bravery of Lot’s
wife to the bravery of a woman defying obligatory heterosexuality and perhaps correctly
recognizes her as relevant to lesbian poetry in its rebelliousness: “A través d’ella Marçal
al ludeix al mite que estableix l’heterosexualitat obligatòria i a la gosadia d’oposar-s’hi”
(“Utopia” 366).

Poetics

In addition to poetic archetypes, Marçal subverts literary limits through an
examination of traditional poetic structures. The poet inhabits verseforms pertaining to
other time periods and explores new possibilities through traditional forms. The sonnet,
the sestina and the elegy allow the poet to inhabit the literary canon while questioning the
very laws upon which they are founded.
Marçal’s use of the sestina is illustrative of these limits and affirms the presence of these limits in the rigid structure of the verses. *Terra de mai* (*Tierra de nunca*, or “Never Land”), first published in 1982 and again in 1985 as a preface to *La germana, l’estrangera*, is a collection of fifteen sestinas. The work is a completely innovative text presented in terms of an antiquated, almost archaic form and is the first collection of Catalan poetry that expresses the theme of lesbian desire (Julià 35, Diaz Vicedo 38). The form and content of *Terra de mai* are indicative of the paradox often seen in Marçal’s work, one that questions the dichotomy of limits/infinity, presence/absence. The collection offers limitless possibility within an oppressive and rigid structure and calls to mind (as it subverts) the inside/outside dichotomy so crucial in both gay and lesbian literature (referenced also in the “clOs/Solc” relation portrayed in *Cau de llunes*).

The structure of the sestina, initiated by the troubadours, is a complex verse form composed of six stanzas of six lines each, followed by an *envoi* (or *tornada*) of three unrhymed lines. More important than rhyme to the sestina is a recurrent pattern of lexical repetition. The six end-words occur in each stanza in a fixed and patterned order; “each successive stanza takes its pattern from a reversed (bottom up) pairing of the lines of the preceding stanza” (Preminger 1146). The repetitions offer new contexts for the end-words and hark back to previous uses already established within the poem. In her study of the Petrarchan sestina, Shapiro discusses the importance of the repetitive pattern to the form and points out that “The exact reproduction of sound serves as the mainspring for the succeeding utterance. Thus the line is constantly reborn from its own ashes” (Shapiro 13). Thus, the sestina is both a self-contained, limiting form and one that encourages rebirth and re-interpretation.
The sestina has also been contemplated in terms of its lexical movement, often explained in terms of “foldings” and “unfoldings”; Ezra Pound famously likened it to “a thin sheet of flame folding and infolding upon itself” (27). It is a verseform that encourages fluid movement and shifts of meaning and emphasis. Shapiro writes of the end-words power to “exfoliate” as they accumulate throughout a sestina; as words shift within verses “previous senses adhere to them, and their return is charged with a more portentous content” (13).

The invention of the sestina has been attributed to Arnaut Daniel. It was later cultivated by Daniel’s Occitan followers as well as Italian, Spanish, French, German and English poets. It is a uniquely European form with strong historical and linguistic ties to Catalan that lends itself to re-workings and re-appropriations. Pound was fascinated with the musical element of the sestina and recognized Daniel as “the first to realize fully that the music of rhymes depends upon their arrangement, not on their multiplicity” (38). Pound, primarily interested in the oral qualities of the sestina, defined it as a form “where stanza answers to stanza not boisterously, but with a subtle persistent echo.” (38) Its limits offer infinite possibility and structure that in a sense dissolve themselves.

The sestina’s composition necessitates intense planning, solitude and a lack of spontaneity. Marçal was conscious of these requisites and had noted that her writing of the sestinas was the result of a particularly obsessive period in her life as she was recovering from the seduction and subsequent abandonment by her lover. In choosing to compose a collection of sestinas, the poet surpasses the limits of the verse form’s complexity (in writing an entire collection) in addition to its traditional content and historical and temporal contexts. Marçal’s use of the sestina is evidence of her tendency
and skill in re-examining and re-interpreting genres and structures quite possibly considered irrelevant by many of her contemporary writers. Contemporary Catalan composers of sestinas were men (Riba, Ferrater, Brossa, Martí i Pol: see Llorca Antolín 221), making Marçal not only the first Catalan poet to explore lesbian desire, but the first woman poet to express herself within (and beyond) the limits of the sestina. The poet defies the limits placed upon her by tradition through the mastery of a form deemed both complex and masculine.

The second sestina of Terra de mai, “Solstici”, is woven together with a series of end-words including “boques,” “molsa,” “sexes,” “brida,” “oberta,” “viva.” The poem conveys an unbridled, chaotic, liquid love, a love free of form and limits. Two lovers are intertwined and in constant movement, confusing and melding “sexes,” “boques,” and “gorga oberta.” “Solstici” calls for a unbridling of sexual and poetic limitations and a solstice of bodies. The poetic voice observes her image reflected in the body of her lover, reflecting a desire free from phallogocentric presence.

The first line of the sestina, “El teu sexe i el meu són dues boques,” both defines and de-limits. Through defining her lover in terms of “el teu sexe,” the poetic voice limits her to, identifying her as, her body. Simultaneously, she does the same to herself and defines both of them as “boques,” capable of speaking, communicating, and defining each other. A vocabulary that facilitates speech and communication as much as it facilitates eroticism predominates in the first stanza: “sexe(s),” “boques,” “parla,” “petites llengües.” In his discussion of Marçal’s subversion of poetic tradition, Josep-Anton Fernàndez refers to the “relació lingüísticosexual que destorba qualsevol ordre,” suggesting that the intimate relation between language and sexed body are capable of
dissolving any imposed, outside, limitations (212). The mouths kiss and bite, speak and dance. The movement and communication introduced by these words metaphorically open the poem and present a poetic, verbal and corporal dialogue that draws from beyond the limits of the traditionally univocal sestina. The dialogue creates a plurality of voices and bodies within the limits of the solitary writing process and the univocality typically associated with the sestina.

A substantial amount of the vocabulary employed in “Solstici” refers to liquid elements; “rou,” “licors,” “mar,” “saba” and “pluja” create a moist, humid and sexual atmosphere. This atmosphere consists of the humidity and the sweat surging from the bodies; this humidity creates a space without boundaries. The bodies become one; what is portrayed is what exists within and between them. The poet’s use of this vocabulary is suggestive in that it enters gradually and increases in intensity, perhaps alluding to an erotic climax. A number of the liquid concepts employed by the poet (including “rou,” “licors de fruita,” “saba”) are liquids that seep, ooze, flow and are secreted, and at the same time hydrate, nourish and wash away limitations. A particularly crucial end-word, “la molsa” (“moss”), alludes to a vegetal life form indicative of high levels of persistent moisture. A moss-filled environment suggests an ever-present humidity that fosters rhizomatic growth and movement. Marçal’s language creates a chaos that is corporal yet fluid, a chaos that exists within the limits of the sestina and thus, dissolves them and washes them away.

Other words employed by Marçal in “Solstici” refer to natural phenomena and are reminiscent of the forest, the sea and the nourishment they provide. In addition to the pastoral element associated with the traditional sestina, the nature imagery of the poem
conforms to a well-known trope common to lesbian literature. Framing lesbian erotic experiences within the context of the natural environment is often an attempt to deem lesbianism “natural” (Diaz Vicedo 49-50). I would argue that the natural references conform also in the sense that the “unnaturalness” of homosexuality is necessary to the argument that heterosexuality is “natural.” As Diana Fuss argued in 1995, “The difference between the hetero and the homo…is that the homo becomes identified with the very mechanism necessary to define and to defend any sexual border. Homosexuality, in a word, becomes the excluded; it stands in for, paradoxically, that which stands without” (235).

Geography and physical space form part of the natural imagery employed by Marçal. The “gorga” and “congost” allude to and create gorges and grooves, geographically, corporally and poetically speaking. The ravine, or gorge, portrayed in the poem, is a dark, in-between, cavernous space, a natural phenomenon and rather explicit allusion to the connection between mouths and sexes depicted in “Solstici.” The in-between spaces exist between what is known, within established limits; they are the most crucial spaces in the poem, the space where erotic contact is at its most intimate, where the two bodies are confronted with limitless possibility and are free from geographical, corporal and poetic limits.

In her study of Marçal, Diaz Vicedo notes that the natural elements of “Solstici” are unique to the poet’s situatedness in Catalonia. The words “congost” and “gorga,” difficult to translate from Catalan, denote aspects of the Catalan landscape: “‘The Congost’ of Mont-rebei in Lleida was, historically, the only geographical pass from the Pyrenese (sic) to the plane of Lleida…a natural pass that was gradually formed by the
river Noguera-Ribagorçana dividing the mountain vertically” (58-59). “Gorga” is “another narrow pass in a cliff position with a narrow riverbed” (59).

Both terms…denote mountain paths and connote secrecy and inaccessibility.

Hence, the poem is resolutely situated in the toughness of the Pyrenees landscape, linking the difficulty of communication and intimacy between women with a particular Catalan geography. Just as, with its rigidly confined lexicon, ‘Solstice’ establishes the space of intimacy within the discipline of form, so the imagery of ‘congost’ and ‘gorge’ of steep and perilous mountain passes demands that progress must be made cautiously, step by step. (59)

Marçal was aware of these connotations and the clear connections that can be made between the geographical terms described in her poem and her own personal origin/family history in Lleida. The poetic voice moves within and beyond Catalan geography, poetic structure and linguistic boundaries. It inhabits not only the lesbian body, but a poetic tradition steeped in rigidity and the nation of Catalonia.

The title of the collection maintains the alignment between poetic, corporal and geographical limits. *Terra de mai* suggests the exploration of a new, unknown, quite possibly impossible expedition. Suggestive of “Neverland,” the title alludes to an impossible utopia, an existence so utopic that it exists only within the ensuing poetry. It is a place lost, never to be inhabited again. The title suggests another referent by naming a former lover of the poet; Marçal had made public note of the name of this woman (Mai) and the devastation she experienced upon the failure of their relationship. Others have also noted the dual function of the title (Fernández 211, for example).
A preoccupation with nature continues in the title of the poem itself; “Solstici” refers to a natural solar and calendrical phenomenon related initially to pagan celebrations and later to Christian holidays. Transitions into the seasons of winter and summer are often defined in terms of the solstices. In Spain, the feast of San Juan is associated with the summer solstice, celebrated on the 23rd and 24th of June. This holiday, particularly significant in Catalonia (Sant Joan), is linked to locales near the sea and often involve fire celebrations. The fifth stanza of “Solstici” refers to “Castells de mar en festa, a nit oberta…,” producing echoes of nocturnal summer celebration. When Marçal’s poetic voice exclaims, “Que facin el solstici els nostres sexes…,” she refers to a natural moment of movement and simultaneous transition; a moment as associated with Spain and Catalonia as with the lesbian bodies inhabiting the space of the sestina.

The poet also combats the lexical limitations of the sestina. Although this is an exercise seemingly permitted by the very nature of the sestina (Shapiro notes that the form is “more conducive to suggestive juxtaposition than to connected statement” [7]), Marçal creates echoes and multiple layers of signification. The end-word “oberta,” an adjective, is easily aligned with a number of concepts; geographical in the case of “gorga oberta” and “platja oberta”. When the poetic voice aligns “sal oberta” and “saba oberta” and she produces the very intermingling of (fluid) concepts depicted in the third stanza. Shapiro points out that in the sestina “recurrence is modified to the utmost. The proportion of introversive to extroversive semiosis increases accordingly, and signans and signatum more closely approach fusion” (7). By framing the notion of openness within the sestina and associating it with terms that permit the poetic creation of the very
erotic experience called for by the poetic voice, Marçal takes advantage of the sestina’s limits as well as the possibilities these limits provide.

Marçal exhibits a similar shifting of frames with another end-word, “la molsa.” The first appearance of the concept (in the second verse) portrays the word as “moss”: “No sents qu’in bes de rou sobre la molsa.” The dew resting upon “la molsa” suggests the green, moist vegetation. Later in the poem, another meaning of “la molsa” is exposed; as “flesh,” the word alludes to the source of the “licors de fruita oberta” of the third stanza. Both connotations are plausible throughout the sestina delimiting the requisite of six end-words. The poet takes advantage of the dual possibility and shatters/dissolves the sestina’s rules from within. A similar play is reflected in the concept of “solc,” a word previously studied by Marçal in *Cau de llunes* (35). In her first collection, “solc” (referring to a furrow, rut or groove) is contrasted with its inverse, “clos” (enclosure), creating a paradoxical alignment that presents limits (enclosure) in terms of their dissolution, and vice versa. The fourth stanza claims

Som on l’hora i l’atzar perden la brida,

on, a cavall de la marea viva,

llisquen sense velam, pels solcs de molsa…

“Solcs de molsa” is a pairing of two of the sestina’s preferred words, each with two possible connotations, all of which conform to the sestina’s thematic; as a furrow, rut or groove, “solc” refers to the dark in-between spaces of the flesh or of the dark, humid moist in-between spaces that thrive within moss formations, thanks to underlying rocks and other elements that determine its formation. As a wake, ripple or wave, similar images are created, this time indicating a fluid, constant, infinite movement. All
combinations of meaning are suggestive of dark, fluid movement and are easily associated with the eroticism of the poem.

The poet’s portrayal of the dark corporal/geographical (and Catalan) in-between does not necessarily define her sestina as subversive. Diana Fuss argued that inhabiting the outside does not always guarantee radicality, despite the apparent relevance and popularity of liminal space (the phrase suggesting that it is “‘in’ to be ‘out’” still rings true) (236). The subversion of the sestina lies in the poet’s portrayal of a poetic voice, a lesbian body and nation that conform to the sestina’s rules as much as they inhabit what lies outside.

Multiple significations and the ever-present lexical repetition of the sestina highlight the crucial notion of recurrence. Shapiro alludes to the infinite nature of the sestina’s repetitions: “The structural elaboration by the poem of its own, changing frames makes us experience how the interpretation of a sign constitutes yet another sign, which has in turn to be interpreted ad infinitum” (7). The final meaning interpreted in the sestina remains reflected and echoed, “Always near and yet just beyond reach…” (7). As words are repeated in the sestina, frames of meaning shift, but always with memory of the previous meaning: “the unchanging sounds of the rhyme words orient each manifestation back toward the previous one” (Shapiro 22). This recurrence illuminates “the containment of the past in the present,” a persistent gaze towards the past anchored and dependent upon the present and its possibilities (6).

In addition to questioning the past, Marçal’s sestina offers possibility. The structure of the sestina, with its seventh stanza, its *envoi*, offers the poem itself an opportunity to recapitulate, summarize and call forth once again its message. In her
discussion of the *envoi* in the Petrarchan sestina, Shapiro describes the seventh stanza as that which “emerges as a statement of vital possibility and a reaffirmation of living on the borderline of the more-than-possible” (13). The *envoi* of “Solsticí,”

I que les boques facin que la molsa
arrellí, viva, com la pell oberta
sense brida al mirall dels nostres sexes
calls for the paradoxical rooting of flesh/moss, a seventh stanza (day) regeneration of unbridled, unlimited love. In her study of the sestina as verse form, Shapiro notes that

The scheme of head-tailed chains replicates the eternal enactment of a periodic destruction and regeneration while eluding the temptations of fixed significance. The emergent poem speaks of itself in terms of contiguity and distance…This principle would seem to encourage the perception of bilateral symmetry…but nowhere as in poems does the metaphor more obviously fail us. (14)

“Solsticí” offers a dichotomy between “la brida,” symbolic of the limits placed on the poetic voice and its contrast with “viva” and “oberta,” vitality and limitlessness. It simultaneously leaves a space within which erotic love between women. The sestina is an inherently cyclical structure (“with cycles in groups of multiple-groups of six”) and for this reason, the *envoi* offers an end to the poem and functions as an “escape route” (Shapiro 18). It simultaneously leaves an open door. The sestina acknowledges “an ultimately unresolvable process, and semantically its conclusion is a question rather than an answer” (Shapiro 37). Marçal submits to this unresolvability in the introduction to *Llengua abolida* when she states “Que deu ser la poesia sinó el mirall que em fa retornar un i altre…” (8).
Chapter 2

Spatial Resonances: Architecture, Urbanism and Space

Marçal’s poetry and prose are global in reach and in their recognition of women’s literature and sexuality, but due to publication in Catalan and the existence of few translations, criticism of her work is largely limited to Catalan speakers and readers and has been somewhat restricted to the territory of the Catalan language. The notion of homelessness, prevalent in works dealing with homosexuality and gender as well as national and linguistic identity is visible in Marçal’s work and explored from a number of angles. The poet addresses the concept of “home” in terms of the domestic versus the public, of nationhood (and her minoritized identity as Catalan), and in terms of rural and urban spaces, particularly as they relate to Catalonia and Barcelona. She brings to light a multiplicity of margins, the movement within and between spaces and places, and the creation of not only new space, but of new ways of inhabiting. The territories inhabited by the poet are not simply spatial; she writes in a language she loves, but it is one in which she is not necessarily “at home.” Marçal combats these complex and multiple notions of territories and homelessness and calls for the recognition of the fluidity of boundaries and the possibility of multiple belongings. “Multiple belongings” echoes Rosi Braidotti’s “sustainable ethics for a non-unitary subject” which embraces “an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others…by removing the obstacle of self-centered individualism” (Transpositions 35). Braidoti proposes this ethics not in terms of what is lost, but as “a new way of combining self-interests with the well-being of an enlarged sense of community, which includes one’s territorial or environmental interconnections” (35).
In the North American academy, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (when in Spain, Marçal was writing and publishing most of her work and most active politically, academically, socially and linguistically, as a translator), homelessness found its place in minority feminist discourse. Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty famously argued for an examination of the minority feminist’s “place” (or home) within feminism as they traced the movement of the lesbian body within the ambiguous genre of the semi-autobiographical, fictional account of Minnie Bruce Pratt and highlighted “interminable boundary confusions” (197). bell hooks affirmed marginality as “a site of resistance” and Gloria Anzaldúa wrote from the “borderlands” exploring the corporal, linguistic and geographical borders inhabited by women writers. Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich, both poets explicitly included in Marçal’s poetic genealogies, explored borders and sisterhood, shared outsideness and situatedness. Marçal was aware of and equally stimulated by these explorations and identified with the spatial, sexual and linguistic marginalizations questioned by these authors in her attempts to foster literary genealogies.¹

As Spain was experiencing the transformative effects of Franco’s death, the new Constitution and the elections of 1978, women writers began to explore previously oppressed themes using previously criminalized languages. Many Spanish women writers were reluctant (and still are) to refer to themselves as feminists and a number of scholars, mainly North American, have explored this apparent paradox, often concluding that this is due to their resistance to being relegated to what Glenn refers to as “the ghetto of literature by and for women” (375). (See Vollendorf [2001], Bergmann and Herr [2007])

The reluctance of many woman writers placed Marçal in yet another minority; she enthusiastically deemed gender a crucial component of writing as she wrote on the edge
of an already marginalized tradition in a language that provided her with few contemporary literary models. In spite of the literary and commercial success of writers like Montserrat Roig who openly identified herself with feminism and published most (but not all) of her prose in Catalan, Marçal sought literary genealogies elsewhere. She enlarged the frame of her feminism by gazing “outward” as opposed to interpreting the term as a restrictive “straitjacket,” as did many of her contemporaries, including Paloma Diaz-Mas, Rosa Montero, Marina Mayoral and Carme Riera (Glenn 375).

A sense of literary orphanhood, even homelessness, may be linked with Spanish feminism in general. Marçal’s case is an illustrative example of the multifaceted nature of Spanish feminism, which distinguishes it from feminism in North America, where political concerns have dominated the discourse for decades, and in France, where language and philosophy define much of the late twentieth-century agenda (Vollendorf 7). Lisa Vollendorf points out that in addition to its diverse cultural makeup, Spain’s geographical location “at the edge of Europe” signals the phenomenon of treating Spain as a (marginalized) anomaly within Western Europe (2). Vollendorf refers to the “tendency among non-Spanish academics to treat all things Spanish as separate, different, even disconnected from the rest of Europe” and points out that Spain remains on the margins of new trends in “international feminism” and “does not figure prominently in an international intellectual economy that sees the developed West as the primary producer of feminist thought” (1-2). This species of marginalized disconnect from the rest of Europe figures into Marçal’s multi-minoritized consciousness and her expression of feminism, which generally speaking, is informed by French feminism and North American literary theorists, philosophers and poets. She seeks to highlight not only
sexual difference through confronting and dissolving fixed barriers and binaries, but also spatial difference. The poet translates theories of sexual difference into spatiality as she affirms the movement of the lesbian body through, within and beyond patriarchal spatial structure. While Sabadell-Nieto (2001) describes French feminism as “inscribed” in Marçal’s work (360), I argue that her feminism also calls for action, echoing North American feminist preoccupations in addition to deeply (French) theoretical workings of sexual difference.

In addition to the question of the minority feminist’s place within feminism and questions of representation, subjectivity and minoritization, emphases on homelessness have appeared in examinations of the lesbian body’s “place” within feminist criticism. These questions are intimately tied to language and new ways of inhabiting linguistic as well as material space. Diana Fuss famously problematized the inside/outside dichotomy so prevalent in theorizing the homosexual body (1995). Kennedy’s examination of the materialization of space, Keeping Up her Geography (2007), attempts to rearticulate the public/private divide in light of how it has been “constituitive of women’s subordination” and shows how this divide is “embedded in the structural organizing of culture at every level” (6). The first anthology of gay Hispanic criticism, not published until 1995, evidences the rather late development of this criticism and the relative reliance upon Anglo-European theoretical frameworks and terms (Pertusa Seva 13). Pertusa Seva (2005) posits that this may be due to the utility, or lack thereof, of the term “closet”/armario within the context of Hispanic literary and cultural studies.

The closet, functioning as both prison and refuge has become an important metaphor for the notions of inside and outside, restraint and freedom. Continuously re-
appropriated, gay communities, particularly within urban settings, have invented an enlarged closet: “enclosing a whole nightlife scene, a bar scene...a whole capitalist, consumer scene...as spaces of both heterocentric containment and gay freedom” (Grosz, AO 9). A “sense of the erotic potential of spaces is partly what is being celebrated in the gay community” (AO 10). Eve Sedgwick’s seminal study of “closetedness” affirms it as “that curious space that is both internal and marginal...centrally representative of its motivating passions and contradictions, even while marginalized by its orthodoxies” (56).

The place of the lesbian body within material space is also a crucial subject relative to embodiment and sexuality and conducive to highlighting the material manifestations of gender distinctions, prejudices, oppressions and silencing. Marçal navigates the spatial/material and the spatial/theoretical in her work through architectural structure, urban wanderings and archaeological excavations. The remainder of this chapter explores Marçal’s treatment of space in terms of the lesbian body’s dwelling and movement.

Architecture as Resistance

My understanding of the architectural is much aligned with that of Elizabeth Grosz, in which what is most illuminating are the theoretical issues that link the concept of architecture “with the phallocentric effacement of women and femininity, the cultural refusal of women’s specificity or corporeal and conceptual autonomy and social value” (Space, Time and Perversion 112). In these terms, Marçal’s use of architecture serves as more than a simple re-examination of the material but as a tool through which she conveys new ways of creating space and dwelling/inhabiting. Her work facilitates an
exploration of the containment of women not only within men’s physical space, but within the masculine conceptual universe (STP 123).

Architecture, as the material structure of space, limits and de-limits, manipulates movement, (en)closes and opens. Walls, foundations, windows, frames and rooms are constructed, appropriated, excavated and traversed in Marçal’s poetry and prose. The presence of architecture and the creation of virtual spaces are a response to the homelessness sensed by the poet in light of her identity as a Catalan, a feminist and a lesbian writer. She portrays a new way of building and inhabiting territories defined and delimited by fluid boundaries, movement, transpositions and translations. The “clós/Solc” dichotomy problematized at the start of her poetic career (Cau de llunes 35) may be traced throughout her contemplations of space; the seemingly binary pairing of “enclosure” and “furrow” echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth (nomadic) and striated (sedentary) space as it opens a space for the feminine, becoming lesbian body. The limits suggested by clos are undermined by the solc and the possibility of subversion. The word cos (“body”) is embedded within the calligramme and haunts the process of enclosing and movement.

“clós/Solc” also poses a re-examination of the notion of the closet, which in addition to serving as a useful contemporary metaphor for “outing” and the inside/outside dichotomy often employed in studies dealing with “reading” homosexuality, provides a frame within which the poet portrays her own preoccupation with framing. As Pertusa Seva pointed out, an inherent paradox frames the closet within another enclosed space with its own obstacle (door, exit) that necessitates a seemingly endless series of “coming out” contrasted with “closetedness” (16-17). The role of movement will also be explored
as it is central in charting a path towards lesbian literary embodiment through building and dwelling within architectural spaces. This chapter also provides a discussion of space in national and linguistic terms in an archaeological analysis, or excavation, of *La pasió segons Renée Vivien*.

**Primitive Space**

*Cau de llunes* (1977), Marçal’s first collection, may be understood as a foundational work, a type of poetic creation story. The collection is perhaps the most classically influenced (Marçal has noted evidence of this herself), and for this reason Plato’s *Timeaus*, itself an interrogation of the question of beginning, an explanation of the genesis of the universe, provides a crucial framework and serves as a fitting lens through which one may begin to analyze space in Marçal’s writing. The title of the work evokes and creates a spatial context as it frames her poetry within a specific, natural space, a “cau de llunes.” At first glance, the “lair of moons” evokes a refuge, a safe enclosure, hidden and inhabited by wild animals, even criminals, in short, beings that are persecuted, threatened or preyed upon. Lairs, constructed by those who inhabit them, are most generally understood as re-appropriated caves or other natural phenomena and are often located at the end of a long passageway, lacking direct daylight (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 167). These spaces are constructed through furrowing, through creating impressions in a pre-existing natural structure so as to provide temporary shelter and protection to a typically nomadic creature. Their mythological significance lies in their association with demons, dragons or monsters, which often hide in the dark spaces; a number of scholars have noted that they are particularly conducive to magic (167), a
connotation not absent in Marçal’s collection. Marçal offers a similar, albeit poetic refuge within *Cau de llunes*; she creates a protective space, a dark receptacle of shelter. The darkness associated with lairs is contrasted with the plurality of moons that inhabit the safe space. Lluïsa Julià has noted that the “cau de llunes” “adopta el sentido de ‘habitación privada’, ‘refugio’, ‘casa’, en alusión…al espacio personal, interno, subjetivo que la mujer necesita, pero también al simple techo que la cobije; es decir, a su << cercado>>” (“Añoranzas y paraísos” 196). Like Julià, other scholars of Marçal have skillfully taken note of the *cau*’s significance as an intimate space at once secure and creative, primitive and playful, but have stopped short of exploring the concept’s profound feminine and spatial resonances.

The space created by the *cau* conjures a *chora*-like enclosure, first evoked in Plato’s *Timaeus* and later “inhabited” by Kristeva, Irigaray, Butler, Derrida and others. The notion of the *chora* unveiled in *Timaeus* (and again in Aristotle’s writings, reflecting the genealogical power of the spatial concept) emerges as an ungraspable receptacle with undeniable feminine resonances: it is “the nurse of all becoming,” “by nature a matrix for everything,” directly linked by Plato to the mother (39-41). The function of the *chora* is to hold, to nurture and to provide the condition for the creation of the material world, “the screen onto which is projected the image of the changeless Forms…providing a point of entry…into material existence” (Grosz, *STP* 115). The spatial notion of *chora* echoes the interpretation of Marçal’s literary lesbian body posited elsewhere in this project where an often ungraspable, undetectable body is also the site of a specific, material, historical register and thus provides a crucial link between Marçal’s examination of space with female and lesbian corporality. Grosz emphasizes an important paradox articulated by
Plato: “Being a kind of pure permeability, infinitely transformable, inherently open to the specificities of whatever concrete it brings into existence, chora can have no attributes, no features of its own…its quality is to be quality-less, its defining characteristic that it lacks any defining feature” (STP 114). Bianchi notes

That receptacle/chôra is marked by feminine sexual difference, a specific kind of difference – one that Plato relentlessly insisted upon – places certain limits on this abstract and speculative register, calling us to think through the specificity, materiality, historicity, and particularity of the “feminine” together with and alongside the possibility of thinking the in-between of Being and Becoming. (133)

This paradox echoes that of the lesbian body as read in not only Marçal’s work, but, as many point out, that which is present in all literature). Bianchi captures the elusive chora as

occupying a zone and role between Being and Becoming, it is neither, having no predicates…it provides the substrate up and the space in which the eternal realm of Being makes its mark and instantiates itself on the way to the creation of the sensible world. It is thus an ignoble and slippery concept, a vision of the feminine locked into a strictly ungraspable maternal role…. (124)

Plato remarks, “Indeed we must liken the recipient to the mother, that from which to the father, and what they produce between them to their offspring,” marking the femininity of chora (41). Although it would appear to lend little insight to feminists in search of a critical understanding of women or the feminine in the history of Western philosophy (Grosz, for example, contends that it serves to produce a “disembodied femininity” as the foundation of the conceptual and social universe [STP 113]), an
examination of the concept in Marçal’s poetry sheds light on the complexities of inhabiting and creating space and the poet’s conception of space and place in terms other than “according to the logic of penetration, colonization, and domination” (113) maintained by an exclusionary, phallogocentric literary canon.

It has been noted that Kristeva’s well-known appropriation of chora departs from the concept outlined by Plato (Butler [1993], Bianchi [2006]). Her preoccupation, in short, is with the decidedly maternal moment (and place) in which the self becomes alien; her linguistic, psychoanalytic notion of the semiotic will be further explored in Chapter 4’s examination of the maternal body. Contrary to Kristeva, Derrida’s rendering of chora refuses to acknowledge any identification of the concept with the feminine; Bianchi counters Derrida’s examination, noting that “our very interest in the notion of chôra lies in its explicit and multivocal feminine resonances, and its potential for feminist thinking” (131). Grosz though, recognizes the relevance of a long list of “deconstructively privileged terms” associated with chora, including “writing,” “trace,” “dissemination,” “cinders,” “ghost,” “residue” which highlight concepts that in Marçal, prove as crucial to writing the feminine, lesbian body as to the space it inhabits and builds (STP 112).

It is fittingly Irigaray who provides the most appropriate and directly relevant register through which chora may be deployed in a study of Marçal’s poetry. In her exploration of sexual difference, Irigaray proposes that

In order to make it possible to think through, and love, this difference, we must reconsider the whole problematic of space and time…Time becomes the interiority of the subject itself and space, its exteriority…The transition to a new
age requires a change in our perception and conception of *space-time*, the
*inhabiting of places*, and of *containers*, or *envelopes of identity*. (*Ethics* 7)

She argues that a “revolution in thought and ethics is needed if the work of sexual
difference is to take place” and that phallocentric modes of thought have not only
obliterated the debt they owe maternal space, but exhibit a continued attempt to usurp it
(6). Grosz captures the spatial resonances of Irigaray’s revolution when she affirms that

Men produce a universe built upon the erasure of bodies and contributions of
women/mothers and the refusal to acknowledge the debt to the maternal body that
they owe. They hollow out their own interiors and project them outward, and then
require women as supports for this hollowed space. (*STP* 121)

Women, as guardians of domestic space, are contrasted with men as the architects of the
conceptual and material world; they become the living representatives of corporeality and
domicity: “of the natural order that men have had to expel from their own self-
representations in order to construct themselves as above-the-mundane, beyond the
merely material” (122). As Grosz points out, the “containment within the (negative)
mirror of men’s self-reflections strips women of an existence either autonomous from or
symmetrical with men’s: it relegates women to the position of support or precondition of
the masculine,” articulating precisely the Platonic *chora* (122). The “negative mirror of
men’s self-reflections” is aptly articulated by Marçal’s poetic moons, housed within the
space of the lair, within *Cau de llunes*.

The moons, perhaps references to the poems themselves, are many.
Archetypically identified as the reflection of the sun, the moons of *Cau de llunes* reflect
and are reflections of each other. They bring light to the darkness of the lair and are
immune, and simultaneously vulnerable, to exterior influence, much unlike the
astronomically defined moon, understood as a passive reflector of the sun’s light. From
its outset, Marçal’s collection provides a space in which a patriarchally defined
“feminine” flourishes as an active, light bearing, plural collective, a space that at once
contains the moon(s), isolating them from “masculine” threat, as it expands and nourishes
their creative power. As defined by its interior as much as it is its exterior, as an outdoor,
natural structure, the lair is a space that is at once furrow (“Solc”) and enclosure (“clOs”),
safe and hidden, yet vulnerable and exposed to the outside. Marçal’s frequent evocation
of ancient feminine literary voices that have been excluded from the literary canon
evidences the recuperative nature of her poetic project.

Within _Cau de llunes_, the poet portrays a plurality of female archetypes that
despite their activity remain a plurality, they remain anonymous. Marçal recuperates
voices juxtaposed with symbols and genres with explicit masculine connections. Marçal
(in addition to a number of Marçal scholars) cites the influence William Blake on her
poetry, specifically with regard to the presence of the moon in his work, signaling the
everpresence of canonical uses of the symbol and contrasting her re-appropriation.

A “receptacle of becoming,” Plato likens _chora_ to “a mass of plastic material
upon which differing impressions are stamped” (_Timaeus_ 41). The term for this plastic
material, _ekmageion_, “denotes an impress or mold…something that creates an impression
in something else” and is employed by Plato in the sense of a model or exemplary case; it
also receives the impression, being “that on which an impression is made” (Bianchi 127).
As a “zone of creativity,” Marçal’s _cau de llunes_ captures both the exclusion and
inevitable mutual influence of male and female writers; like the _ekmageion_, the space
houses at once mutual influences (Bianchi 128). The space offers the possibility for the feminine to generate her own literary impresses, as well as receive them from elsewhere. As Bianchi asserts, “It signifies, then, a capacity to be marked, a passive undergoing, moved and inscribed by Being, but also an indeterminate agentic capacity for inscription and erasure…for remembering and also for forgetting” (128).

Contained within a masculine literary canon from which she is simultaneously excluded, the woman poet must create her own space to subvert the canon while providing a space within which fellow woman writers may be read. Marçal’s consistent use of *divisas* echoes this sentiment and reinforces the spatial relevance of creating a physical emblem within which a literary identity is forged. Simultaneously, she recognizes her own capacity to be “imprinted” with the influences of the literary canon. Instead of privileging the poetry of one sex over another, Marçal creates a space within which masculine influences are noted, anonymous female voices are acknowledged, and new ways of reading and inhabiting are illuminated.

In addition to serving as a reminder of important feats or character traits, the medieval *divisa*, paired with a coat of arms, often signals spatial origin. The *divisa* of *Cau de llunes* articulates all of these features as well as serving as an intertextual reference. The precursor to the *divisa*, the *impresa amorosa*, embodies the encoded reference offered by Marçal’s subtle intertexts, as only the knights’s ladies were capable of descifering them (Aguado 13). In addition to space, place and position, the notion of *chora* also suggests land, territory or country (Bianchi 130). The presence of the poet’s “territory” is complex, yet readable within *Cau de llunes*. Like the *ekmageion*, this presence highlights its capacity to be penetrated and to penetrate.5 “Matinet de Sant Joan”
(Cau de llunes 67) is an apt example of the poet’s play on both territory (the traditions of Catalunya) and language. Marçal has been noted as a poet particularly skilled in a “delicioso maridaje entre el cancionero castellano y el catalán e, incluso, entre el provenzal y el catalán, que tantísima agilidad y riqueza le otorgan a su poesía” (Aguado 8).

The predominance of the moon as archetype in Marçal’s poetry may also be linked to the poet’s general interest in the astronomical and more specifically, astrology and the zodiac. She often included astrological as well as calendrical details in describing both pertinence and origin not only of herself but also of her daughter. Marçal writes of her daughter’s name and emphasizes the month of March, referencing the month in which she was conceived and highlighting the corporal significance pertaining to her body. The zodiac is traditionally represented in terms of its houses, which are determined by their location in space. Zodiac houses are a specific, enclosed space relevant in determining the zodiac sign. Simultaneously, they are formless structures, architectural features located in space; they offer shelter to those seeking astrological identity and remain in a distant, celestial realm. Marçal was born in November and consistently associates herself with the sign of Scorpio; it is this sign that she links with the history of Catalonia through a subtle intertextual pattern exploring the myth of San Jordi (La germana, l’estrangera, “Sota el signe del drac”).

The zodiac house, paradoxically structure and void, facilitates an intimate relation between subject and space that determines personality and emotional traits and predicts life’s paths. Most significant are the relation between material structure, infinite cosmos, and personal identity as well as the multiple planes of space and time occupied by the
zodiac house. The structure represents an ordering of chaos that at once confines and organizes as it highlights the infinite nature of the cosmos. Marçal’s preoccupation with the zodiac stands in contrast to the patriarchal vision of the house as a place that restricts women within an oppressive interior.

In contrast to astronomical, magical notions of space, one of the central preoccupations of Cau de llunes is Catalan popular culture; traditionally conveyed through texts that are recognized and celebrated with pride, but often remain anonymous (“Llengua abolida” 194). As was common in Catalonia during Marçal’s childhood, these sources were orally passed to the poet by her mother and often reflect women’s experiences. The triple rebellion articulated in the collection’s divisa, “À l’àtzar agraeixo tres dons: haver nascut dona, de classe baixa i nació oprimida. I el tèrbol atzur de ser tres voltes rebel” (15), is examined here through a reflection on domestic space and women’s role within and beyond both poetic tradition and the social and architectural structure of the house.

Marçal composed Cau de llunes towards the end of Franco’s life; a poem in the collection, specifically (albeit echoed through an ancient Greek verse), celebrates Franco’s death (“Llengua abolida” 194). Under his dictatorship, legal authority relegated women to the realm of the private and the domestic. Cabrero Blanco describes the relation between the domestic and the political and its profound mutual influence:

El esquema divisorio de la separación de la esfera pública y privada funcionó como elemento legitimador de la legislación, que reforzaba la separación de los géneros en espacios distintos. Al ampliar el poder de las mujeres en la vida
privada, quedó fortalecida la noción de la exclusión de las mujeres del espacio público y, por consiguiente, su acceso a los derechos políticos. (70)

A direct corollary of spatial isolation was exclusion from all political processes. Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff illustrate that the political culture in Spain has favored and encouraged binary oppositions from the Napoleonic invasion (1808) to the transition to democracy (1975-1978) and that “the intensity and durability of separate spheres as a prescriptive model was greater in Spain than in other Western European countries” (20). This was perhaps most acutely embodied by the notion of the “two Spains.” The impact of the dominant ideology of two separate spheres emphasized woman’s role as exclusively that of wife, mother and guardian of the home (21). Writers such as Carmen Martín Gaite explored these binaries in their literary creations. Martín Gaite wrote of the relegation of women to the domestic space, particularly in terms of their consciousness of their exclusion from the public domain and its effects on the female imagination; the very title of Entre visillos (1958), for example, echoes the spatial perspective from which Spanish women observed the public realm. Their position “entre visillos,” once observing (albeit through a filter) the public and being isolated from it, stifled their creativity and facilitated a domestic existence revolving around the most mundane of tasks and topics.

**Domestic Space**

To domesticate is to tame (Hill 14, Wigley 336). Seventeenth-century Dutch houses often serve as the prototype of the ideas and images relevant to the contemporary home and in his writings on this theme, Jonathan Hill observes that the house served
primarily as the juxtaposition of “a static and reassuring interior” with “a fluid and menacing exterior…all that was disturbing” (10). Historically, one of the main purposes of the home was to contain and order women, “keeping them busy in their task as guardians of domestic life and its other ‘unruly’ elements, such as children” (14). Reflecting on more nuanced and contemporary conceptualizations of domestic space, scholars such as Beatriz Colomina, Nancy Duncan and Mark Wigley have highlighted the relevance of sexuality to space and place studies and have shown the “active production of gender distinctions” to be found “at every level of architectural discourse” (Wigley 329). Wigley observes that architectural discourse and, by extension the house, is “defined more by what it will not say than what it says” and that it is necessary to interrogate “the mechanisms with which it constructs space” before the effects can be resisted (329-31). Marçal’s literary occupation of domestic space resists the effects of centuries of patriarchal gender divisions reinforced and exacerbated by the Franco regime; the houses discussed here are built with a seemingly absent discourse that dissolves what Wigley terms “the law of the house” and embodies Duncan’s “spatial revolution,” a deterritorialization that undermines the boundaries between public and private spaces, thus “(re)politicizing both…spheres and corresponding spaces” (333, 7-8).

Marçal begins one of her poems in *Cau de llunes* with an epigraph from Guillaume Apollinaire, “Le cortege des femmes long comme un jour sans pain” (*Calligrammes* [1918]). The epigraph references a work that aligns space and poetry, or rather creates space and images with poetry. Through Apollinaire, Marçal alludes to a nostalgic presence of women in the street, in a public sphere free of threat, violence and harassment that led to contemporary feminist campaigns to “take back” or “reclaim” the
night. The nostalgic tone may also be linked to the Catalan language and its relegation to
the private, domestic realm during the years of the dictatorship. With this subtle allusion
to the unthreatened presence of the (Catalan-speaking) woman in the public sphere, the
poet recalls a linguistic and spatial freedom which is abruptly restricted in the ensuing
poem. 8

The poem problematizes the complex relationship between public and private
spaces. It is precisely women’s restriction within the so-called “private sphere” that
Nancy Duncan explores in “Negotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private
Spaces” (1997). Duncan distinguishes the private as associated and conflated with
the domestic, the embodied, the natural, family, property, the ‘shadowy interior of
the household’, personal life, intimacy, sexuality…care…a haven, unwaged
labour, reproduction and immanence [and the public as] the domain of the
disembodied, the abstract, the cultural, rationality, critical public discourse…civil
society…waged labour, production, the polis, the state, action, militarism,
heroism and transcendence. (128)

Marcal’s poem examines and dissolves the problematic relation between private and
public spheres within the context of a fascist social structure in which the house served as
a microcosm of political order with a male head-of-household as ruler. The poem depicts
a “warrior” within a domestic space that both contains and tames:

Drap de la pols, escombra, espolsadors,
plomall, raspall, fregall d’espart, camussa,
sabó de tall, baieta, lleixu, sorra,
i sabó en pols, blauet, netol, galleda.
Co, sussi, cubell, i picamatalassos,
estonja, pala de plegar escombraries,
gibrell i cendra, salfument, capçanes.

Surt el guerrer vers el camp de batalla. (Ca u de llunes 41)

With language reminiscent of Greek epic depictions of war (Marçal noted that the
catalogue of ships and arms described in Book Two of the Iliad inspired this poem
[“Llengua abolida” 194]), the poet provides an inventory of domestic “arms.” Her
reference here echoes the “pan cotidiano” so prevalent during the Franco regime.) The
various tools are employed to clean, scrub, disinfect, sweep, remove and maintain the
cleanliness (and purity) of the home. They correspond to archetypical notions of the
house and home, which was designed to maintain “the inside inside and the outside
outside” as well as refer to the inner workings of the interior, and inner circle of the
network of spaces. As “arms,” the items reinforce the notion that the private space of the
home is a place where “aggressive forms of misogynous masculinity are often exercised
with impunity” (Duncan 131). Further, the poet recalls linguistic restrictions of the
dictatorship on speaking Catalan that relegated it to within the family, marginalizing it
“as belonging in the kitchen” (Bergmann 5). She subtly highlights both the oppressive
capabilities of the Catalan language and its status as a minoritized one by articulating the
complexities of her own marginalized space.
A closer examination of the inventoried cleaning products reveals the temporal and spatial contexts of the home depicted. In particular, “netol” refers to a brand-name cleaner that emerged during the hygiene campaigns of the Franco regime, which encouraged the cleanliness of the home and the purity and quality of life. Women, embodying the figure of la perfecta casada and the angel del hogar, were the guardians and nourishers of domestic space. According to the model designed by la Sección Femenina, women were to serve as austere, submissive wives and mothers and embody concepts of piety, patriotism and femininity. Carmen Martín Gaite aptly noted that “ninguna mujer podía acariciar sueño más hermoso que el de la sumisión a un hombre, y que si decía lo contrario estaba mintiendo” (Usos amorosos 45) and as Cabrero Blanco observes,

Todo esto comportó para la mujer española, convertida en una sombra del hombre, la dificultad de llevar a cabo cualquier forma de realización e identificación que superara los límites de una sociedad imbuida de machismo y confesionalismo, que había creado un modelo de mujer que anulaba completamente su capacidad intelectual, creativa y crítica. (89-91)

The philosophy and psychology of the Franco regime relied upon a constant gaze inward and emphasis on the irrelevance of what lay outside Spain. The dictator, preoccupied with the image of his nation as understood by the rest of the world, producing his own brand of interior/exterior, inside/outside dichotomy, where the inside was surveilled, maintained and protected by the people and the outside was the realm of the “warrior”/war hero/military leader/dictatorship (Usos amorosos 22). Political vigilance extended into the private sphere as women were forced into a role according to
a discourse of gender in line with that of catholic doctrine and fascist ideologies (Cabrero Blanco 127).

Other details included in the poem, such as the “fregall d’espart,” a broom made of esparto grass, native to the dry regions of southern Spain, reflect another implicit reference to the country. The grass is used by Spanish artisans to create baskets, cords and *espadrilles*. In this case, the broom of esparto grass neatly expresses a uniquely Franquist preoccupation with cleanliness in response to the fear of exterior, unclean, foreign influences. A Spanish brand of hydrocholoric acid (“salfumant”) is also included within the list, resulting in an implicit situatedness that locates the poetic voice within a specific spatial, temporal and national context of hygiene. The series of products creates a spatial interiority where the house is not a passive receptacle but an active space of constant movement and preparedness; it is a potentially threatening, and equally threatened, domestic space. When Martin Gaite, citing a text from the postwar period, highlights the contrast between a woman deemed “muy mujer” and “un torbellino guerrero” (26), she cites the binary pairing combated by Marçal’s poetic protagonist.

Contrasted with the interiority stressed in the poem is the last verse, which signals movement, a departure, an exteriority. This departure invades the previous stanzas and alters a reading of the poem as a depiction of interior, routine, domestic (and feminine) chores as it makes these activities directly relevant to military battle. The last verse derails the tone of the poem, which before is rather light-hearted and interior-oriented, associated with the mundane; the domestic and public poetic spaces are deterritorialized. As women have been treated and defined (in legal terms at least) “as if not fully capable of independent disembodied political thought and objectivity” (Spanish women were
denied the right to vote under Franco, were barred from holding passports, jobs, opening bank accounts, etc.), most men are capable of movement between private and public spheres and spaces with more legitimacy and physical safety (Duncan 129). The poem brings the warrior into domestic space and aligns the movement of*ama de casa* and *soldero*; it blurs boundary between home and warfront, the quotidian and the violent, and the patriarchally defined binaries of masculine and feminine.

The last verse abruptly alters the inventory of products, at first glance a seemingly benign list, not potentially powerful arms. The poet blurs linguistic boundaries in addition to those that bound the spatiality of the house as she questions the familiar and foreign, the interior and the exterior, mundane passivity and violence. The “baieta,” an innocent dishcloth, echoes* baioneta* (bayonet), a weapon. Many of the words of the poem repeat a sound popular in Marçal’s poetry: “plomall,” “raspall,” “fregall,” “tall,” “galleda,” “batalla,” “mall.” Referring to Xavier Bru de Sala, Lluïsa Julià describes the rhymes and a certain “mística del llenguatge que cal relacionar amb simbolistes com Rimbaud i Mallarmé; “El mateix Mall…palíndrom conceptual de llamp, abreviatura de magall, Mal de Baudelaire i Mall de Mallarmé, de malarmats i mallarmats, era un monosíl lab amb ressonànies talismàniques” (*Contraban de llum* 17). (Bru de Sala was referring to Marçal’s work in general, not the poem in question.) In the case of the poem in question, Marçal converts the domestic cleaning materials into tools, weapons reminiscent of a *mall*, hammer or mallet in Catalan.¹² The repetition of the sound, like Yael’s biblical mallet, serves as a poetic appropriation of a masculine activity. Through referencing Sisera’s mother, a woman pertaining to a previous generation in which masculine rights were favored over women’s, Yael “usurps phallic power” in violently killing Sisera by...
driving a tent peg through his head with her mallet (Mudrovic 316). Like Yael, Marçal references an earlier generation; this has the effect of both emasculating the patriarchal ideology of Franco’s Spain and offering a sense of repetition, which as pointed out by Mudrovic’s reading of Barbara Hernstein Smith’s interpretation, offers closure “concomitant with an end to the previously prevailing social practices” (317). Further, Marçal’s play on mall may extend to linguistic practices; the sound is unique to Catalan (not present in Castilian) and the repetitive use of the sound within the poem converts the orality of her poetry into a weapon in its own right as it embodies Catalan linguistic resistance to Franco’s imposition of Castilian as the official Spanish language. Marçal’s public reading of the poem on November 22, 1980 (Interview titled “Solcant l’aire” on Ràdio Sant Boi) further emphasizes the series of abrupt pauses following each –mall syllable.

The poetic voice constructs the territory of the home without an architectural referent, she builds from the inside out. She provides an interior perspective of an inner space and paradoxically opens the space to further possibility as she writes a home composed of fluid space, where violence is present alongside purity, movement alongside permanence. The notion of a warrior recalls frequent comings and goings, departures and returns, and a necessary maintenance of a domestic social structure in flux, one that would shift in line with the movement of a presumably male warrior and domestic female. The poem re-positions the exclusionary binaries central to the fascist system of male dominance and writes an “inclusionary” domestic system that dissolves its own limits. The poem deterritorializes what was understood as “private,” bringing it into the “public” sphere. This action is a subversive effort to highlight women’s “place,” her
previous invisibility in the public realm. According to Duncan, the making
public/publicizing of the private is necessary to legitimize what has been left invisible,
selectively regulated and generally free from public scrutiny (141). Seyla Benhabib
articulates the poem’s effect when she notes that “the struggle to make something public
is a struggle for justice” (qtd. in Duncan 141).

The poem, much like the house, is composed of shifting, fluid spaces and
identities. Catalan does not lend itself to identifying the gender of the warrior whose
identity remains ambiguous (Though Marçal has written little on this poem, she does
emphasize the ambiguity of the warrior [“Llengua abolida” 194]). The warrior’s
departure is the culmination of the domestic preparations and activities depicted in the
previous verses; in light of the domestic limits imposed upon women throughout history
and specifically in Spain, one may infer that the actor in the preceding verses is a woman.
As women were crucial in the preparation of the male warrior’s departure, she is as
capable of being a warrior herself; as she operates in both spheres, she is arguably more
prepared and empowered by her marginal position. Like Joanna Russ’ “she” in The
Female Man, Woolf’s he/she of Orlando and Wittig’s j/e of The Lesbian Body, Marçal’s
“warrior” suspends “the logic of conventional assumptions about gender identity and
gender difference,” articulating “something inconceivable,” performing a textual
“transformation, a transfiguration” of a reality (Figures 258-59). The poem provokes
(mis)readings and highlights at once the “obstinacy of language and…the creative
potential of its figural dimension (Figures 259). Public space often functions as “a site for
the destabilization of unarticulated norms” (Duncan 139) and by bringing the norms of
Spanish domestic life into the realm of the public, Marçal employs what Sally Munt
referred to as a “politics of dislocation” in order to destabilize spatial and gender dichotomies (Munt 124). Marçal disarticulates the spatial and linguistic logic of the Franco regime.

These spatial dichotomies may be explored further. In *Architecture from the Outside* (2001), Elizabeth Grosz explores mimesis and its significance in “outlining the ways in which the relations between an organism and its environment are blurred and confused” (36). She cites Roger Caillois and his study of the spatiality of mimicry in the natural world (“Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” [1935]), where he observed that mimicry, a “dangerous luxury,” has little survival value and can in fact lead to the demise of a species (36). Psychasthenia, a condition in which the “meshing of subject and body fails to occur” is observed when a subject is unable to locate herself where she “should” be (38). This inability stems from a displacement in gaze as well as a spatial displacement; Grosz explains that “such subjects may look at themselves from the outside, as others would…They are captivated and replaced, not by another subject…but by space itself” (38-39). In the words of Caillois describing psychasthenic subjects; “Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them…It ends by replacing them…the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses” (39). Grosz identifies psychosis as the human analog of mimicry as both phenomena involve the replacement of the subject’s own perspective by the gaze of another “for whom the subject is merely a point in space, not the focal point organizing space” (39). Shifting gazes and perspectives result in a blurring of the interior/exterior dichotomy: “The barrier between the inside and the outside, in the case
of the human subject as much as the insect creature, is ever permeable, suffused not only by objects and apparatuses but by spatiality itself” (39).

Grosz’s insight is relevant to Marçal’s poem in that it articulates the role of gaze and perspective in spatial terms. The poem portrays and facilitates multiple gazes on multiple planes; this plurality of perspectives confuses and dissolves the exclusionary binaries imposed not only by centuries of androcentric philosophy, but by the Franco regime, as echoed in the haunting references to household products and cleaners. The poem does not explicitly convey sexuality as a prominent theme; however, the poem’s simplicity lends itself to an examination of the sexed body. Grosz links Caillois’ contribution to psychoanalytic theory to the sexed body of the self and “the meaning the body has for others or for itself” in order to better understand the subject’s embodied relations to spatiality (39-40). Even though neither Grosz nor Caillois “adequately acknowledge that there are always at least two irreducibly different types of body, and thus two types of subjectivity, perhaps operating within two different orders of spatiality” (39). Multiple bodies, subjectivities and spaces are expressed within Marçal’s poem creating a fluid, virtualized body that exists within an equally fluid, smooth, space. This smooth, fluid (Duncan would refer to it as “transformed”) space washes over the striated, oppressive space created and maintained by Franco’s dictatorship. Deleuze and Guattari remind us that “the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (ATP 474). Marçal examines space like Grosz, “from the outside”, but also explores it from the inside. By exposing the inside, the private, the domestic, and “smoothing” the boundary between the private and public,
Marçal uncovers both the necessity and risk inherent to exposing spatial, and therefore, corporeal oppression. Duncan describes this type of spatial risk in terms of “facilitating undue state intervention” as a result of the “opening up of privatized problems to public contestation” (135).

Like Grosz, one of the aims of the present project is to think the body “in terms of the rotation of impossible shapes in illegible spaces” (32). Marçal’s poetic voice renders the space of the poem unreadable precisely as the poetic subject embodies the impossible. Spain and post-civil war societal and social consciousness haunt her very profound questioning of space. Teresa de Lauretis describes the value of Virginia Woolf’s spatial metaphor of the room and highlights an important effect of Marçal’s poem. She reads “a trace silence” at the core of the poetic voice’s material existence, “the silence of what did not happen because women were busy having children and otherwise reproducing human material existence” (Figures 246-47). An “empty center,” “a space of contradiction where opposites converge and cancel each other out” is evoked by Marçal’s poem as she illuminates the only space from which women’s speech may emerge (247). She opens a space for contemplating the female body and as will be discussed in the next section, the lesbian body other-wise (Figures 259).

**Queer Spaces**

“El meu amor sense casa” (*Desglàç* 103) portrays the dissolution of walls and foundations in the face of impossible desire and simultaneously constructs a space that fosters this very desire. The poetic voice is abandoned by language in the moment of writing this desire and expresses it through movement and the senses. The poem is
written in the shadows of language and builds upon a repetition of terms that produces
echoes of itself. The echoes contribute to a tone that is as intense and urgent as it is
nostalgic. Marçal herself has described the tone and musicality of the poem as
reminiscent of American blues; Sabadell-Nieto effectively links the liminal, marginalized
feminine body with the marginalized black body through the poem’s blues cadence
(“Domesticacions” 196).

El meu amor sense casa.

L’ombra del meu amor sense casa.

La bala que travessa l’ombra del meu amor sense casa.

Les fulles que cobreixen la bala que travessa l’ombra del meu amor sense casa.

El vent que arrenca les fulles que cobreixen la bala que travessa l’ombra del meu
amor sense casa.

Els meus ulls que arrelen en el vent que arrenca les fulles que cobreixen la bala
que travessa l’ombra del meu amor sense casa.

El meu amor que s’emmiralla en els ulls que arrelen en el vent que arrenca les
fulles que cobreixen la bala que travessa l’ombra del meu amor sense casa.

The love of “El meu amor sense casa” at once belongs to the poetic voice and is
without a home. It is formless, yet it leaves a shadow that is pierced by a bullet and
covered in leaves which are blown by the wind. The eyes of the poetic voice are
paradoxically rooted within and despite the movement of the wind. The constant
movement of the poem is juxtaposed with the permanence, through echoes, of the
nomadic desire that knows neither home nor place. These echoes indicate an invisible
closure, an un-seeable limit upon which the sounds of the verses infinitely bounce back and forth. One verse rolls into the next, accumulating an intense and sensory momentum.

The poetic voice is excluded from the house in the moment of building (or writing) this space. Joana Sabadell-Nieto articulates the dissolution of the interior/exterior binary when she interprets the poem as

escrivant sobre un amor exclòs, escrivint l’afora de la casa, escriu també la casa mateixa, l’afora i l’endins, i explora a més a més els coneguts binaris centre/perifèria, inclusió/exclusió, viable/inviable, acceptat/proscrit des de la posició del cos exclòs, inviable, proscrit de dona; pero, i aixo el mes relevant, tot fent-ho, desvela també la impossibilitat de tals binaris excloents, els desestabiliza, els dissol. (“Domesticacions” 194)

The poet aligns the female body with architectural structure and destabilizes the regimes of order imposed upon both. The “love without a house,” echoes the first treatise on the bodily interior, or in Wigley’s terms, “the treatise that gave the body an interior,” which argues that the body is in fact a house, “which like any house can only be maintained as such by constant surveillance of its openings” (358). The female body, an “inadequate enclosure” due to “convoluted” boundaries, has “been turned inside out” (358). This turning inside out of the female body as house is explored by Marçal as she examines not only the house as dominant figure for the body through history, but the female body’s relevance as an inscriptive surface and further, the place, or “home” of the lesbian body (or lack thereof) from this discourse. Like Monique Wittig, who portrayed the lesbian body from the inside out (through a naming of the interior organs, the body’s innermost parts) Marçal facilitates the materialization of the dematerialized lesbian body.
The poem conveys an intensive interconnectedness and simultaneous dissolution of limits and provides, in Rosi Braidotti’s “nomadic” terms, a “moveable foundation” upon which paradoxes are evoked and “statements can collapse into each other and be turned inside out” (Nomadic Subjects 7). The presence of desire, “homeless” yet housed within the poem affirms fluid boundaries and foundations. The poet maintains the movement of these boundaries and foundations and creates a productive space. This space, like Deleuze and Guattari’s smooth space, is a haptic one, where points are subordinated to trajectory (ATP 478). Braidotti cites performance artist Laurie Anderson and her talent for depicting a continuum of experience, pointing out that “It is not the bullet that kills you, but the hole,” thus signifying that the boundaries between inside and outside, as well as the temporal chain set up by being hit by a bullet and therefore dying, are not a one-track sequence. Their meaning, consequently, cannot be restricted to a one-way mode,” much like the house built by Marçal’s poetic voice and for that matter, the very notion of homelessness (7). Through writing a “house” for the homeless, the poetic voice builds a structure based on nomadic movement, rhizomatic paths that continuously meet, divert, intersect and overlap. It is, in a sense, an anti-house, a nomadic tenting of sorts, defined by temporariness and movement, where dwelling is subordinated to movement (ATP 478). It has been argued that the basic task of classical architectural theory consists of restricting mobility and is characterized by “bondage to the ground” in opposition to mobility, detachment from the ground (Wigley 357). The smooth space inhabited (or not) by Marçal’s poetic voice is a direct response to this traditional, patriarchal, striation of space.
“El meu amor sense casa” stands in direct contrast to the archetypal house. Jonathan Hill summarizes some of the more prominent assumptions regarding the house in traditional architectural studies. He defines the house as

- the origin and archetype of architecture, the manifestation of its important attributes…
- Home always belongs to someone. It is supposedly the most secure and stable of environments, a vessel for the identity of its occupant(s), a container for, and mirror of, the self. Associated with all that is solidly comforting, the home is synonymous with the material. (Hill 6-8)

The house is also the structure that protects and maintains sexual purity. In his study of historical canonic texts (“crucial to architecture’s promotion into the liberal arts…the academy…into the university and…into this room”). Mark Wigley identifies the role of architecture as the explicit control of female sexuality: “the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife” (332-36). More than providing a scene for patriarchal order, the house embodies it.

The question of gender division and love (so prevalent in Marçal’s poem) highlights the historical significance of marriage and its association with the house. Wigley points out that the house itself provides the boundaries that control women’s sexuality. He notes that “her fluid sexuality endlessly overflows and disrupts” the boundaries of the self: “Unable to control herself, she must be controlled by being bounded” through marriage (“the domestication of a wild animal”) (335-36). The law of the house is the law of the father; it embodies the very possibility of patriarchal order that appears to be simply applied to it (336-37). The notion of the “virtuous woman” represents the “woman-as-housed” her virtue is bounded by her space (337). Sexuality is
intimately connected to spatiality. Marçal addresses this impossibility, this boundary, through dissolving the archetype and rewrites the notion of the house in terms of what is absent. Smooth space is not liberating, “But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new places, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us” (ATP 500). The poet gives a place to the placeless, a home to the homeless and builds a virtual house. In Architecture from the Outside, Grosz points out that the challenge virtual reality poses to architecture cannot be limited to the question of technological innovation, and that the central question is less “Can one design a virtual house?” than “How can one design in such a way as to bring out the virtualities of building and of the real itself?” (AO 88-90). In other words, she refers to “an entirely new way of seeing, inhabiting, and designing space” that involves “reconceptualizing the real and the relations of embeddedness, the nesting…of the virtual and the real within each other” (89).

Marçal builds a foundation and defines the house by negating its capacity to house; she affirms the existence of desire through its lack of home. Sabadell-Nieto (“Domesticacions” 195) points out the relation between hospitality and hostility (reading Derrida and Benveniste), and I add that this conflict and simultaneous common (linguistic) origin embody Marçal’s perspective on lesbian desire. The poem conveys a nesting of virtual and real without binaries (in contrast to a house defined as “a nested system of enclosed spaces” [Wigley 340]); the constant movement affirms presence, turns shadow into substance, makes what does not yet exist appear and creates a new way of inhabiting. It permits a fluidity of boundaries, limitations and sexuality, and an excess
Contrasted with this excessive desire in the notion of the lesbian body (the feminine body) as lack. The ephemeral desire is lesbian desire.

The poetic voice starts and builds from nothingness and is a spectral presence within/on top and inside/outside of the structure (in the in-between spaces). Terry Castle writes of the “apparitional lesbian’s” “…insubstantiality…her weightlessness, her sterility, her annoyingly diffident response to the imperatives of physical desire. She epitomizes ‘notthereness’: now you see her, but mostly you don’t” (46). She is absent yet present within a strikingly uncanny space. Like Castle’s lesbian subject, shadow is turned into substance, what evaporates also solidifies and there exists an uncanny return to flesh not only of the house, but of the love that inhabits it. To reiterate Wigley’s analysis of the “housing of gender,” the law of the father is inherently architectural: “It is itself understood as the intersection of a spatial system and a system of surveillance” (339).

Marçal’s poetic desire escapes the father’s surveillance; it is placed on the periphery, in the discursive void. Simultaneously, she appropriates this surveillance (the gaze) and reclaims her own spatial and sexual subjectivity.

In *Immaterial Architecture*, Jonathan Hill proposes an architecture that “is less the absence of matter than the perceived absence of matter” (72). His conceptualization of architecture involves creativity of interpretation and a keen awareness of the senses:

The experience of immaterial architecture is based on contradictory sensations, and is appropriate to an active and creative engagement with architecture. The complexity of the whole experience depends upon the user’s interpretation of what is present and absent. (73)
The architect explains that his notion of immaterial architecture (which necessarily engages with the material) is more adaptable to human life cycles, movement and the evolution of both the individual and society and does not simply change established habits, but offers “those habits greater flexibility” (74). An architecture only associated with the immaterial may be associated with the formless, which in Hill’s consideration, “appears to threaten society, architecture and the home, whether insidious disorder inside or lurking danger outside”; “But this threat is imagined as much as it is real” because the desire for secure and safe architecture is impossible to fulfill and simply increases the desire for safer and safer architecture (74). Despite Hill’s preoccupation with the immaterial, his architectural work is clearly more rooted in the material than the present study. This does not, however, alter the relevance of his work to Marçal’s virtual house. As a house engaged as much with the immaterial as with the material, Marçal’s poetic architecture opens a space where lesbian desire does not represent a dark and dangerous threat.

Linguistically, the lack of distinction between house and home in Catalan (as well as Castilian) both aligns the architectural and spatial with the social. It is both possible to have a house without being “at home” (as a marginalized outsider) and to have a “home” without a “house” (nomadism). These multiple and shifting dimensions of meaning echo notions of building and dwelling, in which, according to Heidegger, building is contingent upon dwelling (157). As Marçal affirms the ability of her poetic voice to dwell despite a lack of archetypal “house” structures, she preserves the right of the lesbian body to inhabit space and combat homelessness through joining, merging and overlapping otherwise separate spaces.
The *divisa* from Marçal’s *Bruixa de dol* (1979) embodies an architectural and philosophical “in-between”:

Emmarco amb quatre fustes
un pany de cel i el penjo a la paret.

Jo tinc un nom
i am guix l’escric a sota. (9)

The poetic voice, within a frame of four walls, frames a piece of sky and hangs it on one of the walls, taking the infinite sky and bringing it into the territory of a room. In an act of ownership and authorship, she affirms possession of her name, without going so far as to name it. Her possession of a name is more important than the name itself. She takes her written/verbal possession one step further as she writes the name, still unnamed, on the wall. Written in chalk, her name, her written production, is fragmented and fragile; the powdery substance will fade and disintegrate with time. Every verse of the *divisa* is marked by an action by the poetic voice and her movement is mapped for us on the wall in the structure.

Marçal’s use of “jo” and the first person singular verb form (common in her *divisas*) emphasizes the authorship and ownership of the poetic voice and serves as a reminder that it is her voice that will preside over the subsequent collection. The poet’s “jo” is an instructor who provides a concise introduction to the works we are about to read. In addition to representing the fragility of her (linguistic) identity, the chalk used by the poetic voice serves to reinforce the didactic element present in much of Marçal’s
writing, particularly her *divisas*, which often function as a concise framing device to introduce entire collections. As readers of the ensuing poetry, we are instructed to read her rebellion as a lesson in confronting the canonical “wall” and inscribing poetic authority.

Grosz observes that the wall, “the most conventional of architectural forms and presumptions,” best illustrates “the impact, resonance, and richness that the virtual brings to the real” (90). By using this simplest of architectural forms, Marçal creates a spatial in-betweenness where her poetic voice can name, define and move herself. In Grosz’s words,

> The space of the in-between is that which is not a space, a space without boundaries of its own, which takes on and receives itself, its form, from the outside, which is not its outside (this would imply that it has form) but whose form is the outside of the identity, not just of an other (for that would reduce the in-between to the role of object, not of space) but of others, whose relations of positivity define, by default, the space that is constituted as in-between. (91)

This virtual space is “the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it” (93). The nesting of a frame (the frame around the picture of the sky) within another frame (the four walls), authored by both a named and nameless author produces a flow of movement, which according to Braidotti, “entails power relations, transitions between contradictory registers, shifts of emphasis” (14). Despite the multiple (architectural) limits present within the short verses, the poetic voice writes a work of delimitation, of movement, of authorship, of transition. The wall, symbolic of division,
impossibility, stability and isolation is converted into a window of limitless poetic opportunity.

Deleuze and Guattari recognize the frame as the very origin (Grosz refers to it as the “first gesture”) of art: “Art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory, or from which it extracts a chaoid sensation as variety” (WP 206). For art to exist, frames must control chaotic forces. In architectural terms, the frame tames the virtual, “the territorialization of the uncontrollable forces of the earth” (CTA 11). Without a frame, territory cannot exist. In her study, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth*, Grosz argues (following Deleuze, Guattari and Cache) that framing (and deframing) are art’s “modes of territorialization,” and are the basic form of architectural expression:

The frame separates. It cuts into a milieu or space. This cutting links it to the constitution of the place of composition, to the provisional ordering of chaos through the laying down of a grid or order that entraps chaotic shards, chaoid states, to arrest or slow them into a space and a time, a structure and a form where they can be affected by bodies. (13)

The organization of chaos is the very function of art itself, and framing fosters this organization. Grosz determines that art is above all architectural because “its cosmic materials require demarcation, enframement, containment in order for qualities as such to emerge, to live, and to induce sensation” (16). Framing, in other words, makes art possible.

In Marçal, the framing of the *divisa* to *Bruixa de dol* (as well as the other numerous *divísas* she employs in her works) makes possible the ensuing poetry and
opens a space, a territory, for her art. The art made possible by Marçal’s framings is not only a movement of territorialization, “the movement of joining the body to the universe itself according to the bodies needs and interests”; it is the converse movement of deterritorialization (18). The ensuing poetry is framed so that it may continue cutting through territories, breaking up systems of enclosure and performance, traversing territory in order to retouch chaos, enabling something mad, asymptomatic, something of the chaotic outside to reassert and restore itself in and through the body, through works and events that impact the body. (18)

As the frames foster Marçal’s poetry, her poetry, as art according to Grosz, is itself “equally a project that disjars, distends, and transforms frames” (18). Shari Benstock has noted that writers such as H.D., Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf “position themselves structurally in the interstices, gaps, and overlaps inherent in literary orders” (“Expatriate” 197). These gaps, when interpreted as a species of window, represent the presence of “nonpresence,” the “impossibility of figurability and the failure of representation” inherent to writing by and about lesbians (Benstock 192). Art “focuses on the intervals and conjunctions between frames” (18); “The history of the frame is the evolution of an increasing dematerialization, a territory-wall-painting-window-mirror-screen-becoming” (17). Looking through a window provides one with a sensation of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion: “Being both here and there is an experience engendered by all windows” (Hill 21). Windows blur boundaries regardless of which type of window they are (Hill for example includes televisions and computers in his classification). A further consequence, though, is unease (social or psychic) “that strains relations between
individuals and groups because boundaries are less effective” (21). The blurring of boundaries is a threat to patriarchal spatiality.

Within Spanish and Catalan literature, windows and frames, particularly as they relate to the domestic space of the house, have served an important symbolic role. They have offered frames of opportunity to Marçal herself. Echoes of Montserrat Roig, Carmen Martin Gaite, Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca enhance the didactic nature of her work; as she looks forward to new possibility she reaches to her poetic roots. The poet’s conflation of points of view strengthen a gaze that opens a space of resistance. This conflation of points of view and resisting gazes is particularly visible in Marçal’s gazings of the city of Barcelona. This conflation and play on proximity and distance allow us to read Marçal as reader (spectator) and her reading in turn, “demands a becoming” (Doane 45).

A City of One’s Own: Urban Space

Spanish culture is in general, largely urban and for this reason, public spaces, including plazas, tend to be the social and economic center of the city (Dupláa 42). Smaller towns and villages echo this model as they “intentan imitar este esqueleto urbanístico de la gran urbe” (42). Despite many years spent living in Barcelona and her affinity for the city, Marçal’s seemingly paradoxical reference point is the margin. Her writing portrays the theoretical relevance the city holds in gender, feminist and LGBTQ studies and its practical possibilities for activism. Like other feminist philosophers who align the futurity of the city with the becoming of bodily existence, she understands the city as a particularly conducive space to theorizing the female and lesbian body; “The
mode of futurity…of becoming, is a condition of bodily existence…it is also the life and existence of the city” (AO 53). Marçal’s exploration of the city of Barcelona may be rendered an examination of space akin to that of Virginia Woolf (most notably in “A Room of One’s Own”) where women’s space is elaborated as a question of possession, isolation, creativity and accessibility. Her urban perspective is one in which Barcelona serves more as a “metaphorical tool” that expresses wider concerns than as an independent “character,” as others have suggested Catalan writers have done (Wells 2007). The city of Barcelona enables the poet’s continued explorations of inside/outside dichotomy as well as the notion feminine gaze in terms of the paradox of one who sees and one who is seen, one who possesses a gaze and one who is gazed at.

Women writers share a unique relationship to the urban environment, “whether it is considered as an actual place, as a symbol of culture, or as the nexus of concepts and values determining women’s place in history and society” (Squier 4). As a symbol or manifestation of culture itself, the city spatially embodies women’s struggles, roles and inhabitation. Whether they are deemed positive or negative, women’s reflections on the city are as varied as their texts themselves: “In its many guises – as symbol, theme, setting, even character – the city speaks fluently of woman’s public and private life, of her literal and literary confinement in patriarchal models for experience, and of her struggle to win freedom from such constraints in life and art” (Squier 6).

As Virginia Woolf and others have shown, whether the city experience is pleasurable or painful depends on whether or not urban space allows women writers access to creativity and autonomy (4). Urban space is capable of being both stiflingly oppressive and profoundly liberating, often simultaneously. Paris, for example, a city
known for its freedom of artistic and social expression was paradoxically a source of isolation for writers such as 19th-century novelist George Sand, who struggled to live as a “free woman and writer” within the city’s boundaries (4). Even Renée Vivien, living within the heart of the city’s Sapphic community, often felt isolated and relegated herself to dark, oppressive interior spaces. She was stifled and divided her time between Paris and the Greek island of Lesbos as she navigated her spatial struggles with solitude and strove to escape the effects of urban limitations, practical and metaphorical.

On the other hand, for women who have been relegated, in life and literature, to pastoral or interior settings, the city offers freedom from private, domestic isolation and provides the “space and cultural tools with which to transcend enforced domestic servitude: with ‘a room of one’s own’, an education, a job” (5). Urban space fosters communication, relationships, even sisterhoods between women within public spaces and has been documented as a “gate of escape from bondage to the natural, rural past” (5). Even though the most enthusiastic praise of the urban environment speaks to the possibilities of the city, it is often tempered by a sense of exclusion (in terms of design, function, political centers, etc.), necessitating the revisionary tactics so common in women’s writings on the subject.

In spite of the impossibility of universalizing the urban experience, one of the more pervasive themes running through literary, particularly Continental, British and North American, depictions of the city is masculine control of all material and cultural production. In these cities, “women are shadowy figures existing on the margins: of mind, of work, of speech, of culture” (7). The urban space of Barcelona conforms to this model in that Barcelona’s women writers have examined the everpresent, yet apparitional
existence of women using the urban space of their city. Montserrat Roig’s narrative trilogy (*Ramona, adéu* [1972], *El temps de les cireres* [1977], *L’hora violeta* [1980]) traces the possession and re-possession of the feminine gaze throughout the city’s historical turning points and the parallel family history of three generations of “Ramona/Mundetas”. For Roig, writing the city provides a liberating strategy not only to her own search for artistic freedom, but, as Caragh Wells notes in her study of Roig’s use of the city, to “her desire to rise above prescriptive political or social agendas” (89).

In her analysis of urban space in the fiction and non-fiction of Roig, Cristina Dupláa describes the uniquely Barcelonan architectural space occupied by feminine subjectivity in terms of its “microespacios: pisos con patios interiores o galerías y balcones con vistas a la calle” (40). In addition to a constant presence throughout her published work, Roig produced one of the more well known and architecturally focused representations of the city of Barcelona, published first in *BarcelDones* (1989) and again in *Digues que m’estimes encara que sigui mentida* (1991). Some have noted that Roig’s work often considers the space of Barcelona as character: “elevado a la categoría de personaje-testimonio, tanto en la narrativa de ficción como en reportajes y crónicas periodísticas” (Dupláa 40) and others, such as Caragh Wells, consider the author’s use of the city more as a “metaphorical interlocutor,” where female characters interact with the urban space as they alter their gendered gazings (95). In “De finestres, balcons i galleries,” Roig re-constructs the history of Barcelona in terms of women’s access to architectural spaces and analyzes the gaze enabled by these frames. Notions of public and private are examined in terms of windows, balconies and galleries as the late Catalan author provides a historical piece that complements the characters of her novels (often
intertwined and interrelated through genealogies that parallel Barcelona’s history) and builds an architectural-historical recuperative feminine genealogy that frames her literary works and vice versa. In addition to serving as a model for Marçal, Roig’s writing is significant in that it highlights the relevance and potential of Barcelona’s architectural spaces in telling and re-telling its history and that of the women who dwell within them.

In the same collection of texts revolving around the city of Barcelona and “las intelectuales que allí viven y desarrollan su trabajo literario,” Marçal presents her own personal, and therefore urban, history of Barcelona. BarcelDones (1989), compiled by historian Isabel Segura, includes works that embody “la paradoxa de considerar avantajós l’anonimat que comporta la vida en una ciutat…per a una dona, passar desapercebuda és una garantia de llibertat. La mancança de nom és, doncs, el xador occidental” (Marta Marín cited in Dupláa 42). The title of the work blurs the boundary between Catalonia’s capital and its women as it traces the city’s presence in their writing and highlights the influence of their work throughout the city’s history. The collection consists of a montage of images and texts and a fusion of corporal and spatial boundaries.

Marçal’s contribution, “Viratges, Reminiscències” is a nostalgic and telling tracing of her movement within and beyond Barcelona’s city limits. The prose text provides a loosely chronological, yet equally kaleidoscopic, vision of the city and maps a spatial and corporal history that is as personal as it is collective. As one of the many women relegated to shadows of Barcelona’s history and as representative (even a descendant) of fictional characters in seminal works such as those that compose Roig’s novelistic trilogy, Marçal inhabits, reads and writes spaces within a city not quite designated as her true home. She writes from a position at once excessive to and not
contained by the sociocultural and material limits of Barcelona. Marçal understands her feminism as a personal-political practice; notions of marginality and eccentricity are integral to her textual fusion of theory and practice. Like Woolf, whose treatment of space is intimately tied not only to the experimental, but also to the Sapphic (Benstock 192), Marçal’s urban wanderings and subsequent gazings implicate an examination of the sexed, lesbian body.

Though born in Barcelona, Marçal attributes this connection to the city as merely circumstantial (53). The poet spent her childhood in rural Pla de l’Urgell, and often marginalized the role of Barcelona in her formation; the second sentence of “Viratges” for example, immediately identifies her as “una xiqueta du’n poble de l’Urgell” (53). With this gesture, Marçal, within the textual confines of BarcelDones, is at once inside (native) and excessive (foreign) to the city. Her first profound contact with Barcelona is through her aunt, who like the Magi from the Orient, arrived from a place that a young Marçal considered a mythical, distant land; her young eyes “…transmoraven en una fada poderosa aquella treballadora que planxava vuit hores diàries o més, en una clínica davant per davant de la Concepció, per un sou migrat” (53). She recalls the effect of her “aura,” “la sensació de poder quasi magic que em comunicava…” as she aligns magic, fantasy and imagination with her first conceptualizations of the city she would later inhabit (54). Biographically and textually, Barcelona, for Marçal, is above all else, an imaginary, metaphoric construct. Through her aunt, she implicitly absorbs (and reads) the artistic and literary history so crucial to Barcelona’s development and simultaneously asserts her role within this history as she maps her own movement within and beyond it.

The role of “la tieta Mercè” is significant in that it provides a point of view through
which Marçal is able to see, appropriate her own vision, her own gaze of the urban space later in life.

Marçal not only inherited magical, fantastical and youthful visions of Barcelona from her aunt. “La tieta Mercè” was also the origin of her name (Maria-Mercè), and the poet sees this connection as another link that binds her to “la capital del mar” (54). The poet considers herself intimately connected to the urban space of Barcelona, yet admits to finding herself implicitly falsifying her birthplace: “«soc d'Ivars d'Urgell»,” relegating Barcelona to “l'espai del mite” and maintaining a safe and permeable distance between the two sites (54). Through this deception, this fluidity of boundaries, Marçal articulates a certain marginality, a notion of placelessness, a dissolution of the inside/outside dichotomy that defines her as both (and neither) foreigner and native within two spatial contexts not divided by a clear, markable boundary. She sees herself as “un esperit híbrid, indecís, instal lat de forma permanent en el solc entre dos mons…” (56). A permanent resident of the solc, the furrow, the in-between, Marçal equates her geographical pertenance, her “home,” as the “llindar” between landscapes and codes. This eccentric position is an affirmative one; it does not prevent Marçal from experience, but fosters, even privileges, multiple perspectives. In her discussion of the eccentric subject and its relevance to lesbian discourse, de Lauretis analyzes the resistance of the word “lesbian” to dominant conceptual schemes and proposes a subject that, much like Marilyn Frye’s “lesbian,” Adrienne Rich’s “disloyal white woman” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s mestiza, assumes a dis-placed, dis-located, dis-affiliated, dis-engaged position; a position that enables their subjects to “see things that cannot be seen from within” (181). Marçal’s solc both dis-engages and re-engages her “power as a perceiver” and asserts an “unusual
knowing…a form of consciousness…not primordial, universal, or coextensive with human thought…but historically determined and yet subjectively and politically assumed” (181). The poet considers her liminal position as one of privilege; a position from which she is able to re-affirm, re-possess and employ a gaze that belongs only to her.

My use of the eccentric subject here echoes Monique Wittig’s “lesbian society,” which in de Lauretis’ terms, should not be understood as merely a type of “nontraditional social organization” nor as “a blueprint for a futuristic, utopian, or dystopian society,” but as a “conceptual and experiential space carved out of the social field, a space of contradictions, in the here and now, that need to be affirmed but not resolved” (181). When Marçal alludes to “un moviment imperceptible, de sal i d’aigua,” she encodes her own name, once again, into her geography and reinforces the unresolvable nature of her spatial identity (56). Through naming her surroundings as an echo of her own, the salt (sal) of the sea (mar), she inscribes her name (Marçal) in her geography (and genealogy) and simultaneously claims possession of the space.16 Her name though, becomes both lost in and integral to the geography most associated with Barcelona, and this blurring of concepts, in Derridean terms, allows her name to be pronounced without being pronounced, called and recalled with every mention of the city’s geography (Derrida 58). Her play on naming recalls what de Lauretis referred to as the paradox of the “nonbeing” woman; in her words,

the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but is itself inaudible or inexpressible, displayed as spectacle and still unrepresented or unrepresentable, invisible yet constituted as the object and
guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled. (151)

The imperceivable movement is thus named as Marçal’s; this play on possession, inhabiting, fluidity, fragmentation, is embodied and observed by the poet as she affirms her own ability to perceive, as well as represent, the imperceptible. She codifies notions of simultaneous exclusion and imprisonment while highlighting their relevance not only to women’s urban experiences, but to language itself. Marçal, like her name, is at once captive and absent in the city and in the language so associated with it, much like the Sapphic (Benstock 197). As the marginalized geography of the city (the coast) and her name are conflated, she becomes both spectator and spectacle as she disrupts phallogocentric gaze and opens a space for the movement of bodies like her own.

Derrida’s observation that “To let passage to the other, to the totally other, is hospitality” alludes to the opening of space Marçal is writing. It is a “double hospitality” that enables the construction of language and the deconstruction of language (“Sauf le nom” 80). He notes though, that “the two must deal [traiter] with what they claim to avoid: the untreatable itself” (80).

“Viratges, Reminiscencies” is also a literary representation of Marçal’s movement throughout public and domestic space in Barcelona, from apartments to patios to bars to parks. Superimposed upon these tracings are historical events and their effects on the city; she refers to political bumper stickers affixed to her car (“‘Salvem el Born’, ‘Born, ateneu popular’”) (57), “normalizació” (57), “les primers eleccions al Parlament de Catalunya, oposicions…” (58). The public politics of the Catalan language are made
particularly relevant to Marçal’s personal “reminiscencies,” here in their most visible representations.

Also voiced within the text are protest slogans and implicit references to social movements of the 1970s. She references the first time she lived without a man with the popular North American (originally Australian) feminist slogan “Com un peix sense bicicleta” (58). As she creates a multi-layered, palimpsestic, perspective on the urban history of Barcelona, she revises the archaeological, architectural notion of the palimpsest so common to studies of urban environments and includes the material (architecture, streets, etc.) and the immaterial (personal histories, lives, loves): what has been invisible in light of the blinding patriarchal significance of landmarks. She understands, and therefore reads, the city as text, as a multilayered, palimpsestic space. “Viratges” is Marçal’s reading of and interaction with the urban palimpsest of Barcelona. Her writing translates into social relationships and historical absences; reading and writing palimpsests are arguably linked to women’s writing and reading shifting voices, patterns of movement, reading what is below the surface, in the case of “Viratges,” the material, structural code of the city, and therefore, that of language itself.

Marçal articulates a displacement that is at once political and personal, a displacement “across boundaries between sociosexual identities and communities, between bodies and discourses” (de Lauretis 182). This displacement is further explored through the protests she references (including “Take Back the Night”) in which protesters aim to recuperate urban spaces through street marches. Moving bodies through city spaces that so often threaten their safety function to re-appropriate the terms of “one who gazes” and “one who is gazed at,” those who surveil and those who are surveilled.
Marçal’s understanding of the streets of the city as a means through which movement embodies conscious protest and unrest enables her to use the city as a literary/metaphorical tool in which corporeal (in)visibility becomes a central question.

She begins with a fairy-tale version of the city and superimposes the dimensions of her own life history upon that of Barcelona, its architecture, its political and social movements, its literary past and as will be explained later, even its future. Marçal accompanies the reader on a walk through the city as she knows it blurring the points of view of her aunt, herself and later, her daughter. Her walking tour lends itself to a re-writing of the self “in relation to a new understanding of community history and culture” (de Lauretis 181). As she reminisces, she re-evaluates, re-examines her movement and those most crucial to her understanding of her city. In her development of the “eccentric” subject, de Lauretis aligns all feminist/woman writers that deal with spatial constructs in order to theorize the (in)appropriated subject, much like Marçal does in “Viratges.” She employs the city as a site of interaction in order to theorize not only the marginalized, eccentric subject, but the lesbian body.

Marçal’s perspective is therefore linked to women’s presence and invisibility throughout the history of Barcelona and this presence is invariably tied to the derealized, silenced, lesbian: “Incrustada a la ciutat, espargida, difosa arreu, la vasta cambra fosca, opaca, quasi sempre invisible de l’amor entre dones” (61). She traces an invisible history of lesbian desire within the city’s architectural space. This history is mapped as she traces her own movement though the space of Barcelona. Like the “eccentric” lesbian subject that exceeds categories of sex and gender, Marçal’s urban lesbian exceeds, subverts and interacts with the landmarks, exclusionary patriarchal urban design and history. It is
important to note the paradox between the city as inclusive “center” and as exemplary of patriarchal structure; it serves as a nexus of both embracement and denouncement of homosexuality. Further, aside from Fernàndez, scarce work has been produced on the homosexuality of Barcelona.

Marçal as an “outsider” writes, like de Lauretis’s “eccentric subject,” in an eccentric relation to language and history; she continually questions, engages and reexamines them (250). Like the eccentric figure, Marçal’s “desire for writing…is not for the building of systems but, on the contrary, for the excavation or undermining of their foundations” (250). These foundations include “al l’avinguda de la Republica Argentina…el carrer d’Agramunt…al parc del Putget…Parc Guell fins a l’avinguda de l’Hospital Militar…” (“Viratges” 62). She aligns the architectural, the material, with what has been dematerialized in the history and construction of that space. What lies within and between the landmarks and the power and historical narratives they represent. The historical canon, blinded by landmarks, has overlooked the “paths and edges that thread through a city as invisible rules thread through a society” (184). The displacement embodied by her writing/reading the city carries with it an implicit risk: “a place of discourse from which speaking and thinking are at best tentative, uncertain, unguaranteed” (175).

The aforementioned literary remapping and re-inhabiting of boundaries and spaces, in terms of both bodies and discourses, is primarily undertaken by feminists of color and lesbian feminists, feminists themselves marginalized within their own discourses (175). Marçal, as sexually and linguistically marginalized, within her writing of the city of Barcelona, “affords a redefinition of the terms of both feminist theory and
social reality from a standpoint at once inside and outside their determinations” (175). Her “eccentric” point of view is not only “personal and political but also textual, a practice of language in the larger sense” (175).

Marçal’s urban interactions do not exclude literary voices; subtle intertexts pervade “Viratges” and resonate throughout the text as does Marçal within the limits of Barcelona. The poet alludes to one of her own works when she refers to “La febre capciosa d’un amor sense casa. (I, sense tu, casa no ha sabut ben bé ser casa meva)” (57). Included here years before the publication of the two poems referenced (one published in Desglàç and the other in Rao de cos [2000] [67]), these verses precede the poet’s contemplation of architectural (de)limitation, invisible foundations and the dissolution of boundaries. Although Barcelona is seemingly absent from the poems in question, her previous insertion of the notion of “un amor sense casa” weaves the city into the texts and makes the city (and questions of public/private, domestic) explicitly relevant to the seemingly abstract poems. The embedding of the concept of “un amor sense casa” serves as an effective example of her creating simultaneous literary and spatial proximity in her writing as a whole.

Clementina Arderiu (1889-1976), a poet studied closely by Marçal, haunts the text as well. Marçal has spoken of the Catalan poet elsewhere in terms of “el fer i desfer de la vida quotidiana” (“Clementina” 67). Arderiu’s verse, “Ara que ja de tanta casa torno” accompanies Marçal, “en veu baixa” throughout her daily routines and movement through Barcelona. For Marçal, Arderiu’s poetry both expresses and embodies “les fissures…l’espai on irromp el desordre i on la seva veu d’individu que vol fer-se…” (“Clementina” 69). The fissures house invisible events that take place within the
architectural limits of the city, beyond the public spaces. The ghostly presence of Arderiu illuminates some of the “daily” domestic spaces shadowed by the public nature of most urban spaces.

“Viratges” closes with an “Itinerari de jardins,” through which Marçal traces, “amb els seus colors canviants, el pas de les estacions”:

des del meu barri, que duu per mal nom «Penitents», fins a Sarrià, on la meva filla va a escola, i fins a la cerretera d’Esplugues, on l’institut Boscà s’empassa les meves hores, vorac. Enguany tornaré a resseguir, amb discontínuu intensitat, el trànsit del verd al vermell i al coure de les vinyes verges, l’espruneig groc de la mimosa al febrer, estalonada ben aviat pel rosa malva dels arbres de Judea. El seguici esblaïmat dels lilàs. El morat viu de les buguenvíl·lies. Viratges sense aturall. Primaveres d’estiu, primaveres d’hivern que s’escampen arreu en reminiscències. (63)

Her poetry, like women’s presence (and absence) throughout the history of Barcelona composes a “garden path,” affixing and giving form to the material structure of the city. Like the vegetation that surges within the rigid cracks of patriarchal urban structure, women are not considered part of the landmarks that document history yet are always present, vibrant, continuously moving and always growing. Further, the ivy motif is central to Marçal’s creation of a literary genealogy (her daughter, Heura [“ivy”] appears in a number of poems) and in this case, she may also be making a subtle reference to the work of Mercè Rodoreda, an author known, in addition to her affinity for the city of Barcelona, for her love of gardening and the frequent use of flowers in her
fiction (Glenn 388). Rodoreda won “el Premio Ciudad de Barcelona” for *Viatges i flors*, a work described by Pilar Nieva de la Paz as a work
en el que se combinan – con el peculiar estilo de la autora – multitud de imágenes poéticas en torno a la belleza del mundo vegetal, de las flores, provocadoras de emociones y sugeridoras de múltiples sensaciones, con el temor que generan sus maléficos poderes. (130)

Her use of a “wandering” narrator is particularly relevant to Marçal’s urban tour as it evokes the contradictory notions of rootlessness and rootedness (Vosburg 148). Marçal’s title (“Viratges, reminiscencies”) and “itinerari de jardins” echo Rodoreda’s skillful examination of the exilic figure, which, “marked by a heightened sense of ‘otherness’…gives metaphorical expression to an individual’s marginalization from the ‘official’ culture and prevailing norms” (Vosburg 149). Most importantly, Marçal’s evocation of Rodoreda conjures one of the more prevalent effects of *Viatges i flors*, namely, the notion that each “flower” although “rooted” in the soil, acquires its identity through its interactions with its surroundings. By interacting with one of the most important Catalan woman writers of the twentieth century, Marçal adds another dimension to her interactions with their city as she highlights her role as one of the many flowers in a literary and uniquely Catalan garden.

Following the “itinerari de jardins” are the final words of the text: “L’Heura m’ha preguntat avui, a mig camí, on acaba, on comença Barcelona” (63). Marçal’s daughter is included in her mother’s spatial and literary genealogy. Heura, like her mother continues and is aware of her liminal relationship to the city. In her essay on the margins of mainstream literature and culture, Cuban-American author Cristina García affirmed that
“people on the edge see more” (24). Heura is capable of “seeing,” “gazing” at and reading Barcelona from within and beyond its “limits.” Her question, re-written by her mother, affixed to Marçal’s text, exemplifies Marçal’s genealogical project through the feminine gaze of Barcelona. She navigates the paradox of urban space, its limitations and opportunities. The spectator as participant (through interacting) evokes “frames that never quite touch”; in the case of “Viratges” these frames portray “Barcelona according to” Mercè Rodoreda, Maria-Merçè Marçal, la tieta Mercè, Heura Marçal and countless “flors.” The poet’s complex web of gazings shapes, within the conceptual space of Barcelona, a space of contradictions in need of affirmation rather than resolution, a space that enables the reader to read from the “outside” of the spatial and linguistic realms of Barcelona and the lesbian reader to read herself. If she is capable of writing herself “seeing” the city (through the words of other women seeing the same city), she implies that bodies like hers (woman writers, lesbians, members of her creative genealogies) can be seen themselves, implicating a number of gaze centered revisions of lesbian bodies and space.

According to de Lauretis, Virgina Woolf’s organizing metaphor, a room of one’s own, “consists in its representation of a textual space at once public and private” (246). Marçal’s text, like Woolf’s “evokes the figure of an empty center,” an architectural, urban space devoid of its vibrant feminine creative energy (247). Woolf’s room and Marçal’s Barcelona are spaces of contradiction, yet “it is only from that space that women’s speech can come...the very condition of speaking as a woman depends on the recognition of the contradiction that her speech must represent” (247). This contradiction consists of the inscription of writing into silenced space, into spaces that have inscribed
silence in those writing and speaking as women, in Marçal’s case as a Catalan woman writing amid political transition and fragility. The figuraiity of the text “parallels the movement of the text from the silent room of one’s own to the world citizenship afforded by access to language and education; and, at the same time, it figures the still, empty silence at the heart of language…which the text covers over, creating the illusion of that very movement” (249).

The activist nature of Marçal’s career evidences an ongoing preoccupation with the future. A reference to her young daughter at the close of “Viratges,” for example, acknowledges a certain hope for the actualization of her spatial tracings. She planned to continue writing about Barcelona; shortly before her death Marçal shared detailed plans for a second novel with a friend (Whyte 1998). Writer Christopher Whyte reminisces about the last conversations he shared with Marçal in 1998 in which an ill Marçal strolled with her friend through the city. His unassumingly illuminating piece (published in Homenatge a Maria-Mercè Marçal, compiled by Montserrat Abelló, Neus Aguado, Josefa Contijoch, Mercè Ibarz and Lluïsa Julià in 1998) retraces the steps he took with Marçal during her last days. He recalls the genealogy of Mother and Sister present within her house, minding a careful eye over their Mercè and alludes to the youthful absence of the next generation, Heura, who did not happen to be at home that day. The two friends stroll though the Barri Gotic, eating lunch at Lluna Plena near the Museu Picasso as Marçal maintains a sense of humor and even jokes about losing her hair.

Their conversation becomes more serious when Marçal abruptly states “I am planning a second novel…but I do not want to talk about it” (159). Whyte notices the abruptness of this statement as well as the contradiction: “Yet no sooner were we seated
at our table than she began” (159). She then continued to elaborate her plans and as

Whyte recalls, Marçal emphasized the city:

I want it to be about Barcelona…The way the city is changing, particularly the
older part. The things that change and the things that get destroyed. Last summer
you remember, there was a landslide in the Pyrenees. A caravan park was buried
in mud and many people died. I was very ill at the time and those deaths put my
own pain into perspective. The novel is about a woman who gets killed in that
accident. Or rather, about the people she leaves behind…She leaves behind a
child, a boy, though she does not live with his father. The father is a man of
certain importance in Barcelona life. Instead, she lives with a man who helps her
bring up the child, but who is not her partner. They both have partners elsewhere,
he a man and she a woman…When the mother dies, two people get back in touch.
They want to find out more about the woman and her child. One is the father. The
other is a woman from her past. (160)

Though the poet is quoted here by another writer, it is evident that her speaking style and
manner of communicating the plot of this inexistent work is more abrupt, more curt, than
her typical manner of speaking and writing. It appears as if Marçal were sketching an
outline for Whyte, perhaps knowingly aware that he will likely publish this conversation.
The next time they see each other almost one year later, they both know it will probably
be the last time as Marçal’s condition has deteriorated. She has not yet written the book,
and Whyte asks, “The novel? Have you written any of it down?” to which she responds,
“You can write it,” l’escriuràs tu.17 The sketch that Marçal offers, though she describes it
as “about Barcelona,” is as much about the death of a woman and the complex networks
of partnerships that evolve as a result of the birth of a child and the death of a mother.
Not explicitly autobiographical, the sketch (l’esbós) implies the importance of the space of Barcelona. Further, her transferral of this plot to a friend while wandering throughout the city makes the city’s role that much more evident.

Whyte ends his piece through questioning Marçal’s decision to entrust him with the story of this unwritten novel:

Could it have been that, precisely because I was an outsider, someone who would arrive in Barcelona for a few days, then disappear to a country she had never visited, and whose language she could not speak, Maria-Mercè welcomed the chance to talk, and talked at such great length and with such animation? How many people knew the story of the novel? Had she confided something to me? If so, I wanted to find a way of returning the gift, of restoring it to its rightful owners. (162)

Marçal’s passing on of this future novel to someone intimately familiar with Barcelona, yet someone who also remained an outsider provides a final opportunity to address questions of homelessness and belonging, sexuality and Barcelona, as she began to come to terms with her own life and death. Perhaps she remained optimistic that subsequent writings would lead toward creating a new space, as her writing moved toward writing Barcelona, toward Lesbos.

Toward Lesbos

This section will examine Mytilene (Lesbos) and Paris as explored by Marçal in La passió segons Renée Vivien through Vivien’s life and writings. The novel, as the title
suggests, portrays the telling of a passion according to Renée Vivien, through the words of another (Marçal) with echoes of yet another (Clarisse Lispector’s *A paixão segundo G.H.*). It consists of a plurality of voices (through fragmentary narratives including poems, letters and diaries) that move through a multitude of time periods, spaces, languages and experiences. This textual and spatial mobility unites the fictional and real Renée Vivien with Marçal as fellow poet, author and lesbian and echoes Kristeva’s “intersectional” intertextuality, where a kaleidoscope of voices, a plurality of creative identity, fosters continuous movement between origin and all possible connotative meanings (interview with Waller 189). As the present analysis moves through some of the Sapphic spaces traversed by these women, Marçal’s skillful mapping of the becoming lesbian body into the Catalan language subverts the limits imposed on her genealogies by androcentric notions of trees and exclusive canonical genealogies. The movement of the lesbian subject throughout the urban spaces of Lesbos and Paris enables Marçal to portray a moving, becoming, lesbian subject. In order to excavate or exhume some of the Sapphic spaces traversed by Marçal’s genealogy of writers and artists, I will highlight some of the archaeological and recuperative preoccupations of the novel.

Based on cartographies, fragmented realities and histories, archaeological excavation serves the readers and narrators in reading and writing the outline or sketch, *l’èsbós*, of *La passió segons Renée Vivien* as they revisit and reconstruct the life and verses of the elusive poet. Archaeological science is as rooted in the present as in the past. The Biblioteque Nationale serves as a temple in the novel; Renée Vivien’s literary treasures are hidden there along with the lost notebooks of the curator. The narrator speaks of reading the invisible ink (“tinta invisible”) and adopting archaeological
methods in order to piece together fragments in an attempt to form a whole: “Posats a fer
d’arqueòlegs amateurs, podem assajar, a partir d’uns fragments, la reconstrucció de tota
la resta” (206). Working with fragments and reading what lies within the in-between
spaces, the fissures, is crucial in understanding the life and work of the poet. The museum
curator even describes himself as an archaeologist just about to begin excavation: “La
meva emoció…era més aviat la de l’arqueòleg que sóc davant d’un jaciment important i
desconegut fins aleshores, i en el punt mateix d’iniciar una excavació” (257). Notions of
stumbling upon hidden treasures prevail throughout. The reader, not immune to the
anticipation of impending discoveries, anticipates revelation with the impending
uncovering of not only Renée Vivien, but of the literary lesbian body. She remains
something to be discovered, a figure that remains always beyond reach, always in the
shadows as the reader wanders through a plurivocal narrative space.

In her study of the recuperation of lesbian literary history, Susan Gubar alludes to
archaeological exploration when she notes, “Whether the recovery of Sappho results in a
decadent aesthetic…or in a chiseled classicism…it holds out the promise of excavating a
long-lost ecstatic lyricism that inscribes female desire as the ancient source of song” (47).
Vivien was obsessed with Sappho and the recuperation of her verses as she attempted to
recreate a utopic lesbian literary society, building upon a narrative multiplicity that
fosters connections and creates a genealogy in which poets writing for or as Sappho
create “language out of silence” and “peer into the shadows” of her fragmented verses,
“into what has been unspoken and barely imagined,” to write what Bonnie Zimmerman
famously referred to as “What Has Never Been,” the lesbian text (41). The fragmentation
of Sappho’s verses paradoxically represents what has been forgotten. Her verses appear
to anticipate the erasure and dissolution of the lesbian literary body and at the same time, the possibility of the rediscovery of a lost literary tradition. One of her more famous verses reminds us “You may forget but...someone in some future time will remember us” (Barnard 60). Vivien considered herself as a priestess of Sappho and like her Greek predecessor, she exists within the narrative interstices and the material foundations. Vivien writes from and exists within these gaps and her work emerges like “un timid indici de llum per les esquerdes d’una nuvolada encara compacta” (18) as she fills in those left by Sappho. As Gubar and others have observed, the fragmentation of Sappho’s verses and history is precisely what offers freedom for women writers, above all lesbian poets actively in search of a “native lesbian tradition” (46-47).

The archaeological process and the recuperation of fragments has as much to do with the act of reading and studying the fragments, as with the cyclical act of writing and re-writing. In her study of fin de siècle expatriate Paris, Shari Benstock aligns what she terms “literary orders” and the urban space inhabited by lesbian-identified writers such as Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein and H.D., writers who “position themselves structurally in the interstices, gaps, and overlaps” (197). Working both within and outside these structural forms (the literary orders), “they expose the fallacious terms of literary conventions...they insist upon writing beyond-the-boundaries of our inherited critical traditions, readers have difficulty in knowing what to say, where to begin an analysis” (197). Gubar begins to allude to the ghostliness of the Sapphic explored later by other scholars, most notably Terry Castle, when she defines it as “a structure of the unconscious; it is not a language, but it structures language; it is mysterious and shadowy, not directly accessible, not immediately available to view” (193). The creations of
parallel spaces and texts result in what Marks named “lesbian intertextuality” through her description of Collette as a restless, wandering text. Marçal’s lesbian intertextuality is based on subtle echoes and implicit references and makes tracing an origin next to impossible. Within La passió segons Renée Vivien, an important facet of this intertextuality (discussed in terms of anti-genealogies in Chapter 3) is repetition and rewriting.

Sara T. (twentieth-century filmmaker and alter ego of Marçal) continuously writes and re-writes the screenplays of the biopic she plans on making. The museum curator expresses his anxiety over the fact that a manuscript of the Inferno does not exist: “Cal sumar-hi el fet que no en posseïm el manuscrit, sinó còpies de còpies, i hi deu haver, doncs, incomptables errors de transcripció” (280). As this struggle unfolds, the body of Renée Vivien, the lesbian body, is becoming, a process Braidotti describes as “a play of force, a surface of intensities; pure simulacra without originals” (112). As the verses of Sappho, Renée Vivien, Marçal and other writers such as Sylvia Plath are translated into other languages, time periods and spaces, repetition brings as much stability as fragility; for what is repeated forms a sketch. Both Marçal and Vivien translated Sappho’s verses and were skilled literary translators in their own right. This common thread further unites Marçal, Vivien and Sappho within an infinite intertextual web of writers and artists. It also reinforces the importance of language to both poets; Marçal’s ardent promotion of Catalan language and culture and Vivien’s choice to write and publish in French evidence an active linguistic consciousness. Both write from within and beyond their spaces, Vivien in French (as a foreigner) within Paris and Marçal in Catalan (in l’esbós) as
Catalan. As writers and texts are translated, re-interpreted along with recuperated poetic fragments an inherent risk is exposed.

The first narrative fragment of the novel admits the failure of the impending text, a text that excludes the essential and recognizes the impossibility of expressing itself in “a language whose code is unknown” (“com si fos fet en una llengua de la qual desconeuix el codi”) (10). This failure is explicit, anticipated and accepted within the first moments of reading.

La narradora no sap posar fi a aquesta introducció sense confessar la seva ingenuament inesperada sensació de fracàs: com el fotògraf neòfit que hagués intentat de trobar tots els angles i punts d’enfocament d’un paisatge, i al final se sorprendugués de tenir a les mans només unes dotzenes de cartons que deixen a for a allò de més essencial que a ell li sembla saber què és. Potser Sara T. hagués pogut retenir i desxifrar el missatge de l’Àngel, li n’hauria pogut donar, a la narradora, una clarícia d’inestimable valor. (11)

The end of the novel presents another reminder; Sara T. describes the screenplay she has written and laments,

És com si el guió que finalment he escrit no fos sinó una còpia dolentíssima, una rèplica llunyana, d’aquell que jo pretenia fer. Un esbós, tal vegada: hi ha a grans trets allò que volia dir, però essencialment incomplect…Perquè un guió ja és sempre, en si, un esbós. Així doncs, el meu text no arriba sinó a ser l’esbós d’un esbós. (333)

She realizes that the very nature of l’esbós, of her own work, and the nature of the life of Renée Vivien is precisely what lives in the shadows. Marçal described the passion of
Renée Vivien as the “impossible celebration of the Imaginary” (“impossible celebració de l’Imaginari” (Julià 167) and Vivien herself, within Marçal’s l’esbós, reminds us of the great failure of the narrative when she tells us “Si algú parla de mi, sens dubte mentirá” (349). She reminds us of the role of the imaginary in the recreation of her life, a realization she was particularly aware of, especially in terms of her spatial surroundings: “Oblidem, doncs, el que acabo de dir” (349).

Vivien spent most of her poetic career in an attempt to recover and recreate a lost female genealogy in the name of Sappho. Her utopian vision centered upon the island of Lesbos, in particular, the city of Mytilene (Many nineteenth century and fin de siècle writers used the name “Mytilene” interchangeably with “Lesbos” [Blankley 50], and Vivien appears to do the same.) Upon her arrival to Mytilene for the first time, Vivien is welcomed not by the lost city of her dreams, but by an “innuendo reminding her that “lesbian” and “whore” are inextricably wound together in a degrading sexual stereotype that she is powerless to change or to prevent” (Blankley 59). The contrast between her real landing on the island and her idealized vision initiates a series of disappointments. She found the island’s inhabitants to be rather “unattractive and disappointing descendents of Sappho” (59). Her first visit, which she took with Natalie Barney, was interrupted by the arrival of a letter from one of her lovers, the Baroness Hélène van Zyulen, who “wielded a terrifying influence over her” (59).

Despite her initial disappointments, Vivien retained a villa on Lesbos and returned almost every year until her death in 1909. Her dream of a Sapphic colony was never to come to fruition and Vivien remained an outsider both on the island and in Paris as she in a sense “commuted” to and from the island. Blankley points out that Vivien was as
mysterious a figure on Mytilene as many judged her to be in Paris (60). She was regarded as a strange woman, her wanderings were legendary, and extravagant rumors often circulated regarding her origins (60).

Arriving to a place that did not quite correspond with the one that already existed in their imagination resulted in not simply disappointment, but a blurring or confusion of the boundaries that existed between reality and fantasy. In *The Amazon and the Page* Karla Jay notes that for Natalie Barney “the Greeks before her eyes on Lesbos were not ‘real’; the real ones, like the real Sappho, glowed in the imagination” (Jay 73). Blankley articulates Vivien’s ultimate struggle: “The seeds of Mytilene’s inevitable failure are rooted within the vision’s imaginary attempt to connect both the body and the spirit, which are neatly separated in the usual struggle between art and reality” (63).

Marçal’s Sara T. faces a similar disenchantment when she visits the island in 1984. Upon her arrival, she finds an island that emits “un encant real, si més no l’atractiu indefinible d’aquells llocs no afectats pel turisme en excés” (163). She visits the hotel Vivien and Barney stayed in eighty years before and finds “a ruinous relic” (“…ara és una relíquia esdernegada, entre rústica i decadent, entranyable”) (164). As a contemporary voice of the novel, as Marçal’s *alter ego* and as an artist in her own right, Sara T.’s experience adds another dimension to a web of comings and goings, arrivals and departures, inclusions and exclusions conveyed by the novel. The initial disappointment suffered by the women leads to the realization that Lesbos is not capable of living up to their imaginary because it exists precisely within it; it is a virtual space that includes both and excludes neither. It is a space of in-betweenness; like Renée Vivien is described in the novel, it is the
clivella permanent on Renée se sent viure. Els mots que pretenen salvar la fissura no fan sinó representar-la, recrear-la i refer-la un i altre cop. Aquesta és la seva gran inadaptació, doblada d’una altra que també la representa metafòricament i, així, la reforça: la seva revolta de dona i la seva clara afirmació de l’amor sàfic…el Femení pot encarnar-se en Safo i en la seva illa mítica. L’Inaccessible, l’Abisme… (335)

“The words” described by Sara T. embody another risk inherent to writing the lesbian body, one in which a polyphony of voices are collapsed into each other, often echoing, repeating and recreating each other. Renée Vivien’s individuality is at risk of imploding into the narrative and poetic voices of others and this in turn becomes a risk for Marçal herself. In his study of the lesbian body in the work of Catalan author Carme Riera, Brad Epps writes of the “the failure of literary lesbianism” and argues that “failure may actually be one of the surest, slyest tokens of success” (330). His interpretation of failure as an affirmative expression of the elusive lesbian body poses it as the only true form of resistance, claiming that “erasure and dissolution could only be resisted by being reiterated, risked forever” (321). She will forever remain in the shadows, in what Eve K. Sedgwick referred to as the “gap in the discursive fabric,” in this case, the fabric of Marçal’s Sapphic genealogy. Marçal’s l’esbós, like Monique Wittig’s split subject (“j/e,” for example) and Meese’s “lesbian : writing,” is not without linguistic obstacle (slashes, colons, apostrophes). The portrayal of this implosion, this obstacle, this risk, Lesbos as expressed within l’esbós, is perhaps Marçal’s biggest success, as she acknowledges the possibility of “crystallizing” the inaccessible, the linguistic abyss of representing the lesbian body (335).
The city of Paris shadows Mytilene/Lesbos throughout Vivien’s life as well as *La passió segons Renée Vivien. Fin de siècle* Paris remains one of the more iconic spaces of lesbian writing. The city provided writers and artists with freedom of self-expression and a “relaxed moral atmosphere as compared to the Puritanism of the United States and the Protestant rigidity of Great Britain” (Jay 8). The numerous writers and artists arriving in Paris had as many varied reasons. Gertrude Stein devotes substantial writing to “foreigners” in *Paris France* (1940) and serves as a potential intertextual reference when studying Marçal’s vision of the city. Many women-identified modernist writers such as Woolf, H.D. and Stein positioned themselves not only within genres, but spaces.

Although Renée Vivien chose to live in Paris, write in French and appeared to recognize the freedoms the city provided, she maintained an isolated and estranged existence within the city. Vivien locked herself within oppressive surroundings, often nailing shut her windows (Blankley 45). In *Le pur et l’impur*, Collette describes her as “veiled in black or purple, almost invisible in the scented darkness of the immense rooms barricaded with leaded windows, the air heavy with curtains and incense.” Her self-imposed imprisonment within the “real” city allowed her to re-create a utopic, female visionary city in an attempt to “bridge twenty-seven centuries of patriarchal culture to recover both a matriarchal community and a glorious female genealogy” (46). Her estrangement was contingent upon the limitless possibility offered by her imaginary wanderings. As a *lesbian flaneuse*, she breaks free from cultural constraints and is free to “wander at will” to places where “all temporal and spatial barriers are excised” (Munt 36). Benjamin emphasizes the “confined periphery” of the flaneur’s movement “to and fro,” alluding to both the freedom and subsequent marginality of the figure (44). While
maintaining herself as excluded from, and departing from Paris creating a paradoxical
and constant movement and stasis, she literally “wanders” to and from Paris-Lesbos
while remaining stationary, “at home” in neither place. Her movement and simultaneous
self-imposed imprisonment within the two spatial contexts embody the cloS/Solc
dichotomy problematized so consistently by Marçal. The flaneur wanders through a
society that is at once spectacle and constituted by outsiders; Kracauer saw it as a
homeland for those without a home (Wilson 63). On Mytilene she once wrote “…I
dissolve and fade into your azure skies” (Blankley 52).

In her queering of the flaneur, the “hero of modernity,” occupier of “voyeuristic
zones,” Sally Munt appropriates what she terms “a vessel to be filled by the lesbian
narrative” in an attempt to “contribute to the unfixing of the supremacy of the
heterosexual male gaze in urban spatial theory” (36). She argues that the “lesbian
flaneur” breaks free from cultural constraints and, like Vivien, is free to “wander at will”
to places where “all temporal and spatial barriers are excised” (36). Benjamin describes
the flaneur’s movement as “to and fro…within a confined periphery,” alluding to both
the freedom and marginality of the figure (as present in Baudelaire) (44). This dissolution
of binaries presents an opportunity for multiple belongings.

Parallel to her disenchantment with Lesbos, Vivien maintains herself as excluded
from, departing from Paris creating a paradoxical and constant movement and stasis. She
literally “wanders” between Paris and Mytilene while remaining stationary, “at home” in
neither place. Her movement and simultaneous self-imposed imprisonment within the
two spatial contexts embody the cloS/Solc dichotomy, where concepts are “caught in
flight” (à la Benjamin) and “footing” becomes difficult to maintain (Kristeva). The space
of the flaneur was one in which all were allowed to stare and mingle, gaze and participate, be publicized and private (anonymous). He wanders through a society that is at once spectacle and constituted by outsiders.

Marçal, in writing *La passió segons Renée Vivien*, partakes in her own flanerie; a parallel exercise in mobility that affords artistic freedom as it maintains, even strengthens her ties to Catalonia and Catalan. It is perhaps the work of Djuna Barnes on Paris salon culture in *Ladies Almanack*, *Nightwood* and most especially, the journalistic sketches of *Djuna Barnes in New York*, that most aptly articulate Marçal’s position. As Barnes so skillfully “retains the inside/outside dichotomy of the alienated raconteuse, rendering snapshots of a foreign territory” in New York and as an expatriate in Paris, she is both flaneuse and outsider (37). As a writer, Marçal inhabits and creates her own expatriate space, Paris / Mytilene, and embodies the lesbian flaneuse’s motion and stasis, mastery and fragility. Like the flaneur, the poet, “as a stranger, simultaneously inhabits the geography of exclusion at the same time as his cultural capital facilitates his mobility” (Munt 39).

A certain “ambiguity” arises from an impending fragility of the flaneuse’s individualism, which is “constantly threatening to implode” as she “becomes commodified, collapsed into the spectacle” (Munt 39). Benjamin writes of the “fundamental plasticity of Baudelaire’s flaneur, whom he reads as “someone abandoned in the crowd” (55). Elizabeth Wilson notes that “the interpretation of the flaneur as masterful voyeur underplays the financial insecurity and emotional ambiguity of the role,” observing that the role, often reserved for only a narrow segment of the population, often leads to obscurity (72). As Marçal seemingly disauthorizes her own voice, as well
as that of Renée Vivien, through the complex web of voices that compose *La passió*, she imposes this risk upon her subject, her characters and herself as author. This fragility results in a conflation of voices, gazes and spaces that render Barcelona, Paris and their lesbian voices virtually unreadable, undetectable, both detaching and rooting their respective poets. As a lesbian *flaneuse*, the ambivalence that infuses her literary wanderings pulls her “between detachment from and insertion into city regimes” thus engaging the author in what Munt refers to as a politics of *dislocation* (48). But as Benjamin notes, the *flaneur* “refuses to be alone” (48); she is “working” (according to Wilson) as she moves and wanders, expressing an anxiety: “Temporary, simultaneous, multiple identifications mapped out in moments, in the margins” (Munt 48).

The dislocating of space and writing experienced and generated by Marçal’s literary wanderings echoes postcolonial writers’ attempt to write a space in which the in-between becomes utterable. Homi Bhabha’s “third space” provides an interpretative solution to the risk of dissolution suffered by Marçal’s *flanerie* and serves as a liminal space, one that recognizes “the importance of the alienation of the self in the construction of forms of solidarity” (213). It enables the emergence of other, new spaces as it displaces and “sets up new structures of authority” (211). This space is a forward-moving space that unifies traces and fosters becoming, actualization. Bhabha’s emphasis on the utility of migration as literary metaphor provides a subtle linkage to the lesbian *flanerie* discussed above. Marçal’s and Vivien’s *flanerie* produce a novel written in a language that, according to Bhabha, “must be open to meanings that are ambivalent, doubling and dissembling” (212). These dissembled meanings require an astute observer, one
particularly adept at gazing. Benjamin goes as far as to associate the flaneur with a detective.

The body is central to the flaneur’s walking experience. Both Benjamin and Kracauer emphasize the commercialization and commodification of writing and sexuality (Wilson 64). Wilson cites Proust’s role in the development of a flaneur’s characteristic observation of “the multitudinous encounters that occurred every day and thousands of times over in the streets of the great city – and of course the growth of urban life in itself is held to have made possible the very emergence of the ‘homosexual identity’” (65). The flaneur’s (re)possession of the gaze evokes Lacanian renderings of the phallic gazer and lacking female body, which has resulted in “the creation of a theoretical Medusa’s head, whose gaze petrifies everything” (Wilson 69). Possession of the gaze often renders the flaneur’s body invisible. Wilson equates the urban experience itself with the urban body; reading Benjamin’s metropolis in labyrinthian terms, she describes urban life as “insubstantial…ambiguous,” where “meaning is obscure” and the “fragmentary and incomplete nature of the urban experience generates its melancholy – we experience a sense of nostalgia, of loss for lives we have never known, of experiences we can only guess at” (73).

Wilson skillfully argues that the flaneur never really existed; he is a figure of solitude, yet never alone, and, “when singled out, he vanishes” (74). Like Marçal’s Renée Vivien the flaneur is a “shifting projection.” Marçal’s narrator in fact describes Renée Vivien as a “pantalla”: “Renée ha estat un d’aquells personatges mítics que funcionen com una pantalla: tothom hi projecta el propi imaginari” (44-45). The male flaneur “floats with no material base…and, lacking the patriarchal discourse that assured him of
meaning, is compelled to invent a new one” (74). What results is a body that serves more as a map as opposed to a map of the body of Renée Vivien; she may be best understood as an “inscriptive surface” (Grosz, Volatile Bodies 139).

The lesbian flanerie of Marçal and Renée Vivien evokes excess; de Certeau in fact perceives the city itself as a machine that brings forth an excess; discursive practices cannot contain it. The movement of the flaneur is not concerned with a destination, closure. On the lesbian flaneuse, Munt notes that “The restless spaces of the flaneur are fluctuating, rippling and relational, her wandering is not concerned with closure, there is no purpose to it, it is movement for the sake of its own pleasure; in the modernist sense of time it is not productive” (177). These spaces (“real,” imaginary and narrative) succeed in being and becoming…duration (177) and in opening a new conceptual space, much along the lines of Monique Wittig’s “lesbian society,” for example.

Benjamin’s flaneur embodies melancholia and desire simultaneously, and as Munt astutely notes, “the grief of alienation is only partial; the apparitional flaneur lost in the streets also stumbles toward hope, and embodiment” (48). When Vivien composed “Vers Lesbos” she envisioned two lovers on their journey to the shores of a new home as they both fear and hopefully await a new dawn. The women so long accustomed to light after years spent living in secrecy and seclusion “can barely imagine a sunlit world that will not wither the delicate petals of the rose – that is, a world in which female sexuality and self-definition may flourish openly and with impunity” (Blankley 53). Blankley notes an intertextual echo of Emily Dickinson’s “There is a morn by men unseen,” in which a new dawn is contrasted with Dickinson’s own self-seclusion (53). Her movement within and between cities, not a smooth, linear back and forth, to and fro, but stumbling, is
embodied by Renée Vivien herself as well as Marçal’s narrative. The narrative space enables the becoming, the process of embodiment, of the lesbian body. Her work begins the process of adding flesh to the l’esbós, as text/narrative sketches/poetic verses.

The space created by l’esbós is inhabited by lesbian bodies; it provides a Catalan space for lesbian embodiment, one traditionally denied not only in the literary canon but in Catalan society. Carme Riera once pointed out the absence of the word “lesbian” in a major Catalan dictionary and considered this absence a sign of its “unreadability” (Epps 319). Terry Castle acknowledged that “women who desire other women repeatedly find themselves vaporized by metaphor and translated into (empty) fictional space” (45). One of the obstacles of reading the unreadable is learning to read within the cracks, fissures, in the in-between and embracing the virtuality of their literary presence: “in the interstices of representation” (de Lauretis 63).

Like Meese’s lesbian: writing, Wittig’s j/e, and Stein’s “encrypted” bodies, Marçal’s l’esbós represents an effort often exercised by writers attempting to escape, deny, transcend, “or perform...in excess, and to inscribe the erotic in cryptic, allegorical, realistic, camp, or other modes of representation,” adding “flesh to language” (de Lauretis 53). Always crucial is the “condition of possibility,” the process. Barnes in Ladies Almanack famously articulates this movement and futurity when she exclaims “Pardon me, I must be going!” (13). Marks framed the problem of linguistic impossibilities and lesbian body in terms of the “undomestication” of the female body and portrayed the means through which “undomestication” can occur is through excess” in provocative counterimages “ (de Lauretis 60). Spatial process is a facilitator of flows (Grosz 165).
The Opera House

The Gran Teatre del Liceu and the space of the opera house plays a unique role in *La passió segons Renée Vivien*. Though the Paris Opera is overtly referenced in the work, the space of the opera house and the opera as artistic genre mirror the linguistic and spatial play in understanding the elusive Renée Vivien.

Marçal chose a work by American Impressionist painter Mary Stevenson Cassatt (1844-1926), an American-born artist and “leading figure in the group of Independent artists in Paris after 1877” (Pollock 7), to adorn the cover of *La passió segons Renée Vivien*. *The Loge* (1882) depicts two young debutantes seated in a box at the Paris Opera, with an impersonal sea of gazes reflected behind them (Pollock 145). A viewer who is presumably seated in front of them observes the young women, whose gazes are fixed upon the stage. One of the young women holds a fan to her face, obstructing the lower half and emphasizing her gazing eyes. The other sits regally to her right. The sea of darkness behind them only suggests the presence of other spectators. At least two levels of balconies and the light of an ornate chandelier are present in the upper right corner of the painting. The cover of *La passió* extends along the binding and extends through to the back cover leaving the front cover as a detail, further emphasizing the two young women’s gazes and the reader’s contact with the painting.

Cassatt’s impressionist painting explores the “alternation between ‘being seen’ and ‘seeing,’ being on show and being absorbed in the show” (Pollock 146). This alternation between distance and proximity, visibility and invisibility, spectator and spectacle, is key in exploring Marçal’s portrait of Renée Vivien and reflects the effects of
the poet’s frequent reliance on *mise-en-abyme*; internal duplications and the creations of an infinite ensemble of frames and reflections (Pérez 156). Though the role of the opera as artistic genre in Marçal’s work is further explored in Chapter 3, here it will be examined in light of the spatial resonances most relevant to her project of re-mapping the spaces of Barcelona, re-considering Catalan literature written by women and re-evaluating narrative structure.

The painting Marçal chose to adorn the cover (in addition to its ekphrastic intertextual manifestation within the text itself (see Chapter 3 for more) places the reader within the spatial frame of the opera, a space in which performance exists in excess, on and off stage. The opera house enables women’s voices to be heard (to the extreme) and for their bodies to be observed. The theatricality and opulence of the opera mirror the complexities of artistic genre that Marçal portrays in the novel.

More specifically, the painting presents a frame within a frame, as the box in which the young women are seated provides a standpoint from which to observe the opera performance. The box is a space from which one may view the other spectators and in turn, become spectacles themselves. Cassatt’s image serves as a narrative framing mechanism that simultaneously limits and opens as it constructs a narrative space that enhances the readers’ sense of observing. As a number of scholars have observed, the *mise-en-scène* of the opera house serves not only as a place in which spectacles were seen, but a place in which spectators went *to be seen* themselves. In framing a novel, it becomes plausible to extend this play to the reader. The reader is thus placed within a space in which a heightened state of awareness may extend not only to the text, but to themselves, creating a narrative that facilitates a type of voyeurism “as a type of meta-
desire” (Doane 45) The opposition between proximity and distance so frequently explored by Marçal enables a becoming; the problematic of sexual difference (and the predominance of the motif of proximity in feminist theory) promotes an autoeroticism. According to Irigaray, a “woman’s erogenous zones never amount to anything but…a masculine organ turned back upon itself, self-embracing” (This Sex 23). Women’s autoeroticism simply requires, according to Irigaray, language; a language distinct from “man’s” as “woman’s desire has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks” (24-25). Woman takes pleasure “more from touching than from looking” and “While her body finds itself thus eroticized, and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives of the “subject,” her sexual organ represents the horror of nothing to see. A defect in this systematics of representation and desire. A “hole” in the scoptophilic lens” (26). Female sexuality is absent, reduced, masked.

Treating the space of the opera house in cinematic terms serves as a strategy in better understanding gaze and the role of the space in La passió. As Sara T., one of the first person narrators, is writing a screenplay, it becomes further relevant to view the work through a cinematic lens. In her study of opera within film, de Lauretis affirms it as a “narrative space” that “makes a place in it for those who watch it” (Figures 123). Like film, opera engages the spectator’s desire, “placing, shifting, and re-positioning the spectator as a figure in that imaginary” (123). The spectator, as “the point of…coherence…thus contributes to the production of subject positions and the construction – more rarely, the deconstruction – of social, gendered identities for its
viewers in the very process of viewing (a process that film theory calls spectatorship)” (123).

Doane points out that “what the cinematic institution has in common with Freud’s gesture is the eviction of the female spectator from a discourse purportedly about her…one which, in fact, narrativizes her again and again” (44). The dichotomy of public/private desire remains consistent with Marçal’s treatment of space. In the case of opera, another dichotomy is brought to light, that distance and proximity (Doane 46) as spectators gaze at performers, at other spectators in an infinite network of gazings. “Public fantasies” (as studied by de Lauretis guided by Gramsci’s interfacing of matrices) add another layer of distance as the “subjective fantasy structures of individual spectators” reposition spectators, performers, and readers and implicate them in Marçal’s play on proximity and distance.

The stage of the opera is a space of illusions, illusions that are not meant to fool anyone as they pose female bodies alongside each other in an expression of desire. The space of the opera facilitates carnivalesque gender inversion (see more in Chapter 3); but “the fact that the body is female, that the voice is a woman’s voice, remains inescapable” (Castle 230).

Similar possibilities are opened within the opera house as a public, social meeting place, “in which many of the more restrictive norms governing ordinary female-female experience were temporarily suspended” (Castle 202-03). The 18th/19th century opera house served as one of the few public spaces “in which a woman could openly admire another woman’s body, resonate to the penetrating tones of her voice, and even imagine
(from a distance) the blood-warmth of her flesh – all in an atmosphere of heightened emotion and powerful sensual arousal” (203).

Lesbian opera spectator Terry Castle poses the question “Where else but in the plush darkness of [the opera house] might a respectable woman...have spent...hours staring raptly at another through binoculars” (202). Homoeroticism is facilitated by the space of the opera; it is made visible through its invisibility.¹⁹

If the lesbian sees the woman, the woman may see the lesbian seeing her. With this, there is a flowering of possibilities. The woman, feeling herself seen, may learn that she can be seen; she may also be able to know that a woman can see, that is, author perception...The lesbian’s seeing undercuts the mechanism by which the production and constant reproduction of heterosexuality for women was to be rendered automatic. (Figures 67)

As a performative genre, opera is constantly aspiring towards the limits of vocal expression, the limits of meaning; the voice(s) is/are heard under the constant threat of the loss of voice (Grover-Friedlander 22). The extravagance of the voice is contrasted with the possibility of silence, acknowledging the very limits of language. The “silence beyond the song” (Grover-Friedlander (xi), referenced and studied by scholars of operatic representation offers an effective lens through which language functions within the space of the opera as framed in Marçal’s narrative. Opera has shown the ability to surpass cultural and linguistic boundaries and “appeal to multiple sensory registers (visual, aural, tactile)” (de Lauretis 134). Opera does not dispense with the libretto and is not merely composed of vocal gestures – “it destroys words” (25). But the libretto, the operatic “text,” is seen as negligible (26). Opera, therefore (especially as understood within the
context of its manifestation in film), like opera in Marçal, functions as a complication of communication in silence (26). Paradoxically, silent film inherited opera (20); voices were seen, not heard, as opera became an example of independence from language (21).

I have outlined the virtual house, the mapping of nomadic movement, as well as the failure of the outline/sketch, lesbian literature, and of Catalan in representing Marçal. The poet finds a new way to inhabit language, a new way of inhabiting the lesbian body and a new way of inhabiting Catalonia. Braidotti reminds us that

The fact that thinking is a nomadic activity, which takes place in the transitions between potentially contradictory positions, does not make it a view from nowhere. To be nomadic or in transition, therefore, does not place the thinking subject outside history or time. (*Transpositions* 29)

Marçal does not leave Catalonia behind; as she herself has said, she uses the language of her father in order to question the very law he represents. The poet maps herself into a language that is not necessarily the one that best represents her; she moves within it, creates literary outlines that house not only a virtual lesbian body but a virtual Catalan identity built upon moveable foundations, framed between walls, within narrative fissures. Like Castle’s literary lesbian: “…now you see her, but mostly you don’t. Or do you?” (46).
Chapter 3

Intertextual Genealogies

The death of Francisco Franco in 1975 marked the symbolic end of 39 years of a dictatorship in which women did not exist in a legal sense (Bergmann 110). The following period of transition (la transición) led to the formation of a democratic government and regional autonomous regions inspired by the new Constitution of 1978. Upon the adoption of the Constitution of 1978, rights such as that to obtain a passport, sign contracts, obtain work without the explicit permission of their husbands or fathers, were reinstated to women. Divorce became legal again in 1981 after 49 years of being illegal. As artists began to freely express themselves and their experiences without the threat of censorship or punishment, the absence of work published in minority languages and by women became that much more glaring. It has been shown that women writers for example, changed the way in which they portrayed motherhood, particularly mothers, evidencing the profound impact of the political context on artistic production (Bergmann 110).

During the dictatorship mothers were more often portrayed as ardent defenders of an oppressive regime whereas the transition often offers the notion of “missing” that which has been silenced, made absent by brutal social consequences of the fascist regime (Arkinstall 2009). Even though dictatorship ended, generations of both men and women were shaped by fascist machismo, and remnants of it exist to this day as patriarchal domination over the female body and reproduction is often the locus of political, legislative and even medical debate. The Spanish abortion laws of 1985 and 2010, for
example, provide easily subverted restrictions, which despite their weaknesses, demand that women answer to a legal system that utilizes their bodies as a locus of control.

As a woman writing throughout the years of the transition and the fall of Franco’s dictatorship, Marçal observed many of the political, historical, linguistic and social developments and uncertainty that subsequently resulted in the absence of a visible, recognized and read literary and historical feminine genealogy that included women artists, writers and intellectuals. Despite the fact that many women writers were free to publish and express themselves, the “canon” of writers of the transición, as it was during the time period and as it continues to be studied today in both North American and Peninsular criticism, continues to be male-dominated. Aside from the exceptions of Esther Tusquets and Carmen Martín Gaite and more recently Lourdes Ortiz, the literary canon of the transition continues to be defined through authors including Juan Goytisolo, Eduardo Mendoza, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Antonio Muñoz Molina, José Millás, among others. Further, literary studies of women writers of the transition, or even writers who began to publish during the transition, focus on narrative and tend to neglect poetry (Crameri 2000, Spires 1990, Bergmann 2007, Arkinstall 2009, Nieva de la Paz 2007). A study of Marçal highlights the multi-faceted minoritzations of many women poets hitherto neglected and made absent by the literary canon.

The early stages of Marçal’s literary career (Cau de llunes was written throughout the years 1973-1976 and Bruixa de dol between 1977-1979) are marked by a sense of orphanhood and a paradoxical notion of sisterhood among marginalized artists and writers. She embraces this orphanhood throughout her career, and a consequent sense of sisterhood permeates her writings and is manifested through networks of intertexts and
genealogies. This sense of sisterhood both resists the erasure of differences between women and encourages diversity. When North American poet Audre Lorde noted that “There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist,” she was alluding to a similar experience writing as a black woman and a lesbian (116). Lorde proposed a genealogy in which difference was not left unacknowledged, in turn robbing women of “each others’ energy and creative insight” (116). Lorde belonged to a group of self-defined feminist artists who began to question the relevance of canonical feminist theory and writing (à la Woolf for example) to their own complex marginalizations. Lorde’s writings are valuable because they not only question class, social and racial inequality, but because she places literary genres, specifically poetry, in this dialogue. She discusses the privileging of certain genres from the perspective of the artist as well as that of the reader/spectator/listener as she attempts to highlight the question of determining “whose art is whose” (116).

Marçal, like Lorde and other marginalized/minoritized woman writers, drew from beyond her own social/political/historical context(s) and understood genealogies as resistant to homogenization. She recognized the limits of searching out poetic influences traditionally ignored or absent as well as the limits of her own movement within and beyond this genealogy. She interpreted these obstacles as inspiration to dissolve the boundaries instilled by political, literary and linguistic regimes. It is quite probable that Rich’s essay on a feminine continuum here informed Marçal’s theoretical frame (or lack thereof), as she was a reader of Rich, especially her prose. Marçal was also a reader of Lorde. Literary genealogies informed by a notion of sisterhood involve not only recuperating silenced voices, but the strategies needed to learn to read these voices; these
genealogies do not conform to androcentric tree-like canons. Audre Lorde also describes poetry as “secret” and wrote of our inability to “listen” (116).

Marçal’s literary genealogical project was not born from an individual quest for literary roots nor was it a self-affirming search for poetic foremothers. It confronted a literary canon that excluded women and other minoritized groups through a repositioning of women’s voices and sexualities, highlighting both them and the obstacles. The poet chose to view orphanhood not in terms of lack, but as potential for sisterhoods and in terms of an opportunity to look beyond the limits of language, genre, time period and nation while simultaneously affirming her own political, linguistic and national “place” within nations.

Marçal’s project was as literary as it was extra-textual. For this reason, the following analysis, like Marçal, occasionally disrupts the boundaries between fiction and historical fact, social activism and literary protest. Reina Lewis has stressed what she refers to as the “conundrum” of lesbian literary criticism “because of its position at the intersection of literary criticism and identity politics” (18). She proposes that the literary and academic establishment…raise its awareness of lesbian culture, and the lesbian reader must recognize her contradictory demands on the lesbian text” (30). When Elaine Marks distinguished between lesbian authors and lesbian texts, she provided a framework through which lesbian texts may be understood as a genre unto themselves argues for the “inevitable presence of the Sappho model” (356). This thesis argues that Marçal’s intertextuality facilitates precisely this type of sexual consciousness-raising. An example of this is one of the first professional accomplishments of Marçal - the founding of the
publishing house, Llibres de Mall. The current Fundació Maria-Mercè Marçal continues her efforts to promote young artists.

Citationality through Literary Allusion

Marçal frequently employed literary allusion in her writing, particularly in her early poetic works. Literary allusion provided the writer with the opportunity to establish conceptual connections with a work or fellow writer. It acknowledges a certain intentionality that sheds light on Marçal’s conscious literary genealogies and presumes a relation between poet and audience, “a social emphasis, a community of knowledge, and a prizing of tradition” (Preminger and Brogan 39), all of which facilitate filiation. Allusion, though more explicit and even more obvious than intertextuality per se, is relevant to any discussion of Marçal’s intertextual project.

Fina Llorca Antolín has highlighted the more explicit genealogical aspects of Marçal’s work, in which members are identified through epigraphs and dedications in her poetic collections as well as critical works, including “Cartografies del desig,” which Llorca Antolín describes as

_una manera organitzada i compartible, de posar en pràctica la voluntat de crear genealogia, buscant afinitats, coincidències, relacions, entre escriptores, catalanes i de llengües de creació diverses, travant-les en un espai amb un text, amb elements escènics i musicals que poposen un espectacle que vol ser atractiu._ (228)

She reads Marçal’s genealogies as a _pastiche_ of associations, typically composed of names. Llorca Antolín compiles a descriptive list of names, references, verses and epigraphs, and recognizes that the affinities, coincidences and relations shared by the
literary allusions create both meaning and space as they partake in a relation of mutual influence and respect (228).

Her study provides a thorough overview of the most “visible,” or readily readable, elements of Marçal’s genealogies in which her use of epigraphs, dedications and references weaves a web of associations and illustrates her great preoccupation with linking poetry and praxis. Llorca Antolín documents a mosaic arrangement of allusions with a number of references throughout Marçal’s career, from her revisions of literary portrayals of Medusa, Eve, Lot’s wife, a call to “Take Back the Night” in Bruixa de dol, to a reference of a verse by Rosalía de Castro in Sal oberta to dedications to Renée Vivien and Anna Akhmatova in Raó de cos (219-22). What follows is an effort to enhance this mosaic and place it within a larger theoretical, and decidedly feminist, context.

Gerard Genette portrays epigraphs as a means of creating filiation and considers them marginal paratexts, present “at the edge of a text” (159). According to Genette, the epigraph is a “signal (intended as a sign) of culture, a password of intellectuality” (Paratexts 160). The epigraph is the author’s consecration and through his or her use of it, he “chooses his peers and thus his place in the pantheon” (160). He points out the implicit character of epigraphs and their potential to guide the reader (who may or may not be conscious of the epigraph’s influence), and notes that “every joining creates meaning and that even the absence of meaning is an impression of meaning…to think without knowing what you are thinking” (158). Marçal’s use of epigraphs creates constellations of meaning and associations and leads readers to make connections they may not have made if not for reading the text at hand. Joan Brossa (1919-1998) wrote a
The poem, titled “Sextina a Maria Mercè Marçal en la publicació del seu primer llibre” (Cau 9-10), coupled with the epigraph included by Marçal “Els meus trasbalsaments els duu la lluna (Cau 13) (which precedes the *divisa*) and her dedication of Part III, “Fregall d’espart” (which itself is preceded by an epigraph of Apollinaire) to Pepa Llopis create an acentered web of associations. Further, the overt association with Federico García Lorca most obvious in “Lluna Granada” signals another connection to Brossa’s famous carrying of a copy of *Romancero Gitano* in his pocket (Añafil 2 152). Marçal acknowledges Brossa’s influence on her work and includes García Lorca, Brossa and Brossa’s wife, Pepa Llopis, in a citational poetic genealogy that is both experimental and political. Her allusion to Llopis comes as a prefix to the poems that compose the third section of the collection, “Fregall d’espart,” a section decidedly focused on the feminine, heretofore excluded from the collection. I will argue that it was precisely Marçal’s intention not simply to highlight her erudition and astute knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth century Catalan art and Peninsular politics and literature, but to call attention to the inherently exclusionary nature of canons as she presents a more subtle way of reading attuned to embedded references.

Though Harold Bloom’s extensive writing on the subject of literary genealogies in light of “anxieties of influence,” the patriarchal nature of his exclusively male preoccupations has been offensive to a number of feminist critics, it has been successfully appropriated by feminist scholars in their studies of the “anxieties and achievements of female writers from those of male writers” to show that the female writer does not experience the “anxiety of influence” as a male counterpart would (Gilbert and Gubar 22-
Gilbert and Gubar ascertain that the “anxiety of influence” felt by a male poet is experienced by a female poet as “an even more primary ‘anxiety of authorship’ – a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a ‘precursor’ the act of writing will isolate or destroy her” (23). Another scholar also applying Freudian structure to literary genealogies, J. Hillis Miller, described the literary text as “inhabited…by a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts” (Gilbert and Gubar 22).

In her study of Quebequois author Nicole Brossard, Judith Roof articulates a network of naming through which “Brossard alludes to the foremother tradition but undoes its legitimating power by using the names as indefinite referents, as dislocated points in a net of desire that constitutes writing itself” (63). In Brossard’s prose, names constitute much more than a series of literary referents; as in Marçal’s writings, desire is an everpresent and encompassing theme and when made relevant to the writers’ use of epigraphs, evoke rhizomatic structures such as Adrienne Rich’s controversial “lesbian continuum” and similar (and notably problematic) efforts to demarcate a lesbian identity while privileging all types of bonds between women. As literary allusion is generally expressed through “coded messages” (Preminger and Brogan 39), it lends itself to an openness of interpretation, both in terms of a reader’s ability to recognize a writer’s intentions and in the presence of these intentions themselves. Additionally, coded messages, cataloging, pastiche and recombination have long been inherent to writing by and about lesbians (Mayne xx).

As epigraphs and their associated authors and themes become “displaced from any authorizing function,” they “serve to remind rather than license or explain” (Roof 63-
64) (emphasis mine). The names evoke connotations, echo other literary works, and frame the ensuing text as the “the temporal and spatial range” of the writing is enlarged and naming is reduced “to only one among a number of other strategies that play the desire for desire” (63-64). “Reminders” haunt Marçal’s texts and conjure images, meanings and contexts, sensitive to the reader’s knowledge and experience. It should be noted though, that Marçal’s didactic intentions are central to understanding her literary and pedagogical career; she often, in fact, sees these as one in the same. These intentions create a poetic element that is contingent upon the reader making each reading unique; it remains unknown what each reminder will echo or fail to echo. These echoes may also stimulate responsibility on the part of the reader and perhaps stimulate further reading (of Rich for example) or another interpretation of a Frida Kahlo painting (Desglaç, for example, includes two explicit references to Kahlo and her art (30, 47). Although the constellation of names, dedications, epigraphs and verses is an important facet of Marçal’s genealogy and evidences her preoccupation with explicitly citing her poetic influences and showing her solidarity with them, her project penetrates even more deeply in her poetry and prose.

North American modernist poet H.D. (1886-1961) provides an enlightening perspective with regard to national and literary exile, particularly with H.D.’s preoccupation with the palimpsest (see Collecott 1999). Though generally more literal than the application of the concept in this study, H.D.’s palimpsest embodies what has been erased, written over, and superimposed. When H.D. affirmed, “I can’t write unless I’m an outcast,” she indicated “both the potential abjection and the heady freedom of one who has located her own creativity outside the system” (Collecott 57). Virginia Woolf
made a similar statement in her diary: “It is essential to remain outside” (qtd. in Collecott 56), and Marçal’s intertextuality intricately involves literary exile.

In addition to Joan Brossa a number of male names compose a collage of allusions in *Cau de llunes*. The first dedication is to Ramon Pinyol: “A Ramon Pinyol: que floreixi la murtra!” (*Cau* 11). Epigraphs and dedications include Ausiàs Marc (17), Miquel Martí i Pol (17), Bartomeu Rosselló-Pòrcel (25), Curros Enríquez (25), “A Layret, 30 novembre 1920,” presumably Francesc Layret i Foix (30), “A Salvador Seguí” (31), Salvat-Papasset (51), J.V. Foix (51), Vicent Andrés Estellés (65). The names connect Marçal to a political context as well as a literary one. Her political consciousness, stance and understanding of political history is reflected in what is a radical, monumentalizing (eulogizing) of a number of political figures whose lives were taken at the hands of brutal regimes. The citations unite art and politics not only within the context of Marçal’s work, but within the context of Catalonia itself (García Lorca, for example, embodies both; he as representative of a political facet of Spanish history in addition to the most obvious artistic presence).

Marçal’s early literary allusions to male members of the literary canon highlight her relationship with phallocentric discourse. The accumulation of quotations, textual fragments and names “becomes a verbal assemblage representative of the obstacles to women’s creativity posed by the collective cultural tradition; the author’s use of these references also points toward a particular understanding of women’s writing” (Meese Crossing 93). Jane Marcus argues that Virginia Woolf embraced this type of reference as “an act of aggression against the powerful,” a subversive attempt to exercise the literary power that had been previously reserved for men (Meese 92-93). She posits that
documentation (in the case of Woolf, through quotes and extensive scholarly footnotes) is a form of possession and serves as a weapon against injustice (92-93). Like Woolf, Marçal brings to light what obstructs the expression of female creativity within the literary canon through explicitly citing their names, alluding to their texts, fusing her own writing with that of the cited as well as the writing within the cited writers’ parameters. This documentation effectively enables Marçal to name herself as both reader and writer and not only place herself (as well as other woman writers) within this literary canon, but highlight the shadows created by such an exclusionary construct and her ability to overcome them, or speak from within them, in producing her own art.

Emily Dickinson identified a similar notion of obstruction and obstacle when she diagnosed the “infection in the sentence,” further explored by Gilbert and Gubar. In their notable study “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship” (1979), the authors affirm that Bloom’s patriarchal theory of the “anxiety of influence” “cannot simply be reversed or inverted in order to account for the situation of the woman writer” (23). The “chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts” (J. Hillis Miller 446), are named and contrasted with the women (in this case, Marçal and Woolf) as writers.

Based upon the notion that literary allusion necessitates cooperation and the sharing of knowledge between poet and reader, Marçal’s network is both inclusive and instructive to the reader. *Cau de llunes* consistently evokes the writing of García Lorca (see Chapter 1 for more on the explicit appropriation of the symbol of the moon). The collection’s aura of class, gender and linguistic oppression surely provide analogues to the painful, shared memory (Preminger and Brogan state that allusion assumes “readers
sharing knowledge with the poet” [39]) of the execution of one of Spain’s most talented dramatists and poets. “Luna Granada” (*Cau de llunes* 57-64), in addition to providing a conceptual connection with the poetic oeuvre of García Lorca and serving as an example of the complexities of sexuality, genre, the allusion serves to strengthen the relation between Marçal and her audience as it embodies a “social emphasis, a community of knowledge, and a prizing of tradition” (Preminger and Brogan 39). She both names herself within a canon in which García Lorca is present as well as alludes to his own minoritization, symbolized by his violent death at the hands of the Franco regime. (His death continues to be a constant reminder of the beginnings of civil conflict. As recently as 2008, excavations were conducted in an attempt to recuperate his remains.)

The example of García Lorca illustrates Marçal’s intention to textually displace (following Butler’s reading of Irigaray); the “citation” should not be understood as simply being “grounded in a rival ontology” but as inhabiting, penetrating, occupying and redeploying “the paternal language itself” (*BTM* 45). It is not “enslavement or simple reiteration of the original, but… an insubordination that appears to take place within the very terms of the original…” (emphasis in the original) (*BTM* 45).

In addition to the explicit, and overtly intentional, references mentioned above, Marçal creates a much more subtle genealogical web through a network of seemingly infinite intertextual references. Through a Penelopean web of literary echoes, Marçal confronts the absence of a feminine literary genealogy and in turn challenges the notion of androcentric genealogical trees. As I will show, the system of references she creates is rhizomatic in nature, it functions as an anti-genealogy not limited to the territories of nation, language or literary genre. In Deleuzian terms, this rhizomatic system has no
beginning or end, “it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo,*” it forms a structure of alliance (*A Thousand Plateaus* 25). Her intertextual networks enable conditions for becoming and new strategies of reading of voices that fall outside, within and between patriarchal representational models.

Marçal’s explicit references to other writers and their art, aligned with her own texts, create an intermediary space in which a constellation of multiple voices, verses and images are absorbed into Marçal’s own creative contribution. These more implicit references blur authorial boundaries and question the very notion of the subject. Kristeva has spoken of the plurality of participation, not so much as dialogue, but as a conflation; she speaks of “the intersection of a number of voices, of a number of textual interventions, which are combined in the semantic field, but also the syntactic and phonic fields of the explicit utterance” (interview with Waller 189). In “Lesbian Cartographies” Amy Kaminsky (analyzing Sylvia Molloy) writes of the claustrophobic effects of the proximity between writer, protagonist, narrator(s) and other women characters: “They are not conflated, but neither are they totally separable. They are bound to each other, similarly situated in the world…and their position in the universe depends on their relationship to each other” (247). Similarly, Braidotti’s transpositions” indicate “discontinuous but harmonious” patterns that are “creative but also cognitively valid; discursive and also materially embedded…It is not just a matter of weaving together different strands, variations on a theme…but rather a playing the positivity of difference as a specific theme of its own. (5)

Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizome, like Marçal’s intertextual references, fosters connections and composes an anti-genealogy, “an acentered, nonhierarchical,
nonsignifying system…without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states” (21). The circulation of authorial voices, at times explicit, at times barely detectable, composes Marçal’s intertextual genealogy. The voices are often ghostly, corresponding with what many critics have described as the “ghosting” of lesbianism in literature, which is both a meta-textual (exclusionary canons, heterosexist readings, etc.) and intertextual, they are often silent and always present. This ghostly presence involves a repositioning of boundaries; what some have termed “virtual” lesbianism involves the dissolution of the inside versus outside dichotomy and becomes central to understanding literary portrayals of lesbian desire and authorship.

Jane Marcus has characterized Virginia Woolf’s polyphonic portrayals as an echo chamber. Marçal’s work conforms to this definition as it limits and delimits, encloses and opens, and consists of a number of voices in dialogue with each other. This layering of intertexts composes an “intersectional” intertextuality, where a kaleidoscope of voices, a plurality of creative identity, fosters continuous movement between origin and all possible connotative meanings (Kristeva interview with Waller 189).

With an understanding of an intertext as a text that triggers, or inspires another meaning, another referent (following Riffaterre 1984), Marçal’s intertexts serve to reference other authors, voices, concepts, that have been made absent and will quite possibly remain absent. The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics affirms that “Without an ultimate referent that would make possible the self-presence and meaning of a text, texts are by definition fragments in open and endless relations with other texts” (620). According to this definition, intertextuality is marked by two key features: “the absence of an origin and the function of randomness” (621). The
“unnamable absence of origin,” difference, signals “the impossibility of boundaries or borderlines that would adequately frame a ‘work’ and its ‘meaning’ and points instead to a writing’s ‘dissemination’” (621). The implication is that there can be no originals, only copies are possible, “all texts refer to one another – translate one another” at times in infinite and at times in utterly random ways (621).

According to Kristeva, intertextuality involves “the components of a textual system.” In Revolution in Poetic Language she defines the phenomenon as “the transposition of one or more systems of signs into another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position” (Desire 15). Kristeva understands Bakhtin’s dialogism as the source of intertextuality, though it differs from dialogism in that it does not exist merely as the intersection of two voices in direct or indirect discourse. The “textual segment” is “the result of the intersection of a number of voices, of a number of textual interventions” (interview with Margaret Waller 189). The plurality of participation, the creative identity and “reconstitution of a new plurality,” questions the status of author/creator (“the one who produces a text by placing himself or herself at the intersection of this plurality of texts”) and in turn understands “creative subjectivity as a kaleidoscope” (a polyphony in Bakhtinian terms) (190). The literary kaleidoscope is composed of fragments of character, of ideology or fragments of representation (190). In Intimate Revolt: The Powers and Limits of Psychoanalysis she positions the writing subject as “a subject in process…a polyphony without possible reconciliation, a permanent revolt” (258). She presents the paradoxical empowerment of authorial voice and its simultaneous dis-authorization as a rebellious act.
Kristeva highlights the complexities of intertextuality most relevant to Marçal when she speaks of literary content as that which “may be dispersed, traceable to different points of origin…” (Waller 191). This dispersal of the literary content leads to a “final meaning” which “will be neither the original source nor any one of the possible meanings taken on in the text, but will be, rather, a continuous movement back and forth in the space between the origin and all possible connotative meanings” (interview with Waller 191). This movement (which may also be understood in light of Irigaray’s reading and intentional echoing of Plato) serves as a disruption in which the author takes a place, “not to assume it, but to show that it is occupiable” (BTM 36). This consistent movement back and forth, coupled with the empowerment of echoing and referencing of other voices, conjures a Penelopean web-like notion of authorship in which the time and space assigned are rejected. Unique to Penelope’s action of weaving and unweaving is the impossibility of separating mind and body. According to philosopher Adriana Cavarero, the actions of Penelope represent “a female symbolic order that has its own rhythms and spaces, that seeks its figures by stealing them from a context that has dealt with them otherwise” (13). Marçal’s intertexts “function as buoys marking the positions of sunken meaning” (Riffaterre 136). Butler’s reading of Irigaray highlights the necessity of finding “a way of reading a philosophical text for what it refuses to include” and poses the question “For how can one read a text for what does not appear within its own terms, but which nevertheless constitutes the illegible conditions of its own legibility?” (BTM 37).

Before moving on to more specific examples, a rather illustrative marçalian trope serves as a useful example of tracing multiple points of origin. In La passió segons Renée Vivien, the narrator cites a biographer of Renée Vivien, Jean-Paul Goujon. In his
biography, Goujon notes that Violette Shilletto (a close childhood friend of Renée Vivien, speculated to be the poet’s first love) playfully classified men as “‘porcs’ ‘porquets’ or ‘porcassos.’” Marçal’s novel echoes this word play when Mary (her younger sister) states, “Els homes? Els homes no li interessen per a res, a Violette: porcs, porquets o porcassos, diu que són…” (133). Significant are not only Marçal’s use and citation of the biographer (one point of origin), but her change in speaker. Further, the play on Picasso’s name represents one of a number of subtle references to not only Spain, but Catalonia, linking Marçal’s narrative (and therefore France) with Barcelona in an intertextual and spatial conflation characteristic of La passió segons Renée Vivien. Violette’s wordplay reinforces the crucialness of Marçal’s publication in Catalan; in Castilian, the expression loses its novelty entirely. Marçal appears to employ a similar intertextual strategy in Bruixa de dol (1979). The title of the work overtly echoes Sol, i de dol a collection of sonnets composed by J.V. Foix between 1913 and 1927 as well as the popular Catalan folk song, “Plou i fa sol / Las bruixes es pentinen / Plou i fa sol / Les bruixes porten dol.” Marçal has publically noted her intentions regarding the double intertextuality. She explains, El títol ratifica el meu homenatge a Foix, amb una cantarella al fons de cançó infantil que parlava d’unes bruixes que tal volta portaven dol per nosaltres, les xiquetes del meu poble. I tot esperant, evidentment, un temps, un país on les bruixes ja no duguin més dol. (Bruixa, edition of Mercè Otero Vidal 24)

This example calls to mind Barthes’s and Derrida’s writings on textuality and the difficulties in tracing and determining authorship. Barthes argued “there is no father-author,” and Derrida described writing as an orphan (Preminger 621). These examples
uphold the general consensus of intertextuality in addition to making a more subtle statement, personal to Marçal’s context. These telling examples enhance the notion of polyphony so crucial to understanding Marçal’s ouvre and her attempts to portray feminine “intersubjectivity.” In the case of La passió segons Renée Vivien, the above examples offer a sense of the elusiveness of authorship and the author(s) her/their presence within the text as well as the history of literary criticism.

In a more general sense, the above examples serve as a transition to a more detailed overview of what this study, following Marks (1979), terms “lesbian intertextuality,” an intertextual project in which patriarchal literary authority is questioned in light of what it excludes, what lies in the shadows and the effects of centuries of silencing voices, bodies and sexualities. In Le pur et l’impur, Colette wrote “In no way is it passion that fosters the devotion of two women, but rather a feeling of kinship” (92). Colette (1873-1954) wrote about Renée Vivien, was read by Marçal and is also cited in Marks’s study of lesbian literature and intertextuality. She surely figures into Marks’s consideration of the “double heritage” of many women of fin de siècle Paris. Following Butler’s reading of Antigone, this study will explore Marçal’s genealogies as a lesson on “the limits of intelligible kinship” (Antigone 29). Antigone represents neither kinship nor its radical outside.” Her name represents opposition (anti) to that which generates. For the purposes of this study “that which generates” will be linked with genealogy.
Lesbian Intertextuality

Marçal’s intertextual project reflects the literary history of the lesbian subject in that it has been silenced, at times is silent, and is always present. Writers and poets attempting to portray lesbian desire are often preoccupied with erasure (such as H.D.), palimpsestic writing, silence and codes (see Stimpson 1997, Cornejo Parriego 2007). Many have noted the relevance of intertexts to women’s literature, particularly lesbian literature. In “Sapphistries,” Susan Gubar examines the twentieth century lesbian poet and sees Sappho as representative of “all the lost women of genius in literary history, especially all the lesbian artists whose work has been destroyed, sanitized, or heterosexualized in an attempt to evade…‘lesbian intertextuality’” (46). Sappho is a poet with a history as fragmented as her poetic works. Her legacy leaves many gaps to be filled and provides the authority sought by woman writers. Gubar notes that,

For the woman poet who experiences herself as inadequate or inadequately nurtured by a nonexistent or degraded literary matrilineage, for the lesbian poet who looks in vain for a native lesbian poetic tradition, Sappho is a very special precursor. Precisely because so many of her original Greek texts were destroyed, the modern woman poet could write “for” or “as” Sappho and thereby invent a classical inheritance of her own. (46-47)

Sappho facilitates intertextuality, polyphony, conversations and paradoxes.

Now, while we dance

Come here to us
gentle Gaiety,
Revelry, Radiance
and you, Muses
with lovely hair. (Barnard 25)

Elaine Marks emphasizes the multiple manifestations of Sappho’s name (“Sapho, Sappho, Psappa, Psappho, the lesbian from Lesbos”) and points out that a “confusion of facts, a profusion of semantic and phonemic connotations emanate from and surround the name. The small, ugly, lewd nymphomaniac and the beautiful poetess and muse coexist in the mind of the contemporary reader” (356). She is an inherently contradictory and ambiguous figure; her literary presence encourages the reader to listen to echoes and read within the spaces left by the poetic fragments. Joan DeJean affirms that what she calls “fictions of Sappho” (the only measurable way to read the poet) are informed by projections of the critic/writer’s “desires onto the corpus, the fictive body, of the original woman writer” (3). What is often termed as her “recovery,” (“as though it were possible to strip away successive semantic transformations and reveal once and for all the original Sappho”[3]) is in fact women writers’ taking on “authorial authority by means of their identification with Sappho” (6). They work as muses for each other: “They fuse poetic voices with her; the propose alternative Sapphic fictions to the dominant plot inevitably dictated by their male contemporaries – this is the essence of the process by which they become able to assume the literarily deviant role of woman writer” (6).

Lesbian poetics have been described in terms of “what is not said” (Collecott 1999), and more broadly, lesbian literature as “what has never been” (Zimmerman 1981), a network of coded “linguistic zeros” (Stimpson 1997). It is a question of assuming
authorship, or rather denying authorship through kinship; in other words, exploring “what sort of kinship it might be” (*Antigone’s Claim* 9).

The echoes illustrate the issue of reading lesbian literature, exemplified by Bonnie Zimmerman’s definition of the lesbian text as “the creation of language out of silence” (41). The stance of lesbian critics “involves peering into shadows, into the spaces between words, into what has been unspoken and barely imagined” (41). At the same time, it is important to recognize what is defined:

The task is to refigure this necessary “outside” as a future horizon, one in which the violence of exclusion is perpetually in the process of being overcome. But of equal importance is the preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent boundaries of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity. (*BTM* 53)

Butler addresses the question of the in-between of the in-between, the outside of the outside, “the elsewhere of…elsewhere” and determines that darkness should not be understood as a “sad necessity of signification” (53).

Intertextuality in Spanish Literature Written by Women

In terms of Spanish literature and genealogies, intertextuality has its own unique role in women’s (especially feminist) writing (see Bergmann “Reshaping the Canon”). Intertextuality is also relevant to women writing in an era where much of the provocative
content of their works had to be self-censored and woman writers became skilled in writing in code. Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*, published in 1944 is an enigmatic text that celebrates the ambiguity of friendship between women and was not initially suspected of including “lesbian” content (see Cornejo Parriego 2007).

An illustrative example of Marçal’s complex employment of intertextuality and her consciousness of writing as a woman is the famous divisa to *Cau de llunes*: “A l’atzar agraeixo tres dons: haver nascut dona, de classe baixa i nació oprimida. I el tèrbol atzur de ser tres voltes rebel.” A number of scholars have noted that the divisa echoes other poetic voices (Aguado 2005). Neus Aguado suggests that Marçal is replicating that of Tales de Mileto, who wrote “Da gracias a Dios por tres cosas: primera, haberte hecho hombre y no bruto; segunda, haberte hecho hombre y no mujer; y tercera, haberte hecho griego y no extranjero” (12).

This structure also echoes biblical triptic phrases. Cònsul, citing the Bible in Catalan, explains, “l’acció de gracies de la tradició jueva que explicita l’agraiment al Deu biblic pel fet de ser home, de pertanyer al poble escollit, i haver nascut lliure i no esclau” (94) (Fernàndez 201). Further, it is probable that Marçal was conscious of Montserrat Roig’s (another Catalan woman author preoccupied with the creation of literary and artistic genealogies) trademark response to questions as to why she chose to publish her works in Catalan: “Si me preguntan por qué escribo en catalán, se me ocurren tres razones: primero, porque es mi lengua; segundo, porque es una lengua literaria y, tercero, porque me da la gana” (*Dime que me quieres* 41). The element of playfulness distinguishes itself from Marçal’s declaration and indeed places less importance (while
simultaneously declaring her own agency in making the decision) on the political nature of her choice. This is reflective of Roig’s career in general.

Marçal’s *divisa*, where azure (*atzur*) confronts chance (*atzar*) (see Fernández 201), confronts and inhabits ancient androcentric poetic structure, within its own limits; she acknowledges this structure in order to dissolve it into a feminine azure. Azure, a color that makes darkness visible, symbolizes the coexistence of darkness and light, illuminates what is (seemingly) absent and is an active, affirmative color (Cirlot 1997). Like the statement itself (which brings to light the feminine, the oppressed and the lower class), the azure of Marçal’s poetic voice is rebellious in its penetration and subsequent dissolution of Christian and philosophical patriarchal foundations. There may also be a potential etymological connection between *atzur* and the Greek *sappheiros* (“sapphire”), and Sappho, further complicating the *divisa’s* marginalizations.

Marçal’s use of the *divisa* recalls Spain’s medieval *cancionero* tradition, where the *divisa* typically functions as a coat of arms and when published in conjunction with the *letra*, forms an *invencion* (206). The *invencion* was understood as a “balanced conjunction of body (divisa, an object seen, taken in by the eye), and soul (letra, lines of verse heard, taken in by the ear)” (206). The combination was designed for stimulation, “for a refined aristocratic audience accustomed in the late Middle Ages to plasticity in integrated art forms, an invencion, which, ideally, affords a single, imaginative, pleasurable, moment of insight” (206). Though Marçal’s use of the *divisa* (which is frequent, along with epigraphs and dedications) lacks the explicitly visual element inherent to its heraldic function, her appropriation of the *divisa* serves to emphasize the conflation of art forms, genres and literary traditions so crucial to her poetic
consciousness. This conflation carries with it a reference to the constant dissolution of boundaries, which are sexual, corporeal, generational and linguistic.

Historically, the cancionero marks the inception of Castilian as the dominant poetic language of Spain. Though thematically inspired by Occitan, the official language of publication was Castilian, rendering Marçal’s use of Catalan divisas, and reference to the nation of Catalonia in her most emblematic example, a linguistically significant, and subversive, appropriation. The “turbid azure” references the visual aspect of the heraldic function of the divisas, as azure was the preferred term to express the blue tincture of flags and heralds; the poet approximates the visual as linguistically as possible.

Genette interprets the coat of arms as the forerunner to the epigraph and points out that “what distinguishes the motto…is…its independence in relation to the singular text – the fact that it can appear at the head of several works by the same author, who puts it, as it were, en exergue of his career, or of his entire life” (144). Genette outlines the divisa (he considers them “mottos”) as being in direct relation to the text it frames and simultaneously uniting the text with its author. Generally speaking in the case of Marçal, the divisas place the poet in a medieval tradition and illustrate her tendency to frame her poetic collections with short verses. They are often the verses most suitable for re-appropriation by popular musicians, activists and other artistic voices.

The union between text and author, poetic voice and poet, body and soul, facilitated by Marçal’s divisas is a relevant and important one when analyzing literary lesbian desire. Many of the frustrations in defining so-called “lesbian” texts involve conflations of art forms, the dissolution of limits of genre, authorship and gender and are often left unresolved or un-resolvable. Braidotti’s concept of “transpositions,” which
stress “the experience of creative insight in engendering other, alternative ways of knowing” (7), are usefully employed in understanding Marçal’s intertexts. Marçal makes this distinction, or lack thereof, a central one. She displays and carries with her the divisa and allows it to frame her entire poetic oeuvre. In contrast to Barthes’ pronouncement on the author, Marçal’s personal identity (though not yet sexuality) and marginalities are relevant and crucial to her literary creation; its unity, then, is intimately connected with its origin (Barthes 148).

Marçal’s divisas function as a mise-en-abime; they frame the individual texts they modify and they reflect the poet’s movement through her poetry and prose. They serve as a mechanism through which Marçal’s literary nomadism may be understood. Susan Stanford Friedman defines the textual mise-en-abime as “the idea of endless repetition, internal and reflexive mirrorings without origin and end, the text as mise-en-abime suggests both writer and reader caught in a chain of devouring repetitions” (98). In Marçal, the divisas frame the work about to be read; she offers an introductory story that is to be repeated (often seemingly infinitely) throughout her work. The recursive and repetitive images (conjuring a Droste effect of two mirrors in front of each other) become more philosophically central to her ponderings of the female body and lesbian desire in her writing as her career advances. The frames are like reflective windows, facilitating the reader to looking through and beyond, creating a kaleidoscopic effect of reading that enhances proximity of images and art forms.

Collecott explains that H.D.’s preoccupation with the palimpsest considers not only what has been written over the remnants of another text, but what has been erased and has become a metaphor for the collective process of reading and rereading her work.
(2). When considering Marçal, H.D.’s most provocative, and perhaps most literal, interpretation of the palimpsest considers the parchment as a vehicle through which one writing is erased in order to “make room for another” (2). She asserts that

Rather than following the literal meaning of the Greek to achieve a rubbing smooth, by biographical or reductive interpretation, this inevitably tentative procedure involves reading through layers of significance, living with multiple meanings, and being alert to the play of meaning between a given text and its intertexts. (Collecott 2)

The divisa to Cau de llunes, Marçal’s first published collection, is an introduction to her poetic project in its entirety. Through the divisa’s three short verses she articulates her call to revise, inhabit and redefine the constraints and limits of patriarchal discourse while defining her poetic voice as both feminine and Catalan. An astute reader of Peninsular literature, particularly poetry, Marçal was an expert in the history of Spanish letters. She retained extensive notes (both pedagogical and personal) evidencing the consistent presence of scholarly literary study throughout her life (Archives, Biblioteca Catalunya). She weaves past and present and penetrates literary tradition through appropriating poetic structures and makes these traditions relevant to her own poetic, political and social context. The divisa serves as a useful example of Marçal’s exercise in weaving texts, voices, and time periods. The poet frames herself within a tradition and employs this frame to open an infinite poetic space, a space where the frame is reflected, reflects, encloses while it simultaneously opens. The divisa, like Marçal’s (anti)genealogical project, creates associations and makes connections while maintaining situatedness, a politics of location. What follows in this chapter is a more or less
chronological review of Marçal’s weaving of intertexts and their role in the creation of a rhizomatic genealogy.

**Popular Culture, Myth and the Fairy Tale Intertext in *Bruixa de dol***

*Bruixa de dol* (1979) contains a number of intertexts that highlight Catalan popular culture, the role of Marçal’s own family in the formation of her identity as Catalan and the North American feminist movement of the 1970s. The references highlighted in this section also allude to the significance of names, naming and anonymous feminine collectives, specifically witches and fairies, calling into question authorship, anonymity, and the everpresent silencing of marginalized women.

The title of the collection echoes a verse of a popular Catalan children’s song: “Plou i fa sol […] les bruixes van de dol” (Julià *Contraban* 9). Lluïsa Julià was the first to suggest that the title may also pay homage to J.V. Foix and his work *Sol, i de dol* (10). Foix, a Catalan surrealist poet (it should be noted that he rejected the term), often framed his dreamlike, hallucinatory works within realistic, consistently Catalan settings easily recognizable to the Catalan audience. *Sol, i de dol* is a collection of sonnets published in 1946 and evidences Foix’s project of illuminating and defeating limits from within. Marçal’s personal archives stored at the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona evidence the poet’s close reading of Foix and contain a number of resources dedicated to teaching Foix’s poetry, particularly *Sol i, de dol* (Caixa 2/4). In fact, during the time in which she was composing the poems that eventually became *Bruixa de dol*, her personal notes contain telling references to her notion of intertextuality. One such reflection describes intertextuality as the “apropació anònima o documentada de textos d’altre per incorporar-
los en un altre context ou prenen un altre significat…” (her emphasis) (Caixa 2/5). She sees the effects of intertextuality as inciting the reader to consult the cited work, as indicating a “collective” consciousness of the author in an effort to combat “oblivion” (Caixa 2/5). Her play on Foix’s title resurrects an important Catalan work with the effect of inspiring her readers to revisit Foix’s art, one with which she was intimately familiar.

When Marçal pays homage to Catalan popular culture and Catalan artistic culture, she does so through affirming her own authorship, her own role in this formation and dissemination of this culture, in addition to that of her family. Poem III of the section titled “Els núvols duien confetti a les butxaques” is dedicated “A Magda Marçal” as Marçal weaves her immediate family into a public Catalan song. By naming her sister, Magdalena, she claims authorship, provides a role for her sister, and alludes to binary notions of public/domestic. The heavy alliteration of the “ll” and “l” (“Magdalena, lluna plena, qui t’ha fet lo mal del peu?”) evoke a lullaby-like quality and emphasize the orality (and subsequent femininity/maternity) of the poem. The third stanza highlights two sewing or weaving tools, the didal (thimble) and l’agulla (needle) and enhances the feminine domesticity of the poem:

Magdalena,
lluna plena,
on has perdut
lo didal?
ai, quan brodis
boires baixas
amb l’agulla
et faràs sang! (*Bruixa* 94)

The work as a whole aligns traditional *cançons* with classical hendecasyllabic sonnets (see Fernàndez “Subversió”). The *cançons* were transmitted to her by her mother, further emphasizing a domestic, non-canonical facet. What they have in common is a search for feminine identity “a través d’una imatgeria mítica i ancestral, arrelada als elements més primitius i despullats, elementals, com l’aire, l’aigua, la terra i el foc, dels quals la dona esdevé la principal dipositària” (Nadal 184). The feminine is present through the predominance of nature as well as the fact that the *cançons* represent a uniquely maternal experience for the poet.

As the primary historical function of genealogies is to map *families*, blood connections/relations, Marçal’s generally intertextual, more subtle genealogy becomes more literal in this case; a play on overlapping literal genealogy is contrasted with a more figurative network. In Butler’s study of kinship and Antigone, she portrays blood in terms of excess:

by signifying “blood,” Antigone does not precisely signify bloodline, but something more like “bloodshed” – that which must be remaineded for authoritarian states to be maintained. The feminine, as it were, becomes this remainder, and “blood” becomes the graphic figure for this echoing trace of kinship, a refiguring of the figure of the bloodline that brings into relief the violent forgetting of primary kin relations in the inauguration of symbolic masculine authority. (4)

Marçal’s appropriation of phrases, songs and archetypes extends beyond the limits of Catalonia. The section titled “Tombant” opens with an epigraph “Una dona
sense home és com un peix sense bicicleta” (Bruixa 43). An echo of the same slogan appears in poem III, which begins

Com un peix sense bicicleta

cerco el meu cor entre les ones.

Alço la copa on mor la lluna

en vi molt dolç.

M’he emborratxat de solitud. (47)

The section “Vuit de març” (117) closes the work and celebrates International Women’s Day. “Vindicarem la nit / i la paraula DONA” (120), in addition to serving as a call for vindication (channeling A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Wollstonecraft’s 1792 feminist treatise), alludes to another, more activism-centered facet of twentieth century feminism, “Take Back the Night” protests (like International Women’s Day, celebrated yearly in the Spring). “Take Back the Night” also recalls the nocturnal connotations of witches, flying through the night sky on their brooms, their silhouettes contrasting with the brightness of a full moon. Witches’ brooms are aligned with the domestic tools so associated with women. Singularly, these references are a better fit with the allusions category, but taken as a whole, the poet weaves together verses and slogans and geographical and temporal provenances that narrate the North American women’s movement.

Marçal presents a type of sociopolitical, activist intertextuality that reflects her more intellectual play on the individual / collective dialectic. This species of poetic
activism is representative of much of the early theorizing of lesbian feminism in North American literature (See Faderman, Farwell and Garber) and highlights what is a generally self-conscious creation of lineage and history in late twentieth century lesbian poetry (Garber 11). Though at times criticized for potential essentialist tendencies, it is important to recognize that writers theorizing lesbianism and the social construction of lesbian identity in poetry “were actively engaged in a version of the essentialism/constructivism debate itself” (Garber 17). Making this connection permits an understanding of the poet’s preoccupation with witches in terms of her effort to resurrect nameless collectives of women. According to Marçal,

La bruixa, fins i tot, en forma de l’arquetipus infantil, amb escombra i tot, i la bruixa com a representant de la marginalitat i de la història negada, massacrada, la llengua abolida en el context d’allò que Derrida ha batejat amb el nom de fal logocentrisme. (Sota 195)

These are women that have suffered a shared oppression and have had their names taken from them. Their shared experiences lead to a solidarity, a sisterhood. In a draft of an unpublished article on J.V. Foix, Marçal references “l’herència clandestina de les bruixes” perhaps alluding to her own clandestine appropriation of Foix’s witches (Caixa 14/1). Witches are key to Marcal’s intertextuality as many of the intertexts (and poetic voices) remain anonymous; their names are not readily readable. She does not strip them of their names, she merely highlights their historical anonymity and their collectiveness and teaches us how to read voices that have been made absent.

An element of corporality may be detected in Marçal’s intertextual appropriation of witches and serves the present discussion of (anti)genealogies. The poet’s substitution
of witches for the *sol* (“sun”) of Foix has been discussed in Chapter 1 in terms of her early appropriations of primitive archetypes, but here I would like to extend the discussion to gender, the female body and notions of textual/artistic kinship. Her emphasis on the anonymity of witches cannot transcend the body as they were most often persecuted as receptacles of evil spirits or due to their knowledge of midwifery. For many centuries, “the knowledge of pregnancy, of the birth process, of female anatomy, and of methods for facilitating labor, was being accumulated entirely by women” (Rich 124-25). In fact, the Western medical profession as it is known today “emerged out of the suppression of women healers during centuries of witch-hunting, persecution and murder” (125). In Rich’s extensive treatment of the institution of motherhood, she documents that “wisewomen, healers, and midwives were especially singled out by witch hunters” (125). Grosz’s discussion of genealogy in Foucault and Nietzsche emphasizes “the inscription of social power on bodies” (146) and provides a useful lens through which corporeality may be read in Marçal’s genealogies.

The notion of naming, and related questions of authorship and anonymity are central to *Bruixa de dol*. The *divisa* to this collection (also discussed in Chapter 3) presents the question of naming, framing and limits within a vaguely Lorquian space. Traditional androcentric genealogical trees are based on and defined by names. *Bruixa de dol* presents an alternative sisterhood in which traditionally nameless collectives are united and given agency. Possession is important to Derrida as well. Roffe notes that “The proper name (and…the signature) are significant for Derrida because they are marks of propriety: ownership” (108). Derrida notes that
It is a matter of holding the promise of saying the truth at any price, of testifying, of rendering oneself to the truth of the name, to the thing itself such as it must be named by the name, that is, beyond the name. The thing, save the name. (Derrida 68)

The readable traces are detectable through the referentiality of Marçal’s constellations of names.

The *divisa* to this collection also serves as an implicit reference to poet H.D. As an intertext, it is probably most indicative of Marçal’s lesbian intertextuality.6

Emmarco amb quatre fustes

un pany de cel i el penjo a la paret.

Jo tinc un nom

i amb guix l’escric a sota. (29)

Marçal has written of the “tema del nom” that appears throughout *Bruixa*, beginning with the *divisa*:

Tots els infants, ara i aquí, religiosament o laica, són batejats en el nom del pare.

El nom de la mare – que de fet és, ja, el nom del pare de la mare – es perd, amb més o menys immediatesa…El nom és portador d’identitat: les dones artistes, escriptores, etc., que com se sol dir <<s’han fet un nom>> tenen un reconeixement social en tant que individus: per més que, sovint, Caterina Albert s’esborri sota Víctor Català o que el cognom Woolf sigui el del marit de Virginia Stephen. Per més que això hagi pogut situar-les en el difícil lloc de l’exceptionalitat, dels <<monstres>> és a dir, d’aquells éssers estranyys que poden
Adrienne Rich has also reflected on a similar type of authorship. In *The Dream of a Common Language* (published in 1978, one year before *Bruixa de dol*) she writes of the failure of language, a theme prevalent throughout her career (she admits that it is “an old theme even for” her). She speaks of “chalking” it “on the walls where the dead poets lie in their mausoleums” (18). She claims ownership of the words written in chalkdust and declares “Let me have this dust, these pale clouds dourly lingering, these words moving with ferocious accuracy like the blind child’s fingers or the newborn infant’s mouth violent with hunger…” (19). Rich’s claim is instinctual, necessary, desperate, solitary. Her poetic voice, like the blind child and hungry infant, is a being desperate to survive. She is a being that will forge her own way to communicate her need in a space where a system does not exist. The intensity of this need is as corporal as it is linguistic and conveys a paradoxical solitude and dependence on other(s), communication and silence. Her message is both intense and silent:

> No one can give me, I have long ago taken this method whether of bran pouring from the loose-woven sack or of the bunsen-flame turned low and blue…I keep choosing these words, these whispers, conversations from which time after time the truth breaks moist and green. (19-20)

For Rich, reading echoes is a conscious choice. She affirms her own authority both as reader and writer.

Marçal echoes Rich’s notion of shared authorship through writing on the wall, designating, creating and in turn inhabiting poetic space. This space is one composed of
whispers and conversations, dialogues of echoes. Marçal’s *divisa* actively participates in the dialogue of whispers, of dust. The dialogue she presents includes nameless interlocutors and affirms her name (without naming it) and also affirms that of Rich (and others, like H.D.) without naming them.

The first tercet of the sonnet “Zodiac” closes with the verse “*i ens fem penyora d’amor a la bestreta,*” echoing Carme Riera’s seminal *Et deixo, amor, la mar com a penyora* (1975). Another sonnet (the second in the part titled “Tríptic per una quimera” refers to “*l’hora violeta*” and echoes Montserrat Roig’s work of the same title. Both works were commercially successful narratives written by women, both dealing with questions of love between women and in the case of Roig, a complex literary genealogy. Marçal’s inclusion of such echoes compels new formulations of understanding kinship and illustrates her approximation of what Butler would refer to as “the limits of intelligible kinship” (*Antigone* 29), allowing us to begin to question Marçal’s feminism and the effects of normative heterosexuality.

Mothers and Fathers, Sisters and Strangers

*La germana, l’estranger*, like *Cau de llunes* and *Bruixa de dol*, consists of many uniquely Catalan echoes. The title alludes to questions of foreignness and conjures Marçal’s preoccupations with identity politics, often reflective of nationhood and language. Questions of exile and the paradox of searching for and finding (or building) a home as a displaced being evoke perhaps the most poignant struggles of the poet. Published in 1985, *La germana* reflects Marçal’s reading of burgeoning notions of intersectionality in Anglophone feminist studies. In addition to intersecting identities,
intersecting textual influences, literary and artistic genres are characteristic of many writings and artistic production of the period.

Marçal appears to be consciously evoking these questions and associations; a collection of essays and speeches published by black, North American, lesbian, mother and poet Audre Lorde published in 1984 was titled *Sister Outsider*. The work speaks to notions of motherhood, race and politics and represents a seminal collection of twentieth century feminist theory. In *My Monster/My Self* (1982) Barbara Johnson explores feminine ideals in terms of the monstrous. Though Marçal had never written on Johnson’s work, it is quite possible that the dichotomous title influenced the poet; in the very least, Johnson’s work reflects the consistent questioning of dichotomous identities in feminist writing of the 1980s. Another North American writer, Nancy Friday, in *My Mother/My Self*, examines the complexities of the mother-daughter bond in terms of sexuality. It is perhaps most useful to view Marçal’s intertextual project in light of the familial structure, particularly in terms of her reaching out to other writers pertaining to other languages, as she expands notions of family while exploring her most personal and at times painful experiences.

One the great preoccupations of *La germana, l’estrangera* is motherhood, particularly through the lens of childbirth. As mentioned earlier, *Terra de mai* presents one of the first portrayals of explicit lesbian desire expressed in the Catalan language and constitutes the first half of *La germana*. The parallel between the opening collection of sestinas and the explicit, often troubling portrayal of motherhood conjure questions of corporality, familial relations, communication, and sisterhood.
In addition to Renée Vivien and Emily Dickinson, Marçal cites and alludes to the poetry of Adrienne Rich in *La germana, l’estrangera*. The images depicted in *La germana, l’estrangera* echo Rich’s sentiments toward motherhood in her famous prose text, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1976). In this work, the North American poet examines the despair she suffered as a mother and lesbian. Rich, like the goddess Diana (simultaneously at home and a foreigner), is a poetic sister and stranger.

A verse of Rich’s (translated into Catalan) opens “D’Artemis a Diana”: “Uns ulls nous se m’obrien dessota les parpelles” (130) and permeates the poem. As the title suggests, the poem presents a play on naming and mythical genealogy. In addition to Artemis, Diana and Rich, Marçal embeds her own name into her contemplation of the evolution of Artemis/Diana’s name.

Uns altres ulls que escandallin el pou
De l’aigua i de la set, que interroguin la sal
I aprènguin a llegir l’alfabet viu,
Indesxifrat, hermetic, del mirall.
Uns altres ulls que esbatanin la mar. (130)

The “mar” and “sal” that markedly end the second and final line of the first stanza encode the poet’s name within a work whose purpose is to question the decipherability of names. Marçal further complicates genealogical allusions when she alludes to mirror images of female corporeality.

The earliest representations of Artemis associate her with nature and fertility (she later becomes a goddess of the hunt). She is notable for assisting her mother in the birth
of her twin brother, Apollo. Her midwifery blurs the genealogical relation she shares with her mother and brother, who is her twin. She is both daughter and midwife, sister and deliverer. In her manifestations as huntress and protectress (never conquered by love), Artemis/Diana remains a kaleidoscopic figure composed of polyphonic portrayals.

Marçal’s questioning of the notions of motherhood/sisterhood presents a parallel between her own poetic and that of Adrienne Rich as well as Alice Walker. She extends these questions to North America and brings Rich’s insight to Catalan poetry. She links lesbianism and poetry and family and includes Rich, Lorde and others in her genealogy; as a sister and fellow mother; solidarity in mothering and loving.

Elegies and Burial Shrouds

In Desglaç, Marçal explores her identity as a daughter and as a lesbian, and references another North American poet. She has referred to the work as one that explores the simultaneous death of her father and birth of her lesbianism (Llengua abolida 10). The collection begins with “Daddy,” continues to “Ombra de presa” and ends with “Contraban de llum” and embodies the action of thawing (desglaç) as shadow becomes darkness and light becomes an intermediary state, the poet enables a fluid dissolution of patriarchal binaries; “Desapareix la carcassa que immobilitza, però que també sustenta, el solid dóna pas al liquid, els contorns es fonen” (Llengua abolida 9). She dedicates this liberty from the constraint of the “law of the father” to “les dones que estimo – i en especial a la meva filla Heura” (11). This dedication aligns the “women that she loves” with the metaphorical “father” as well as highlighting a very specific familial connection with her daughter, and perhaps a national connection to the death of Franco.
The work conveys Freudian (*fort-da*, traumatic loss and repetition) and Lacanian intertexts that Marçal defies from within their constraints. The poet includes herself in an elegiac tradition and although she maintains a number of traditional elegiac tropes, presents a rebellious interpretation of the genre. What follows is an analysis of Marçal’s elegy to her father; she presents a parallel between language of the father and *la ley del padre* and conjures questions of fascism, sisterhood, shadows, absence versus presence, skeletons/fluids. The collection embodies a dissolution of linguistic, corporal and familial limits and the simultaneous formation of (anti)genealogical connections, a poetic sisterhood.

Peter Sacks notes that “much of the elegist’s task lies in his reluctant resubmission to the constraints of language” and that elegy provides a vision of the poet “in tension with, rather than inertly constituted by, the language that so conditions him” (xiii). The tension portrayed in the elegy, according to Sacks, highlights the “elegist’s need to draw attention…to his own surviving powers” (2). In Marçal, the surviving power of sexuality is made evident (albeit “altered” according to Sacks’s formulation).

It remains impossible to ignore the Oedipus/Electra question (8). Sacks, using Lacan, illustrates the transition between dyad and triad; in *Desglaç* we read from dyad (father) to another dyad/triad. A Lacanian view of this process would understand that Marçal’s entry, or penetration, into language consists primarily of the poetic declaration of her lesbianism and the death of the language (as father).

Elegy is above all a portrayal of presence and absence, a representation of absence (Sacks 11). This concept mirrors itself in *Desglaç*; on one hand, Marçal complies with the tradition of writing of her dead father in his absence. She simultaneously makes
present her lesbianism, the lesbian body; in other words, what has been absent within (and due to) precisely what her father represents.

The work may also be understood in light of fascism and the fairly recent death of the symbolic father of Spanish fascism. The work is a testament and a call for survival; a reaching beyond limits and consolation for all those oppressed by the Law of the Father. Sacks also points out the mythical roots of the elegiac tradition and, as in the case of the story of Pan and Daphne, elegies often consist of complex networks of metamorphoses and mourning (Sacks 4). Elegists “seem to submit by quotation or translation, to the somehow echoing language of dead poets” (25). Marçal conforming to this aspect of the tradition, cites another rebellious elegist, Sylvia Plath.

Plath’s name and verses haunt Desglaç. Marçal takes the title of Plath’s famous poem, “Daddy” (published in 1962) and transposes it, un-translated, to begin her elegy. While she leaves Plath’s title unchanged from the English, Marçal uses a verse of Plath’s (translated into Catalan) as an epigraph, echoing the North American poet once again. She incorporates Plath and Plath’s language into her (using Sacks’s term) “network of mourning,” blurring the lines between transposing, translating and transitioning.

Plath’s elegy was written in 1962 and published posthumously in 1965 in Ariel. It is most effective in its feminist appropriation of the elegiac tradition; she defies the canonical tradition that relegates “women to the roles of ineffectual muses, distracting nymphs, inadequate mothers, and figures of death” (Ramazani 1145). She reverses the “norms of female subjugation and masculine inheritance” and speaks as a powerful and “wrathful mourner” and “instead of effacing it, defaces the name of the dead father instead of revering it” (1145).
Plath’s “Daddy” is a violent, angry declaration of rage written in a nursery rhyme scheme. The poet’s cutting language enables Plath to resurrect her father so that she may kill him. She confronts her worst fear and stamps it out, kicks it, stabs it and buries it once again. The language of the poem is brutal and violent; Plath’s terms are those of World War II. Speaking to her father she “thought every German was you” and “I may well be a Jew.”

Plath’s most profound confrontation with fascism is the inability to communicate; she is unheard, paralyzed and suffocated. She alludes to her failed attempts to reach her father (through her failed suicide attempts and attempts to secure a substitution for him) and in the moment of poetic expression, is “finally through.” She permits her father to lie back and await the stake she drives through his heart. Plath uses the very violence of (linguistic) fascism that her father represents in order to combat it. (Ramazani points out, “In a remarkable anticipation of French theories of the feminine, she portrays the symbolic ‘language’ of the father as alien and ‘obscene,’ a disfiguring discourse that was, nevertheless, the only vehicle through which she could constitute her identity” [1150]). She inhabits these codes, exaggerates them and defeats them from within. Her elegy is both an act of self defense and preservation; she reclaims the language that impeded her and at the same time kills it, moves “through” it and affirms herself as not the literal, traditional elegiac survivor, but as a victorious woman poet who triumphs over a language that does not represent her.

Repetition is characteristic to the elegiac tradition and is evident in Plath’s “Daddy” through her adept employment of alliteration. Marçal also upholds this tradition of repetition in her “Daddy.” Her use of the title, verse (as epigraph) and name of Plath
are explicit examples. Through seemingly repeating some of the same thematic, Marçal inhabits a genre as traditional as it is rebellious, an elegiac tradition that confronts fascism and linguistic oppression. The conventional repetition of the elegy creates “a sense of continuity, of an unbroken patterns such as one may oppose to the extreme discontinuity of death. Time itself is thereby structured to appear as familiar” (Sacks 23). As a response to trauma, repetition creates a “protective barrier that, had it been present at the actual event, might have prevented or softened the disruptive shock that initially caused the trauma” (23).

Marçal’s explicit naming of Plath is significant in that, according to Sacks, “The survivor leans upon the name, which takes on, by dint of repetition, a kind of substantiality, allowing it not only to refer to but almost to replace the dead” (Sacks 26). Interestingly, Sacks refers to this process as “virtual reification by means of repetition” (26). Marçal replaces her father (and his law), a singular, univocal entity embodying phallogocentrism, with a collectivity of feminine voices.

Marçal’s “Daddy” also presents an elegy to Plath. Her use of the epigraph, in effect, serves as an *epitaph* for Plath. In *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning*, Kurt Fosso presents an analysis of the poet’s preoccupation with epitaphs. Fosso focuses on Wordsworth’s conceptualization of community as the product of “conjoining the living and dead” (149). Epitaphs facilitate this union and inspire “conversation” between the living about the dead; epitaphic “conversation of the dead forges social cohesion among the living” (150). In the case of Marçal’s elegy, a dialogue is inspired through her inclusion of Plath’s work; this conversation includes Marçal and Plath as community as well as the readers and Marçal (in memorializing Plath) and
arguably has the effect of, after Marçal’s death, serving as a conversation between readers. Epitaphs memorialize the dead, serve as a written (at times spoken) reminder of the dead. According to Fosso, Wordsworth’s commentaries on and poems about the epitaph “oblige[s] readers to tread cautiously the ground that separates the living and dead: those who speak and those who are spoken of and whose legacy of epitaphs the living are entrusted to share” (155).

One of the elegist’s goals is to prevent her own end: “the mourner must prevent a congealing of his own impulses” (Sacks 22). According to Sacks, an obvious function of elegiac questioning is to set free the energy locked up in grief or rage and to organize its movement in the form of a question that is not merely an expression of ignorance but a voicing of protest” (22).

The European elegiac tradition often employs weaving as a way to create a text(ile) in the place of an absence (Sacks 18). Sacks, for example, alludes to Apollo’s laurel wreath and Pan’s reeds and a number of classical references to weaving (18). Weaving as an act of mourning refers to the creation of a burial shroud. Mourning is an active process (a “work”); as corporal and repetitive as it is spiritual. Barthes’ aligns the “text” with work, as “experienced only in an activity of production” (Image Music Text 157). The text according to Barthes is paradoxical; its “weave of signifiers” is “half-identifiable: they come from codes which are known, but their combination is unique” (159). “Citations, references, echoes, cultural languages” form a text, and in turn provide a space “where languages circulate (keeping the circular sense of the term)” (160-64). Marçal’s “Medusa desossada” references Plath’s poem and enables Marçal to pose the questions “Qui em viu a l’altra banda? I com podré pensar-te / com so jo no fos tu?”
(Desglaç 29). She builds (or weaves) her text from the outside; in turn, it provides a form to her poetic body and creates a type of shroud that both pays tribute to Plath and affirms her own corporeal desire. Like the varying scales of the ouroboros, the Omega, the sum of all, the “zero of impossibility” (as Catherine Stimpson put it), the texts (echoes, voices, remnants) that haunt and constitute Marçal’s elegiac writing provide a generic lens through which lesbian writing may be read.

The Shroud of Renée Vivien

La passió segons Renée Vivien is composed of this type of weaving of intertexts and references and is the most illustrative and complex manifestation of Marçal’s intertextual project. The title of the work is perhaps the most obvious example of Marçal’s intertextual weaving. La passió segons Renée Vivien echoes the biblical passion of Christ and reflects the telling of a passion as well as the complex corporal and spiritual journey associated with this. Further, the authority granted to Vivien in telling (segons) the passion.

The structure of the title also reflects Brazilian author Clarisse Lispector’s A paixão segundo de G.H. (The Passion According to G.H.). In short, Lispector’s novel is one that confronts patriarchy, language and the dissolution of the limits of the self and a celebration of the (nameless) protagonist’s gender. Lispector’s novel explores the dissolution of the limits of the self through a dislocation of space and time. Both authors rewrite the biblical, corporal agony of the Christian “Passion” as positive, productive forces of desire rooted in the female (or the becoming-lesbian) body. It is a work that questions what is human, what is social and the communication of these limits. Rosi
Bradotti and Hélène Cixous have both written on Lispector (Cixous 1991). Marçal’s play on the title is further complicated when the name of Renée Vivien (nom de plume of Pauline Mary Tarn) is inserted as an agent in the telling of the passion (it is one according to Renée Vivien). With this move, Marçal imparts authorship to Renée Vivien (as literary figure) and sacrifices her own. She weaves her narrative voice, the voices of Renée Vivien and Clarisse Lispector and the many tellings of the biblical passion.

The novel also echoes much of Marçal’s primary poetic preoccupations. Her preoccupation with motherhood, mentioned above, is closely linked with that of Adrienne Rich. Rich’s critique of motherhood as social institution and discussion of her personal experience as lesbian and mother is central to Marçal’s work and often uses similar violent language to describe the complex relation shared by mother and child. Marçal has woven Rich into her poetry and the theme (and play on polyphonic authorship) is not absent in her novel. Sara T. alludes to the theme and weaves the poetry of Renée Vivien into the letter she composes to Chantal. She writes,

m’agradaria parlar amb tu una mica de tot aquest tema de mares i filles. A l’obra de Renée hi ha una mena d’horror estrany cap a la maternitat. Per exemple, des del punt de vista fisic: «Maternitats feixugues que els pits han devastat/- són com bots i carbasses en llur deformitat-…», diu en un poema. (49)

Sara T. articulates her own preoccupations with maternity through the verses of Renée Vivien, which she suggests are cited from memory, complicating the poetic genealogy she is referencing. Sara T. reminds the reader of the potential ambiguity (or failings) of memory when she states, “i coses per l’estil” (49).
The mother of Pauline Tarn/Renée Vivien recalls the birth of her daughter with language similar to Marçal’s (as published in *La germana, l’estrangera*), in her depiction of her daughter’s birth. She states, “Sempre li havia plagut fer-se la víctima…D’ençà que aquella coseta arrugada i lletja va sortir del seu cos, botxí del seu cos…plorava, plorava, sense parar…” (51). The images employed by Pauline’s mother remind the reader of Marçal’s own poetry (which echoes Rich) in addition to that of Renée Vivien. Marçal weaves sisters, daughters, mothers and poets into a genealogy that is readable at the same time it dissolves boundaries of authorship, making it almost impossible to trace anxieties of influence; instead of reading backward, we are compelled to read forward. When Sara T. reflects on the death of her father, asks herself

¿No era jo, qui havia escanyat en mi la filla obedient del pare? ¿Qui era, doncs, aquesta aparedada que em colpejava des de dins, malferida, potser, amb els nusos rosegats, potser, però vivent? ¿Era la mort d’ell, la que li tornava la vida, com si el darrer alè que es va escapar de la seva boca s’hagués arrapat als pulmons d’ella, exigent-li alhora la vida i la mort, deixant-la esqueixada entre l’impuls de substituir-lo i el de deixar-se caure, vora seu, ombra contra ombra, pols contra pols? ¿Es ella la qui des d’aleshores fa guàrdia com in gos fidel intentant d’arrossegar-me cap a la tomba del meu pare, que jo no he visitat mai? Ells dos, amants sense remei, m’han deixat a mi sola, com una estranya medusa, sense carcassa, sense ossos, carn viscosa, informe, sense contorns…Com si tornés, a contrapèl a l’estat d’esbós. (75-76)

These words of Sara T. harken back once again to Marçal’s elegy, which itself is woven into a rebellious elegiac tradition that questions notions of father, fascism, sister,
stranger. She maintains a politics of location/situatedness through the link to l’esbós, a spatial and linguistic marker alluding to a forbidden language and the death of a fascist. By citing herself, she cites Plath and produces endless circles of echoes forming around the body of Renée Vivien.

The Opera According to Marçal:
Ekphrastic Diva Worship in La passió segons Renée Vivien

Marçal’s writing evidences a continual preoccupation with the visibility (or lack thereof) of the literary lesbian, culminating in the publication of La passió segons Renée Vivien (1994), a polyphonic novel in which a twentieth-century screenwriter, nameless narrators and the voice of Renée Vivien herself contribute to a kaleidoscopic rendering of the British-born poet embodying fin de siècle excess and decadence. La passió segons Renée Vivien explores the question not only of writing what is absent, observing the unobservable, in terms of the literary lesbian (as represented in this case overtly by Renée Vivien, born Pauline Mary Tarn); but of how to read what has been left unread, what has been suppressed, what is positioned in the interstices, gaps and overlaps, exposing, the fallacious terms of literary conventions and therefore the Sapphic (Benstock 197). Despite the seemingly limitless nature of this genealogy, a consistent haunting of other texts written by Catalan women in the twentieth century persist in her writings. I will examine these echoes in light of admiration, a type of “diva worship”, as Marçal’s use of the opera (as artistic genre and space) proves a particularly illuminating lens through which her intertextual project and devotion to the Catalan literary tradition may be better understood.
The alternation between distance and proximity, visibility and invisibility, spectator and spectacle as seen in Mary Cassatt’s painting, is key in exploring Marçal’s portrait of Renée Vivien and reflects the effects of the poet’s frequent reliance on *mise-en-abyme*: internal duplications and the creations of an infinite ensemble of frames and reflections (Pérez 156). The novel’s first full chapter, preceded only by a short “Introit,” presents a brief sketch of Pauline/Renee’s life from adolescent to her premature death at age 32. The chapter, dated 1909, consists of a complex web of gazings, intertextual echoes, images and (mis)interpretations as the reader is introduced to Pauline Mary Tarn, Paule, Pauline, Paulette, Renée Vivien. I will trace visions of Pauline as framed within the recollections of Amedée Moullé, which themselves are nested within the novel’s first full chapter. The following analysis of three key moments of gazing articulates the excessive/hypercritical position attained through a never-ending displacement by Marçal’s eccentric, lesbian subject. These moments are framed within the context of the opera according to Marçal and her reliance on the Impressionism of Mary Cassatt.

Amédée’s first glimpse of the poet, the daughter of a family acquaintance takes place at a formal dinner, where the young girl remains under the strict surveillance of her mother, referred to as “Madame T.” within the novel. Amédée’s wife, “Madame M.” is a strikingly similar overbearing character and mimics Madame T.’s hyper-preoccupation with the act of *seeing*. As Amédée reminisces (through the novel’s third person narrator), Pauline appears to the reader through their “epistolary relationship” which consists of letters, original and re-written verses and descriptions of photographs. Amédée, a poet himself, aligns his memory of the young Pauline with his nieces, “enriolades i vives com un cuadre de Renoir” (16), conjuring an impressionistic tone to his description through
which vivid colors, blurred borders and ambiguous lines present a visual(ized) portrait of Pauline that mirrors the narrative space she soon will occupy, however spectrally.

When Madame T., Pauline’s mother, catches a glimpse of what she perceives to be a sign of an inappropriate relationship between Amédée and Pauline, she whisks her to London, where the young poet’s isolation results in her first failed suicide attempt. They succeed in continuing their epistolary dialogue and maintaining secrecy; Amédée hides letters from his wife, and, as requested by Pauline, he continues to write two versions of each letter to her, one which will knowingly be seen by Madame T., the other only by Pauline, manipulating the gaze of the two surveilling women, implicating the reader in the game of surveillance and reinforcing the censorship so crucial to understanding the portrayal of not only Renée Vivien, but of the literary lesbian where the content is often as “unconventional” as the form in which it is set forth (Epps 318).

Pauline’s overt attempt of self-erasure through her insistence on writing (and re-writing) her letters on “funeral” (parchment) paper thereby creating a palimpsestic effect of “overwritten text” (Collecott 2) and the emergence of visible signs of her anorexia in a photo sent to Amédée, evidence her preoccupation with how she is seen (or not) by others. Her corporeal obsessions reflect a frequent trope in Marçal’s poetry: that of literary art as the “flesh” to her skeletal framework. Her play on the Catalan word for “sketch” or “outline” (l’esbós) and the Sapphic island of Lesbos, is probably the most obvious manifestation of the inscription of French feminism and theories of sexual difference in Marçal’s oeuvre (see Sabadell 2001).

Pauline abruptly ends their correspondence and Amédée does not see her again until she returns to Paris years later. Their letter-writing highlights discursive gaps so
common to writing by and about lesbians, appropriated by Elizabeth Meese as the “letter” of the Law and the letter “L” in her articulation of “lesbian : writing.” Wittig’s split subject and Sedgwick’s discursive gaps refer to them as “borders, spaces and silence… the holes in discourse” (Collecott 12). Marçal’s project is most concerned with reading and writing what lies within these narrative fissures, of “reading through layers of significance…and being alert to the play of meaning between a given text and its intertexts” (Collecott 2). The three key narrative moments that I have chosen frame not only Marçal’s greater project of creating literary and artistic genealogies, but recall a persistent and subtle presence of Barcelona’s Gran Teatre del Liceu in 20th Century Catalan narrative writings by women.

Pauline makes a sudden appearance in the box shared by Amédée and his family at the Paris Opera (25). The abrupt scene places us within the spatial frame of the opera, more specifically, a frame within a frame, as the box provides a standpoint from which to observe the opera performance. Further, the box is a space from which one may observe the other spectators and in turn, become a spectacle oneself. This brief and seemingly inconclusive meeting serves as a narrative framing mechanism that simultaneously limits and delimits as it constructs a narrative space that enhances the readers’ sense of observing. As many have observed, the mise-en-scène of the opera house serves not only as a place in which spectacles were seen, but a place in which spectators went to be seen themselves. In her study of opera within film, de Lauretis affirms it as a “narrative space” that “makes a place in it for those who watch it” (Figures 123).

Amédée’s purchase of a book of poetry by Renée Vivien leads to his next encounter with the poet. Upon leafing through the collection, he immediately recognizes
Pauline’s verses, and attends a conference on the poet with desperate hopes of seeing her again. The critic presiding over the conference (mis)reads the love poems as if they were written by a man, dedicated to a woman, and assumes the sex of the ambiguously named Renée to be male. Amédée himself perceives the critic’s misreading as Pauline’s taking her anonymity (and her pseudonym) to the extreme. He does not read, or rather, “see” her desire for another woman. Their heterosexist (mis)interpretations of her poetry evidence what many scholars of lesbian literature define as what readers have been trained to overlook, namely, the Sapphic, “a source of artistic creativity that is simultaneously remembered by the artist and suppressed by the culture” (Collecott 4). Further, the misinterpretation recalls a fundamental characteristic of the opera as artistic genre; that of carnivalesque gender inversion. Cixous recognized the potential of this gender play when exploring the complexities of operatic transvestism, where women often sing as men, sometimes disguised as women. She concludes that “A-man-who-loves-a-woman-as-if-he-were-a-woman has a voice that traverses...walls ... languages ...gender” (101-02). Like the opera spectator, and like Cixous, the reader of Marçal’s text is aware of the ambiguity of a woman (in this case the poet) being interpreted as a man; it is impossible to suspend knowledge when confronted with what Castle refers to as “uncanny moments of double-drag” (Castle 233). The female spectator, reader or writer observes that “the more dazzlingly” the performer “in drag” “pretends, the more completely she fails” leading to a new stage illusion, “that of a woman robustly in love with another woman” (Castle 230). No matter how artfully “true to life” the gesture, the singer in drag fools no one (230). Butler’s reflections (on drag) highlight the resulting fluidity of identities and the resulting “openness to resignification and re-contextualization” (188). The “dragging”
of Pauline enables Marçal and her readers to openly re-contextualize the multiple frame stories she has embedded in her narrative.

At the conference, Amédée sees Pauline as an audience member, seated with another woman, a blonde, American heiress, Natalie Clifford Barney. A typical voyeur, Amédée fears and avoids being seen himself. Amédée observes the two women as they share mischievous glances as the critic continues his heterosexist interpretations of Vivien’s poems. Upon looking at each other, the two convulse with laughter, leave the theatre, weave through the crowded venue and pass Amédée, seated in the back row. A rosy-cheeked Pauline does not see him; she directs her eyes forward, lips tightened, restraining an outburst of laughter, preoccupied with Natalie. The blonde glances at the man in the back row and the two make eye contact (28). Amédée as voyeur can no longer enjoy looking once his look is detected, however subtly (Newman 451). It is Natalie, not Pauline, who disrupts the gaze. Paradoxically, Pauline remains “unseen” despite being the focus of the conference and the object of Amédée’s desire.

Amédée sees Pauline once more, years later on a street in Longchamp. She is riding in a covered coach, under the shade of a gray parasol, “abstracted,” hidden behind a feather fan (“Instal·lada en un luxós cotxe descobert, sota una ombrel·la de seda grisa, es veia abstreta, amb la mirada baixa clavada en el ventall de plomes”) (37). At her side this time, is a “dama exuberant,” gazing at the horses through binoculars (32). Amédée assumes the woman to be a family member of Pauline’s, once again, misreading the scene. As the woman lowers her binoculars, Amédée immediately recognizes her as the Baroness van Zuylen de Nyevelt, wife of the founder and president of the Auto Club of France, lover of Renée Vivien. Amédée is an acquaintance of the Baron and in fear of
being recognized, he immediately leaves the scene and finds another location from which he may observe the women. Through his binoculars, Amédée catches his last glimpse of the young poet who as an adolescent read to him and who so skillfully translated the verses of Sappho into French. The Baroness, through her binoculars embodies an active looking, usurping the gaze and posing a threat to Amédée’s entire system of representation. It is as if the woman had forcefully moved to the other side of the specular (Doane 50). The excessiveness of the buxom, overbearing Baroness is also embodied by Natalie (the blonde who succeeds in returning Amédée’s look at the poetry conference) as it enables an “eccentric discursive position outside the male (hetero)sexual monopoly of power/knowledge” and when read through the looking glass (a là de Lauretis’s Alice), ekphrastic intertexts emerge, the most visible from the opera-esque binoculars employed by the Baroness. The image of the Baroness echoes the cinematic “woman with glasses” cliché; an image linked with the idea of the female body “as the site of an excessive” and even threatening desire (51). 

A series of paintings by Mary Cassatt echo the moments of gazings I have outlined and confirm her as an intellectual artist, more than merely a painter of “mothers and daughters” to which she has often been reduced in the field of art criticism and history (Pollock 141). At the Opera (1878) “confirms that Cassatt was…experimenting with angles of vision, scale, composition to produce a distilled, and synthesized painting rather than some swiftly brushed record of a transient impression” (Pollock 141, see also Sabadell-Nieto 2007). A woman, seen in profile, holds her opera glasses to her eyes and “looks across the viewer’s line of vision in a determined action” (144). She adamantly ignores the viewer’s gaze, which “finds itself confronted instead with a sketchily painted
man, peering from his box...at the woman [in the box in whose space the viewer is putatively placed”(144). The viewer of the painting is seeing others see (the woman, the man, as well as the remaining sea of spectators) and simultaneously, is seen by the woman and the man. In addition to echoing the narrative fragment in question, the painting highlights one of the more social functions of the opera house; not only does one go to the opera to see the spectacle, but to be a spectacle.

Pauline and Natalie’s pleasure upon anonymously attending the poetry conference attests to this function of the space of the opera house. Marçal chose *The Loge* (1882) another painting in Cassatt’s theatre series, to adorn the cover of her novel. In it, two young debutantes appear for the second time. The blonde woman is actively looking and fully available (visually); the other, partially obscured behind a fan (much like Pauline when seen with the Baroness), is more abstracted and her eyes are directed lower, not overtly watching the performance, but perhaps more concerned with being watched herself. The painting frames the problematic sketched in the novel’s first chapter most explicitly embodied by Amédée’s moments of seeing, and simultaneously his not seeing, Pauline/Renée Vivien at the Paris Opera. Pauline is at once framed within and excessive to the operatic frame. She captures the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but of itself inaudible or inexpressible, displayed as spectacle and still unrepresented or unrepresentable, invisible yet constituted as the object and the guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled *(Figures 151)*,
much like the female body of transvestite opera performers, who present an “eloquent
interplay of erotically charged identification and difference” (Blackmer and Smith 5) and
in the words of Cixous, “gender without limit” (97-100).

Sara T., a narrator presented to the reader through a pastiche of letters, notes and
private journal entries, is a filmmaker writing in 1984. Her preoccupation with her
screenplay further emphasizes the role of the visual and reinforces the notion of
spectatorship. In her work on semiotics and cinema, de Lauretis and others have aptly
noted that there is a “sweeping of lesbian sexuality and desire under the rug of sisterhood,
female friendship, and the...theme of ‘the mother-daughter bond’” (Mayne 157). Other
scholars have attempted to formulate the lesbian as spectator in terms of a liminal
experience, in which what is obvious to the lesbian spectator remains unseen by others
(Mayne xvii). An ambiguous epistolary relationship between Sara T. and Chantal lends
itself to a like interpretation and in the very least, highlights the possibility of an intense
homoerotic relationship between the two women. Similar possibilities are opened within
the opera house, as noted by the lesbian opera spectator Terry Castle when she posed the
question “Where else but in the plush darkness of [the opera house] might a respectable
woman...have spent...hours staring raptly at another through binoculars?” (202).

Homoeroticism is facilitated and made visible to the reader through its invisibility.

When Elizabeth Meese posed the question, “When Virginia looked at Vita, what
did she see?” within the context of Virginia Woolf’s relationship with Vita Sackville-
West, she addressed the question of lesbians looking at each other. Meese understood
lesbian letter-writing in light of the parallax, which consists of an “apparent change in the
position of an object resulting from the change in the direction or position from which it
is viewed,” an “apparent difference in position”: “the parallax of an object may be used in determining its distance from the observer” (475). The narrative, visual, intertextual, ekphrastic frames employed by Marçal are not limiting; they function simultaneously as limit and horizon (Mayne 151). If we, like de Lauretis and others, liken lesbian representation to “its condition of possibility” (Figures 53), Marçal’s narrative portrait of Renée Vivien recalls yet another work by Cassatt.

In Reading “Le Figaro” (1878), Cassatt paints her mother, Katherine Cassatt, seated in an armchair reading a newspaper (Pollock 91), which is partially reflected in a mirror. Griselda Pollock articulates Cassatt’s maneuver of condensing contradictory images of femininity, maternity and intellectuality: the mother is able, but not young or available...The image of the intellectual mother is created by her adult, artistically creative, daughter whose gaze is implied in the space of the studio where together the daughter painted and her mother read. (134)

The work shows one woman, “yet invites us to imagine the presence of the daughter painting her” (136). The artist inscribes herself into her work as its imaginary interlocutor and proves herself to be much more than a woman artist preoccupied with mundane images of women and babies (Differencing 207). The viewer at once observes the spectacle (the mother, who is an observer herself as she reads) as well as the artist, who becomes at once spectator (as artist) and spectacle (as another woman viewer present in the room). Cassatt captures in these intimate studio scenes, the same questions of gaze explored in her opera series. We are perhaps, reminded of these questions by her
mother’s choice of newspaper, whose title evokes, if not Mozart’s operatic version of *La nozze de Figaro* a theatrical spectacle with its own Spanish echoes.

Within the frame of the narrative fragment in question, it is twice noted by the narrator that Amédée is an avid reader of *Le Figaro*; it is in this newspaper that he learns of the poetry conference and later, of the death of Renée Vivien. The presence of *Le Figaro* highlights the characters’ reliance upon reading Renée as well as the role of the reader herself. Additionally, Amédée as character is only identified as Amédée M. Though the expert Vivien scholar may presume him to be Amédée Moulle, Marçal’s suppression of his last name, and emphasis on the initial “M.” is suggestive perhaps of Mozart as composer. This blurring of nominal lines is a rather common trope in both Marçal and Vivien and serves to reinforce, however subtly, the operatic frame of the narrative.

One character remains in the shadows of this text within a text even more explicitly than Renée Vivien. Carmen, the Spanish servant of Amédée, appears in the last two pages as she hands Amedée his copy of *Le Figaro*. Carmen is the name chosen by Amédée; he notes that she is the first servant he has named himself. Amédée is sure that the Spanish girl has never heard of Mérimée or Bizet, subtly noting that it is in fact the opera *Carmen* that inspired his choice. As Carmen brings him his daily paper, the young servant shyly voices her continued preoccupation with the events unfolding in her country. Since the events of July 1909 in Barcelona, she continues to worry about “una ciutat on ni tan sols no vivia la seva família” (32). Like Marçal, who throughout the remainder of the novel, writes through a contemporary character-narrator, filmmaker Sara T., Carmen identifies with a city that does not (literally) house her family. Marçal herself,
though born within the city confines of Barcelona, spent her childhood outside the city and frequently alludes to conflicting notions of birthplace, enhancing the mirror effect of her writing and the spectral presence of the city in the text.

If we, like de Lauretis, explore strategies of writing and reading as forms of resistance (*Alice 7*), it becomes clear that the only way to position oneself *outside* of a dominant discourse is to displace oneself *within* it. Sara T. is Marçal’s most obvious manifestation of the poet’s project to investigate the life and art of Renée Vivien. In the case of Carmen, however, Marçal appears to be acknowledging her presence by *displacing* herself within a discourse in which she has already *placed* herself. De Lauretis also speaks of a certain “deviousness” (7), which is arguably articulated by Marçal’s choice of name for Carmen, which at once, strengthens the frame of the opera and echoes her own authorial presence through anagram. The obligatory personal article in Catalan, “la,” prefixed to “Carmen,” makes this possible (“M-a-r-c-a-l” is embedded within l-a-C-a-r-m-(e-n)). As Renée is contrasted with her assertive, gaze appropriating lovers, Marçal opens a space for the lesbian spectator/reader to partake “in the act of cataloging, of pastiche and recombination, and in the simultaneous work of “decoding” (Mayne xx).

The aforementioned texts offer the spectator/reader a framework for seeing “what the conceptual system of heterosexuality…attempts to keep invisible” (*Figures 67*).

If the lesbian sees the woman, the woman may see the lesbian seeing her. With this, there is a flowering of possibilities. The woman, feeling herself seen, may learn that she *can be* seen; she may also be able to know that a woman can see, that is, author perception…The lesbian’s seeing undercuts the mechanism by
which the production and constant reproduction of heterosexuality for women was to be rendered *automatic*. (*Figures* 67)

Marilyn Frye reminds us that the conventions of seeing remain “partially anchored or contained by a frame of visibility that is still heterosexual…” (*Figures* 67), as illustrated by the heterosexist poetry critic, by Amédée’s inability to interpret the overt eroticism of Pauline’s relationships with women, and further, by viewers of Cassatt’s paintings who often stop short of interpreting her women subjects and spectators in terms of their sexuality (See Pollock). By highlighting the opera, I hope to point out a frame within which Marçal’s devotion to the Catalan literary tradition is particularly, though subtly, evident.

Marçal, like Vivien, also witnessed a critical overshadowing of the lesbian content of her own poetry. She chose to publish only in Catalan. This positions us to liken de Lauretis’s conceptual system of heterosexuality to the linguistic minoritization so crucial to the author’s political consciousness. Though Marçal and others have been defined and studied in light of their double minoritization, the portrayal of marginalized sexualities embodies a more complex navigation of minority identities than simply “woman” and “Catalan,” though these are often the most relevant to the North American literary critic. Further, the question of how to read these voices necessitates an acknowledgment of Marçal as a reader of others and critic of heteronormative connotations of female-female relationships. This is precisely where Marçal’s genealogies become most relevant.

The opera according to Pauline Mary Tarn, Mary Cassatt and Maria-Mercè Marçal, as presented in Marçal’s polyphic novel, portrays limits that are not quite
transgressed and highlights the presence of the Catalan literary canon and its simultaneous neglect of and dependence upon a number of woman authors who themselves find the opera a useful genre and space with which to question feminine subjectivity. Montserrat Roig’s *L’opera quotidiana* (1982) appropriates the formal structure of the opera and utilizes the metaphor to present a set of intertwining narratives told from a variety of perspectives and voices (Fernàndez 225). A preoccupation with performance extends throughout Roig’s fiction and journalistic oeuvre and although no one has yet linked the space of the Liceu with Roig’s preoccupation, its presence in her fiction as well as her own acting career suggests a subtle intertextual reference on Marcal’s part to Roig’s “version” of the opera. Roig’s novel points to, and participates in, “a crisis in the definition and circulation of discourses of Catalan national identity…articulated through reference to the body and notions of gender and desire” (Fernàndez 226).  

I understand Marçal’s embedding of the tradition ekphrastic views of opera as an act of deference, in line with what Castle provocatively described as lesbian diva worship: She notes that for lesbian listeners of opera, “the diva’s passion is a mirror: a fluid silvery form in which desire itself can…be recognized. By the liberating way that she desires – by the bold ardor of her own “homovocal exaltation” the operatic subject/singer becomes a “collective emblem,” a “poignant token of homoerotic possibility” (237), “so moved by the act of giving voice to her pleasure, revealing herself, without shame or self-censoring, as a fan of other women” (235), Marçal shows her devotion, through Renée Vivien’s self-destruction and her subsequent passió/demise.
As Castle confronts the intellectual rationalization, “the analyzing away” of all exaggerated feeling” (236), Marçal tackles a similar project through her intertextual genealogy, which she understood as a profound effort to combat oblivion (archives, Caixa 16/4). Marçal’s opera is an “erotic luxury,” a conflation of female voices (Blackmer and Smith 1). As a genre it is constantly aspiring towards the limits of vocal expression, the limits of meaning, the voice(s) is heard under the constant threat of the loss of voice (Grover Friedlander 22). It is an “excessive medium,” and as such, it enables Marçal to write her homage as one that needs to be decoded. Many have described opera in terms of its independence from language, as a complication of communication in silence; my framing of Marçal’s intertextual project within the opera reflects the silence related to not only to the literary lesbian, but to the Barcelona according to Montserrat Roig, Mercè Rodoreda, and Esther Tusquets.

Virginia Woolf’s writing explores language as a frame that can surround an idea or reality but never approach its true substance; she elevates both the temporal and spatial substance of music, which “goes straight for things” by saying “all there is to say at once,” evoking a sense of excess perhaps echoed through Marçal’s subtle use of the opera as visual, poetic and narrative frame. Through the sometimes sarcastic lens of Gramsci, de Lauretis remarks on the significance of the opera for its viewers/listeners “to…enable individual subjects to their erotic, ambitious, or destructive aspirations” (*Figures* 119). The spectator as participant evokes “frames that never quite touch,” the opera according to Pauline Mary Tarn, Mary Cassatt, Maria-Mercè Marçal.

The complex intersection of observer and observed – in an intricate, kaleidoscopic fabric of desire, in “an erotics of en-gaze-ment – recalls Barthes’ exploration of the
ecstasy of the gaze, as the object pierces the subject in an ecstatic confusion of activity and passivity. Jane Gallop explains that ecstasy obtains when you are no longer within your own frame “some sort of going outside takes place…Barthes calls it jouissance” (Meese “When Virgina” 474). In conclusion, Marçal’s complex web of gazings shapes, within the conceptual space of the opera; a space of contradictions in need of affirmation rather than resolution, a space that enables the reader to read from the “outside” and the lesbian reader to read herself.

“Sota el signe del drac”: Sant Jordi

In one of her many diary entries, Sara T. alludes to Renée Vivien’s preoccupation with what she terms “invisible genealogies” and revisits one of Vivien’s short stories in which a female protagonist, aboard a sinking ship, refuses a place on a lifeboat in order to save her pet wolf (her alter ego). She voluntarily perishes despite a willing male narrator’s efforts to save her. This reminds Sara T. of Vivien’s version of the Andromeda/Perseus myth, in which the woman refuses to be saved from the dragon. Upon questioning the choices of these women (in light of Renée Vivien’s own suicide), Sara T. asks herself if their motivation lies simply in what she calls the “self-loathing of the marginalized,” echoing her own sentiments as linguistically and sexually minoritized within Spain.

This complex play of alter egos may be read as a retelling of the myth of St. George. Derivative of the Andromeda/Perseus legend and patron saint of Catalonia, St. George (Sant Jordi) epitomizes social, familial, even literary order. April 23rd began as St. George’s Day in Catalonia and eventually became associated with World Book Day.
It corresponds with the deaths of two of the world’s most canonical authors, Shakespeare and Cervantes, and is a celebration as much of chivalry as chauvinism. St. George’s slaying of the serpent-dragon is an icon of women’s debt to men; on April 23rd in Catalonia, women receive roses as a symbol of the bush that blossomed at the site of the serpent-dragon’s demise while men are the recipients (and therefore the readers) of books. The holiday continues to be one of Catalonia’s, particularly Barcelona’s, most important celebrations. Barely detectable in Sara T.’s writings, the St. George intertext is a subtle and subversive allusion to a Catalonia that although seemingly unavailable at the outset, has infiltrated the narrative. Like Terry Castle’s literary lesbian, the feminine and lesbian voices absent from the Catalan literary canon, are defined by their “notthereness” (2). Through multiple incarnations and feminine re-tellings of Sant Jordi, they “can only be represented to the degree that [they are] simultaneously ‘derealized’, through a blanching authorial infusion of spectral metaphors” (34).

As an icon, Sant Jordi is a visible facet of Catalan architectural history. The dragon’s scales and skeleton frame Gaudi’s Casa Batlló and the saint’s cross is emblazoned on the roof of the iconic structure. Not unlike Francisco Franco himself (often represented, propagandistically, riding a white horse echoing Santiago Matamoros), St. George continues to embody national myth entwined with religious iconography. Both figures are in many respects as iconographically mythical as Renée Vivien herself. Vivien was hyper-conscious of the role of the visual, her own “body image” so to speak; she understood her body as an inscriptive surface (using Elizabeth Grosz’s term). She was obsessed with religious iconography and identified with a Christ, not resurrected, but nailed to the cross “in the midst of an uncaring world” (Jay 84-85).
Vivien’s anorexia can be traced to her cult of death and the body-text relation was not left unnoticed by Marçal, who obsessed over her own poetry in terms of the skeletal and the flesh. She often defined her poetry as pure, unstructured (“de-boned”) flesh while Renée Vivien strove to convert her body into one that was in effect, pure sketch, *l’esbós*, skeleton without flesh.

Conclusions

Marçal creates a continuum of mothers/daughters/sisters/foreigners/strangers through a discourse that confronts and eradicates any possibility of monolithic, univocal, androcentric poetic/creative voices (against Barthes). I argue that one may consider this continuum a “lesbian intertextuality” given the method in which it was created (weaving) and the implicit, haunting, echoing presence of lesbian/feminine authors and traditions. This collective is limitless; it does not restrict itself to race, gender, heterosexuality, yet all are united in their uncanny foreignness and sisterhood. Braidotti calls for new strategies in learning to read, or “listen to,” the voices of Marçal’s artistic genealogies;

Echoes of silenced insights, of unspoken truths, of untold accounts reverberate in the inner chambers of a feminist’s mind – forcing upon her the realization that something, in feminist discourse, resists direct translation into the language made available by academic propriety. Something of the feminist countermemory is in excess of convention, it is transgressive of canonical knowledge – something [that] calls for new ways of listening. (*Nomadic Subjects* 208)
Chapter 4

Theorizing the Body

Previous chapters have outlined the ways in which Marçal undermines heterocentric hierarchies and subverts and dissolves archetypal, spatial and literary limits. Lesbian desire and, in turn, a theorizing of the body permeate Marçal’s literary dismantling of these limits. This chapter explores this theme in order to emphasize the inherent multiplicity of theorizing the lesbian body and Marçal’s attempt to embody desire and female sexuality. The nature of Marçal’s work lends itself to overlappings, contradictions, repetitions and (re)presentations; for this reason, the present chapter recalls earlier commentary and alludes to future analysis. As Barbara Christian suggests in “The Race for Theory” (echoed by Butler in Bodies That Matter [182]), I will consider the literary (in this case, Marçal’s oeuvre) as a space in which “theory takes place” (37-49). A theory of the body that provides a space in which multiplicity, eccentricity, eroticism (terms Christian deems “difficult to control” [45]) may be understood and utilized as a means through which the lesbian body may be detected and, in turn read, in Marçal’s work.

The following analysis of corporality in Marçal necessitates a reading of her work more as a philosopher than as a poet. It has been suggested that by virtue of writing poetry as a lesbian, one is inherently a theorist of the body. Self-identified queer philosopher Mary E. Galvin explained that “Our poets are our theorists…theorists of language and form…theorists of the interrelationship of language, consciousness, sexuality and social control, theorists of the deconstruction of categorical thinking…of gender and identity and the unconscious” (3). Galvin’s observations reflect many in the
queer academic community and suggest a philosophy of the body as readable as a philosophy of poetry. On the so-called “lesbian novel” Catherine Stimpson asserts that lesbianism “represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast and bone” (177), echoing philosophical writers such as Monique Wittig for whom the body is a graphic, even abject, site of inscription. Though vulnerable to criticism for reflecting essentialist tendencies, the inherent theorizing of the body present in Marçal’s writing presents a certain optimistic futurity, an affirmation of possibility, where one may begin to contemplate the body beyond previously established discursive frameworks unable to contain the transformative nature of such bodies.

Marçal’s poetry actively and continuously theorizes the body while consistently echoing, conjuring and explicitly citing other writers and poets (both contemporary and not) who have also stressed the relationship between theorizing and writing poetry, including, for example the North American writers Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde.¹ Like Lorde and Rich, Marçal’s poetry also stresses an active, local politics, adding yet another register artfully inhabited by the poet.² Joana Sabadell-Nieto describes the Marçalian oeuvre in the following terms:

La poesía de Maria-Mercè Marçal es ante todo la práctica lírica del feminismo y de la diferencia, una escritura del cuerpo…es un cuerpo de mujer, que es decir un cuerpo ignorado por las prácticas políticas, culturales, históricas, económicas de nuestra…sociedad y que la poeta se ha empeñado en hacer presente, único punto de partida posible aunque a contracorriente. (“Mi amor” unpublished)

Through tracing the theories of lesbian desire implicit in Marçal’s poetry and prose, this chapter explores the creation of a system of embodiment that weaves together
poetry, theory and praxis, confronts patriarchal discourse and does not exclude the poet’s own personal, biographical context. Marçal does not simply propose a new feminine, or lesbian, essence, but offers a vision that recognizes multiplicities and fosters proximity. Her work is one in which multiple theories of lesbian embodiment are problematized as she figures and “re-figures” corporality.

The notion of “refiguring” desire stems primarily from Elizabeth Grosz’s “Refiguring Lesbian Desire” in which Grosz describes her project as an experiment with ideas “to see how far they can go, what they enable us to rethink, to recontextualize, to see in a different way – a kind of excessive analysis, one that goes beyond a well-charted terrain…” (69). A constant refiguring of desire culminates in Marçal’s late poetry and her novel, *La passió segons Renée Vivien*, a climactic work in which a multiplicity of passions (defined most typically by Marçal in terms of the active and creative dimensions of the etymology of the word) facilitates an intertextual polyphony of poetic voices and artists, and kaleidoscopic re-examinations of poetic voices:

> Tot i la seva etimologia, la paraula passió sembla tenir una dimensió activa, creadora, que tendeix expressar-se, i a expressar-se, quan ho fa, fora de la mesura preestablerta, i per la qual cosa li cal donar-se un llenguatge. (Caixa 16/4)

This chapter will continue by tracing the silencing of the lesbian body in a number of theoretical/poetic/feminist texts most relevant to Marçal and her treatment of sexuality and the body. A brief literary review will highlight the original problematic of “writing the lesbian” and will better illuminate Marçal’s portrayal of lesbian poetic embodiment and her solutions, which include an opening of corporeal theoretical possibility and a subsequent transition into a corporal theory in line with current renderings of queer
ecology that engages with the qualities of interrelatedness and multiplications of difference (Morton 275). I will trace the evolution of the body in Marçal, more or less chronologically, and show how this evolution may be read as one from performative to queerly ecological citationality, based upon the concept’s probing of “the intersections of sex and nature,” in order to demonstrate “an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 5). The remainder of the chapter will in some respects embody the structure in its web-like depiction of the body in Marçal’s writing, a depiction in which bodies are apparitional and interconnected. These bodies enable transformation, openness, new readings, “connections, assemblages, and becomings” that “form central concerns for many queer and nature writers,” and the limitless possibilities offered by nature for models and metaphors (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 39).

So(l)c(los), I Am Body: Writing the Lesbian

The notion of “writing” the lesbian is relevant not only to the trajectory of the present study, but to the evolution of Marçal’s feminism and contemplation of the female body as expressed in her writing. It may be argued that “lesbian” writing is evident in her first collection, Cau de llunes through the mere presence of a poem composed in Sapphic verse, “Xera” (27). The poet was sensitive to Sappho’s challenges (also shared by scholars of Sappho) in poetically expressing lesbian desire and recognized what they shared in common as woman poets’ linguistic struggles. The question of the poetic influence of Sappho is not quickly lost on the reader of Marçal as it is intimately
dependent on questions of intelligibility, lost material and corporeality (Gubar 1984). The problems faced in detecting the literary lesbian are akin to those faced by Marçal early in her career, publishing as a political, sexual and linguistic minority. It is important to note that her conscious decision to publish in Catalan complicates the linguistic minoritization to which I refer, especially in light of her success in acquiring readership and winning numerous literary prizes. By choosing to publish in a language that was minoritized during the Franco dictatorship (which ended upon Franco’s death only two years before Cau de llunes was published further emphasizing the subversive facet of her choice to publish only in Catalan), she takes on a language very recently deemed inferior and further, restricts the size of her reading public to Catalan speakers. The poet did, though, recognize the patriarchal nature of this language and her complex relation to a language that, according to Sabadell-Nieto, was not the one that best represented her (“Maria-Mercè Marçal” 362). Later in Marçal’s career the theme of lesbian desire is made explicit and is skillfully woven together with questions of linguistic identity and the dialectic of the presence/absence of woman within patriarchal language.

The recuperation of Sappho is above all a recuperation of the body in poetic language. Woman writers intent on honoring the voices of the Greek poet were inspired by Sappho as “legendary survivor,” “a love-lost suicide,” a nursing mother and a prostitute (Gubar 44). Writers such as Isadora Duncan, Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elizabeth Robbins understood Sappho first and foremost as a corporal agent who expressed this agency in her poetry (44). Further, they recognize that this corporeality has been “destroyed, sanitized, or heterosexualized” and they attempt to “solve the problem of poetic isolation and imputed inferiority” (46). Returning agency to Sappho is
intimately tied to her body and that of the genealogy of writers following her footsteps. Renée Vivien considered herself a priestess of Sappho and exhibited a constant obsession with the body (poetically and literally) evidenced in her anorexia, alcohol abuse and her eventual suicide. North American poet H.D.’s “Sapphic modernism” embedded direct allusions to Sappho much in line with Marçal’s intertextual genealogies, creating her own brand of “lesbian poetics” (Collecott 1999). Both H.D. and Renée Vivien centered the notion of rebirth through their self-naming and code. Marçal’s readings of these two women centers on their poetic preoccupations.

Much of Vivien and H.D.’s recuperative efforts concerned place, particularly in terms of Lesbos, the island representative of exile from the “native language of desire” (Gubar 52). Though the poets’ spatial concerns are often discussed in terms of the marginalized and exile, I have argued that subversion of limits, spatial and linguistic, lend a structure from which her poetic voice can contemplate, explore and embrace eccentricity (following de Lauretis 2007). In Marçal this is one of the more important facets of Lesbos as she, through l’esbós, equates poetry with the body and evokes the possibility of recuperating the flesh of the “disembodied muse” (Marks 1979), aligning corporeal and linguistic obstacle.

The calligramme of clOś / Solc (Cau de llunes 35) similarly encodes corporeality within the poetic. The body, cos in Catalan, haunts her language as a first person affirmation, soc (“I am”) echoes and inverts the spectral body portrayed in the calligramme. A permanent resident of the solc, the furrow, the in-between, Marçal equates her geographical pertenance, her “home,” as the liminal space between
landscapes and codes. This eccentric position is an affirmative one; it does not prohibit Marçal’s poetic voice from expression, but fosters, even privileges, multiple perspectives. The cloS/Solc dichotomy was problematized at the start of Marçal’s poetic career (Cau de llunes is her first published collection) and may be traced throughout her contemplations of space; the seemingly binary pairing of “enclosure” and “furrow” echoes a Deleuzian smooth (nomadic) and striated (sedentary) space as it opens a gap for the becoming lesbian body. The limits suggested by cloS are undermined by the Solc and the possibility of subversion. The word cos (“body”), embedded within the calligramme, haunts the process of enclosing and movement. In her discussion of the eccentric subject and its relevance to lesbian discourse, de Lauretis analyzes the resistance of the word “lesbian” to dominant conceptual schemes and proposes a subject that, much like Marilyn Frye’s “lesbian,” Adrienne Rich’s “disloyal white woman” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s mestiza, assumes a dis-placed, dis-located, dis-affiliated, dis-engaged position, a position that enables their subjects to “see things that cannot be seen from within” (181). Marçal’s solc both dis-engages and re-engages her “power as a perceiver” and asserts an “unusual knowing…a form of consciousness…not primordial, universal, or coextensive with human thought…but historically determined and yet subjectively and politically assumed” (181). The poet considers her liminal position as one of privilege, a position from which she is able to re-affirm, re-possess and deploy a gaze that belongs only to her.

Terry Castle’s synthesis of the “apparitional lesbian” in literature contemplates its vaporization “by the forces of heterosexual propriety” (AL 7). Drawing upon nineteenth and twentieth century literature, film, popular culture, opera and personal experience, Castle presents a seminal work in which the “ghosting” of lesbianism (including self-
inflicted ghosting) opens up the possibility of recovery, “a way of conjuring up...what has been denied” and in turn, “the invisible will rematerialize” and the “spirit will become flesh” (8-9). Castle’s work, though primarily concerned with Anglophone literature, provides a useful perspective with which to explore the absencing of the lesbian in literature written in other languages, genres and time periods. The apparitionality of a specifically lesbian body in literature is a particularly illuminating frame through which the body in Marçal, as evidenced by the aforementioned calligramme, for example, remains in the shadows and requires decipherment.

Though the terms “lesbian” and “homosexual” are neologisms (stemming from the “invention” of the notion of the female sexual deviancy on the part of Freud, Havelock Ellis and others), lesbian identity only became possible, “supposedly, after she was ‘produced’ by turn-of-the-century clinicians” (Castle 8). Foucault reminds us that, “We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterized” (43). As for the lesbian as written in European literature, Jeannette Foster “recovers” and analyzes it through her often overlooked bibliographic study Sex Variant Women in Literature (first published in 1956). Despite the fact that many of the representations of love between women were created by men, “love between women has been a motif in European art and culture since classical times” (Castle 9).

Within the realm of Hispanic studies, studies of the presence of homosexual desire in literature are a fairly recent development. Though influential anthologies such as ¿Entiendes?: Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings (1995) attempted to fill a void in which gay bodies in the Spanish-speaking world were neglected, the Spanish body (especially
the lesbian body) remains incompletely examined. Paul Julian Smith’s monograph, published in 1992, *Laws of Desire: Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film* introduced Peninsular queer studies and inspired further studies in the United States and Great Britain. The dichotomy of feminism versus homosexual desire/bodies is a fairly recent trend in Hispanic studies; the two are not necessarily as intimately tied as they are in North American criticism.

Though Josep-Anton Fernàndez was one of the first to examine literary representations of the homosexual body within the context of Catalonia, he focused primarily on the male body. *El gai saber* (2000), edited by Fernàndez, attempts to offer a more thorough view of Catalan homosexualities. In *La salida del armario: Lecturas desde la otra acera* (2005), Inmaculada Pertusa Seva explored homosexuality in the works of female writers exclusively. (Her title presents an obvious echo of Sedgwick’s seminal *Epistemology of the Closet* [first published in 1990], an important influence on Marçal in its own right). She does not incorporate the complex questions of nation and language, as Fernàndez touches upon in his work. *Ellas y nosotras: Estudios lesbianos sobre literatura escrita en castellano* (2009) compiles a series of essays on twentieth- and twenty-first-century literature written in Castilian and highlights “la necesidad de hablar de aquella escritura que nombra el deseo lesbiano, que lo hace simbólico y visible, sin entrar en cuestiones identitarias que limiten la potencia de ese deseo” (10).

Brad Epps, in an essay on a work by Carme Riera (one of few to discuss the lesbian body in the ¿Entiendes? volume) poses a number of questions particularly relevant to the current study of Marçal in that linguistic exile and what he terms “virtuality” are key in seeing, making present, lesbianism in Riera’s story. In Epps’
terms, “virtuality,” though “productive,” represents a type of failure in the inherent risk that “literary lesbianism” will remain “only and forever an idea” (330). On the other hand, Castle notes that

within the very imagery of negativity lies the possibility of recovery – a way of conjuring up, or bringing back into view, that which has been denied. Take the metaphor far enough, and the invisible will materialize; the spirit will become flesh. (7-8)

These affirmations of productive possibility contribute to an interpretive framework for analyzing twentieth-century literary portrayals of lesbian desire as they embrace possibility and combat erasure.


Questions of female corporality and authorial influence serve as a point of departure for the poet in her early publications. *Sal oberta* and *Terra de mai*, preceded by *Cau de llunes* and *Bruixa de dol*, are often classified by critics as her “early” work (Fernàndez, for example published a study of three of the works (he does not include *Sal oberta* in his discussion and identified them as indicative of the early stages of Marçal’s “poetic subversion”) and are the first works of Marçal’s (as well as the first in Catalan) to explicitly deal with the lesbian body. *Terra de mai*, more explicitly erotic than *Sal oberta*, maintains some of the crucial questions highlighted in her earlier works, including exclusionary archetypal symbols and poetic structure. Although the collections celebrate and highlight the poet’s feminism and preoccupation with Catalan as well as global
issues, they are not independent of masculine, patriarchal influence and the consequent questioning of the presence/absence of the female body.

Her poetry creates what may be considered a poetry of encounter, echoing one of North American poet Lyn Hejinian’s numerous descriptions of language writing. *Cau de llunes*, *Bruixa de dol* and *Terra de mai* portray a border, a transition, one much aligned with the political transition experienced in Spain upon the death of Franco. “Traduït d’Alceu” (*Cau de llunes* 33), for example, explicitly rejoices in the death of the dictator; the poem exclaims, “És ara quan ens cal escampar el vi i empillocar-nos fins que ens fugí el seny, que el tirà és mort!” and alludes to the turbulent political atmosphere of the time. The poetic border framed by these works is not one in which poetry is relegated to the margins, but rather illuminates “discontinuities, incongruities, displacements, possession” and is occupied by “ever-shifting images, involving objects and events constantly in need of redefinition and even literal renaming, and viewed against a constantly changing background” (Hejinian 327). The poem immediately preceding “Traduït d’Alceu,” “Maledicció amb estrella,” alludes to the brutality of the regime of Augusto Pinochet and is signed “Santiago de Xile, 11 setembre de 1974” (*Cau* 32), viewing the dictatorship of the “tyrant” (Franco) against that of Pinochet. The pastiche-d effect of aligning the two poems (and their contexts) creates a space of “incongruities” that highlight the political activism and universal consciousness of the poet and her simultaneous inhabiting of patriarchal literary traditions.

The notion of a border embodies a dynamism that lends itself to the political, social and personal contexts of the decades of the 1970s and 1980s in Spain and Catalonia. During this time, female and homosexual bodies were criminalized,
minoritized and oppressed. Any non-heterosexual act was criminalized, women were subordinate to men on almost every level; often subjected to rape, and abuse was overlooked and at times encouraged. Sexual difference was especially visible during this time and Marçal’s political views stemmed from what she observed as a young woman of the Franco regime and its effects; in Marçal’s case, the personal was the political.

Judith Butler’s writing on difference serves as an effective point of departure from which Marçal’s personal and political poetry may be read. Regarding sexual difference, Butler suggested that “it is important to resist that theoretical gesture of pathos in which exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification.” Instead, the “task is to refigure this necessary “outside” as a future horizon” (*BTM* 52-53). Central to Butler’s observations is the preservation of the outside, the site where discourse meets its limits, where the opacity of what is not included in a given regime of truth acts as a disruptive site of linguistic impropriety and unrepresentability, illuminating the violent and contingent *boundaries* of that normative regime precisely through the inability of that regime to represent that which might pose a fundamental threat to its continuity. (*BTM* 53: emphasis mine).

Through publishing a collection amidst *la transición*, citing some of the most canonical literary figures and expressing herself in Catalan (a language only recently deemed legal for publication), *Cau de llunes* makes readable the bodies that have been excluded from discourse. These bodies were often relegated to darkness that was as literary (censorship) as it was metaphorical. The inability of the regime to represent the excluded bodies in question call to light the complexities of her rebellious choice to
publish in Catalan, a language at once subversive and patriarchal. The *divisa* of the text, “Al atzar agraeixo tres dons: haver nascut dona, de classe baixa i nació oprimida. I el tèrbel atzur de ser tres voltes rebel” (15), evidences her own consciousness of the context of her work. This re-articulation constitutes a re-writing of Tales de Mileto’s (Thales of Miletus) biblical *divisa* and also functions as a stamp or impress (see Chapter 2 for discussion of the *ekmageion*). Joan Brossa’s introductory sestina written in honor of the publication of Marçal’s first collection “Sextina a Maria Mercè Marçal en la publicació del seu primer llibre” (9-10), serves a similar impressionistic function. Written by one of Catalonia’s most celebrated male poets on the winter solstice (“Solstici d’hivern de 1976” [10]) it alludes to the transitional nature of the political and poetic represented by Marçal’s poetry and the stark contrast of the new poetic, social and historical “life” with the nation’s recent past.

Drawing from the writings of Eve Sedgwick and Judith Butler on gender and “queer performativity,” Marçal’s early poetry may be explored in terms of performative acts, “forms of authoritative speech…statements that, in the uttering, also perform a certain action and exercise a binding power” (*BTM* 225). Marçal’s consistent citation (direct and indirect) of canonical voices highlights her preoccupation with the questions of authorship and authority. Her personal history as an activist makes this connection particularly relevant to notions of minoritized populations (specifically women and homosexuals) and the canonical “place” of their art. Sedgwick writes on the feminist challenge to the “master-canon” and cites its most important effect as challenging its conceptual anonymity:
The most notorious instance…on the one hand [has confronted] the master-canon with alternative canons of women’s literature, and on the other hand reading rebelliously within the master-canon, has not only somewhat rearranged the table of contents for the master-canon but more important, given it a title. *(EC 50)*

The feminist process of “canon-naming” *(EC 50)* has the effect of defining the canon as one of mastery, “men’s mastery over, and over against, women” *(50)*. Marçal’s “canon naming” creates a structure within which she may thrive and write from the shadows.

The power (or “will”) of a judge for example, is created precisely through the citation of the law *(BTM 225)*. Reminding the reader that “reiterations are never simply replicas of the same,” Butler determines that the provisional success of a performatively exists “because that action echoes prior actions, and *accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices*” *(226-27: original emphasis)*. The success of Marçal’s feminine bodies in her early works may be considered “provisional” when explored through the framework provided by Butler in her studies of the queering of heterosexual (dominant, phallogocentric) norms. Butler’s scheme posits that femininity, for example, is “not the product of a choice, but the forcible citation of a norm”; in other words, the “citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a ‘one,’ to become viable as a ‘one,’ where subject formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms” *(BTM 232)*. When Marçal implicates her poetic voice within exclusionary canonical tradition in her early poetry, she identifies the injustices of that exclusion. Performativity describes this relation of being implicated in that which one opposes, this turning of power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation
that is not a “pure” opposition, “transcendence” of contemporary relations of power, but a
difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure. (*BTM* 241)

*Cau de llunes* is particularly illustrative of Marçal’s questioning of authorial influence, through turning it against itself. Stemming from the title and from the prevalence of the symbol in the Spanish contemporary poetic consciousness of the time, the moon is the most explicit reflection of Marçal’s efforts. As an archetype, the moon embodies the mirror problematic central to psychoanalysis’ influence over phallogocentric understandings of woman’s existence. Consisting of the rational sun’s reflection, the moon necessitates other light, origins external to itself. The “atzur” of the collection’s *divisa* (a shade with the symbolic property of making darkness visible [Cirlot 1997], the often alluded to binary of public and private throughout the work and a constant *pastiche* of overt and implicit poets and artists play with the notion and properties of the archetypal moon.

The poetic influences cited by Marçal are masculine, the majority pertaining to the literary canon. (The case of García Lorca may be considered an exception, as he was a marginalized figure, though by the time of his assassination, he had already been canonized to a certain extent.) The referenced poets are the only named influences in the text and the very explicit, almost excessive referencing of male authority serves to obscure the female and paradoxically emphasize, even highlight her silencing. Further, the appropriation (or “miming” as Butler calls it) can expose the masculine’s claim to originality as suspect. Insofar as the masculine in founded here through a prohibition which outlaws the spectre of a lesbian resemblance, that masculinist institution – and the
phallogocentric homophobia it encodes – is not an origin, but only the effect of that very prohibition, fundamentally dependent on that which it must exclude. (52)

As I concluded in Chapter 3, Marçal depicts her female influences by directly contrasting her silences with the explicit naming of the canonical voices paradoxically important to her own development as a poet. The more implicit, feminine influences remain in the shadows, they are sheltered within the cave and are able to offer their own light to each other. Luce Irigaray, in her writing on Plato’s cave, simultaneously explores the theme of the cave and usurps Plato’s original writings. Butler describes it as the “radical citational practice” of Irigaray, “the catachrestic usurpation of the “proper” for fully improper purposes,” taking “on a language that effectively cannot belong to her, only to call into question the exclusionary rules of proprietariness that govern the use of that discourse” (BTM 37-38).

The witches of Bruixa de dol, mourning the absence of their reflections in masculine lovers and the moon, struggle with phallogocentric definitions of femininity. The witches represent the fragility of feminine identity and a painful history of oppression and suffering (Fernández 206). Victimized largely because of their femininity and associations with female-female traditions and practices (midwifery, for example: see Rich 1977), witches represent an important, unnamed continuum of female historical victims. Defined as witches by their oppressors, their identity as such remains in constant contrast with patriarchal injustice. Implicitly relevant to the lesbian discourse that later enters Marçal’s corpus, witches, in addition to fostering a sisterhood or continuum that evades phallogocentric genealogical trees, are often associated with natural forces and “could be counted on to add an invidious aura of diabolism to any scene of female-female
desire” (Castle 62). Early in her poetic career, then, Marçal begins to appropriate a common lesbian literary trope. Further, the element of paganism commonly associated with witches contrasts directly with the fascist preoccupation with Christianity and Catholicism so crucial to Franco’s oppression of women, homosexuals, non-Castilian speakers and other minorities.

The poet includes a number subtle references to global women’s issues and movements in this collection. She also makes note of the popular culture passed to her by her mother’s side of the family. The feminine in this work occupies an in-between, silenced space but does not consist of a void; their voices are connected, proximate; they are also anonymous but pluralized. Like the portrayal of lesbian voices in other works, 
Bruixa celebrates “unity in multiplicity, plentitude through diversity, and totality despite disparity” (Ostrovsky 73). Like Irigaray, the poet maintains that women “remain elsewhere” (This Sex 76). In her attempt to “recover the place of her exploitation by discourse,” Marçal has the feminine voices so crucial to her development as a poet and activist inhabit an affirmative in-between space that fosters multiplicity, polyvocality and proximity. The in-between space, understood here in terms of Irigaray’s “elsewhere,” highlights the masculine, patriarchal discourse; Marçal simultaneously highlights this discourse in order to suggest what haunts the shadows. 
Bruixa de dol, Sal oberta and Terra de mai are the most fruitful examples of the poet inhabiting traditional patriarchal poetic forms in order to convey a uniquely feminine message. The sonnets of Bruixa and Sal oberta and the sestinas of Terra de mai provide a complex structure within which the poet portrays erotic corporealities. Temporality is also problematized as she writes of her
most current present in a medieval poetic form, bringing a stifling poetic form into the present, and translating love between women into the twelfth century.

The poet creates an encounter, a meeting, a border space. When Lyn Hejinian appropriated Adorno’s pronouncement in an essay entitled “Barbarism,” she was mindful not only of what the atrocities of Auschwitz represent, but what they fail to represent (320). She interprets the Adorno’s statement as a challenge, focusing on the concept’s origins, proclaiming that poetry must be barbarous after Auschwitz, it must be foreign; “the poet must assume a barbarian position…occupying (and being occupied by) foreignness – by the barbarism of strangeness” (326). Like the language poetry described by Hejinian, Marçal’s has the capacity to serve as a poetic border, not simply an edge or fringe, but as the middle, the “between.” She creates the border by fostering connections between the named and the unnamed, the historically chronicled and the ignored, traditional form and poetic innovation. Being foreign to a situation provokes a condition of doubt and encounter, “a condition which is simultaneously an impasse and a passage, limbo and transit zone…a meeting place and a realm of confusion…unstable and perpetually incomplete” (327). In Marçal, masculine canonical tradition and innovation come to “meet” in her early poetry. The encounters of this poetry consist of and foster “discontinuities, incongruities, displacements, dispossession” (Hejinian 327).

The border space of these meetings is central to and easily linked with the poetry of 1970s North America, described by Hejinian as “a poetry of encounter.” Poetry of encounter constituted a political contextual “scene” for poetry and forged a close relationship between theory and practice (328-29). Marçal’s repetitive citing of the North American feminist movement as well as her own activism within Spain (including the
development of the publishing house) links movements that otherwise would have remained independent of and strangers to each other. When the poet documents, or names, the masculine poetic influences and aligns them with her creations based just as closely on her own mother’s interests and influence she incorporates these voices into a documented realm and brings the named canon to the realm of the ignored, the silenced. The witches of *Bruixa de dol* embody a collective of active women that remain anonymous in the face of patriarchal oppression and allude to an alternative pagan community of nameless women united in their strengths. “Vuit de març” represents a call for unity, references International Women’s Day (March 8th) and includes a subtle reference to the poet’s last name (through març):

Hereves de les dones
que cremaren ahir
farem un fuguera
amb l’estrall i la por.
Hi acudiran les bruixes
de totes les edats. (*Bruixa* 119)

Naturally, the effectiveness of the encounter, particularly in terms of literary devices and tradition has not been ignored within feminist criticism as it questions the notion of re-appropriation. North American poet Audre Lorde sought in her writings a “world in which we can all flourish” through difference and famously declared that

*the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.* They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring
about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master’s house as their only source of support. (112)

Marçal’s early poetic career does not define the “master’s house” as her only source of support; she overtly highlights the presence of the master’s house while writing what lies in the shadows, it’s ghostly hauntings. What haunts the structure of the “master’s house” inhabits her poetry; the women present in the collection represent nameless influences, non-canonical popular (and personal) voices. The identities of the women represented (including Marçal herself) portray a canonical, patriarchal vision of the feminine. Jill Johnston articulates the struggle of representing women’s voices within masculine discourse when she notes that “identity is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be” (Meese 120: emphasis mine). Marçal uses the language (law) of the father to depict pluralized and personalized experiences and identities.

Unlike Fernàndez and others (Epps 1995, for example), I do not choose to interpret this paradox as failure, but as the first stages of the process of poetic lesbian embodiment.

The poet engages in these first steps of lesbian becoming amid political upheaval, oppression, the beginnings of the women’s movement in Spain, recent linguistic and sexual oppression, etc. As a young woman, poet, Catalan and activist, Marçal struggled with multiple processes of formulating identities; Franco’s Spain facilitated a view of women as inherently inferior, and rampant censorship and numerous other oppressions (linguistic, sexual, etc.) were visible and frequent. The temporal context of the three works in question deals with the simultaneous rigid tradition presented with new liberties, a process of reconstruction for many and of construction for some.
Elizabeth Meese articulates the double movement women writers must make as they break through the encapsulated self in order to defy the received identity and at the same time engage in the process of constructing a self (Meese 120). According to Meese, the struggle is an imperfect one; the woman writer is not in search of new identities, “separations from the discourse within the discourse that proscribes such autonomous definitions of the illusorily autonomous self.” Rather, “she tracks down the tracks,” the silences, the defiance, the destruction (120). These silences, not present because they were never present, are searched for; the woman writer searches for traces of silenced resistance (120). Though “the appropriated woman speaks without a voice of her own, the very act of writing, of speech, signals her defiance and requires that she transgress or (un)cross the double-cross of difference as constituted by phallocentrism” (120).

Marçal’s early work uncrosses the double-cross and signals the beginning of a journey, an activist, poetic and personal quest to find and appropriate language and discourse in such a way that the silenced, ignored, oppressed and hidden may be expressed and ultimately read.

Monique Wittig famously claimed that the writer “has only two choices – either to reproduce existing forms or to create new ones. There is no other” (70). Understanding the infiltration of old forms as a subversive tactic, one that will eventually work as a mine that “will sap and blast out the ground where it was planted,” Wittig describes the woman writer’s desire to destroy the structure she so artfully infiltrates so that the innovation and expression hidden within may emerge.

Within feminist criticism, Wittig’s Trojan Horse has been critiqued as essentialist and a “form of reductivism...that provides ideological answers to serious conceptual
questions (Braidotti, *PD* 246). In his critique of three of the works in question so far in this chapter, Fernàndez argues that from Marçal’s appropriation of the psychoanalytic mirror (particularly in *Terra de mai*) emerges a risk that results in the poet becoming trapped in her own game of reflections:

va usar la repetició per revelar la incapacitat de la tradició heretada de constituir-se com a idèntica a ella mateixa. Però la repetició depèn d’un “jo” de repeteix, un “jo” que al seu torn depèn de la seva pròpia repetició per existir com a tal…al final…Marçal torna a ser presonera del mirall. (“Subversió” 214)

In light of Fernàndez’s use of the word “failure” and feminist criticism’s preoccupation with risk in general, I propose that the so-called traps and fallings portrayed by Marçal in her early work do not constitute a “failed” attempt at writing the feminine, but a problematizing of methods through creating encounters, borders, and facilitating a poetic crossroads. These methods, maps, problematizations both implicate and exclude; Butler’s analysis suggests that an economy of difference is in order in which the matrices, the crossroads at which various identifications are formed and displaced, force a reworking of that logic of non-contradiction by which one identification is always and only purchased at the expense of another…It will be a matter of tracing the ways in which identification is implicated in what it excludes, and to follow the lines of that implication for the map of future community that it might yield. (118-19)

Marçal’s subtle poetic preoccupation with the crossroads of identities presents her readers with a nod to futurity, optimism and tools with which to better understand the possibilities in representing the body.
Flesh, Bone and Blood:
*Terra de mai, Sal oberta, La germana, l’estrangera* and *Desglaç*

In addition to highlighting the tradition subverted by the poet, *Terra de mai* portrays a provocative beginning of Marçal’s writing of the lesbian body. In this work, the body is explicitly lesbian and decidedly fluid. Instead of inhabiting a void created by the rigid tradition of the sestina, this body is affirmed through the poet’s notion of proximity. The collection is a “border work” in that Marçal maintains the tactics employed in *Bruixa de dol* and *Cau de llunes* while presenting an explicit lesbian embodiment that emerges within and despite phallogocentric poetics. *Terra de mai* reveals the masculine character of poetic discourse and fosters the creation of a corporeality specific to Marçal and her twentieth century re-appropriation of the troubador poetic tradition.

Luce Irigaray posits a similar feminine embodiment that stems from difference in every sense of the concept. Difference, according to Irigaray, lies between and within the sexes, between and within women. She does not propose a women-centered counter-philosophy, an inverted exclusionary gynocentrism (à la Mary Daly), but the possibility for feminine difference to become enacted. She calls for the possibility of *enacting* difference and simultaneously notes the need to redefine heterosexual ethics, in Braidotti’s terms, “a new recognition of the equal worth of the two sexes on the symbolic plane” (*PD* 261).

Braidotti’s philosophical treatment of Irigaray illuminates a number of questions crucial to both philosophers and useful in understanding Marçal’s poetic trajectory. I refer to Braidotti not only in light of her insightful work on many philosophers most
relevant to feminist criticism, but to highlight some of her own relevant theories that prove themselves to be particularly relevant to an analysis of Marçal and to incorporate her not merely as a critic but as a pertinent philosopher in her own right. Irigaray seeks to “nourish and develop what is most innovative and subversive in women’s thought, while avoiding the classic traps awaiting the feminine: mimetism, dependency, denegation, hysteria, aporia” (PD 249). Braidotti articulates the questions most central to Irigaray’s project:

How can we speak, think and create, within structures that are misogynist and seem to feed off the exclusion and appropriation of the feminine? How can one be a conceptual thinker and not be contaminated by the ‘femino-phobic’ nature of theoretical thought? How can women repossess and recover the positivity of the feminine? (PD 249)

Irigaray writes in what Braidotti refers to as a “double movement” that merges “denunciation and creation” in order to reveal the masculine character of discourse while simultaneously unveiling a new female/feminist subject (PD 249). She critiques masculine discourses (including psychoanalysis) from within and treats them as weapons to be used against themselves as opposed to hostile territories. She affirms her own expertise and lucidity and reveals new possibilities for these discourses, and herself as philosopher for the new feminist subject.

Irigaray’s new female/feminist subject is presented in opposition to the void (the “nothingness of the female sex”), the dark value assigned to women by psychoanalysis. She posits that women’s exclusion from the economy of the logos is due to their identity as excess, what cannot be placed within the structures of phallogocentric discourse; the
female subject “resubmits” herself, “so as to make ‘visible’, by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language. It also means ‘to unveil’ the fact that, if women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply reabsorbed into this function. They also remain elsewhere” (This Sex 76). The question, then, that remains, is how to negotiate a theorizing and presencing of the body within a space of negation and nothingness.

The issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the subject or the object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and a meaning that are excessively univocal. Which presupposes that women do not aspire simply to be men’s equals in knowledge. (This Sex 78)

*Terra de mai* “jams the machinery” of canonical poetic convention; Marçal inhabits tradition in order to subvert its canonical exclusions. She accepts phallogocentric terms in order to defy them and speaks from the very heart of masculine discourse. The fact that the feminine “resides elsewhere” in the historical *sestina* provides not darkness and obscurity, but possibility for the poet; she chooses to shine a light on the “elsewhere” of lesbian corporality.

The corporal proximity portrayed in *Terra de mai* depends much on the act of communicating, speaking and touching, namely the mouth, genitalia and fluids. Irigaray’s treatment of the female lips conveys the notion of proximity crucial to her understanding of sexual difference. The lips of women’s sex touch each other and are in constant movement and like Marçal’s portrayal, are instruments of orality on a double(d)/dual level. The philosopher portrays a complex game of doubling and specularity that
positions the body (specifically its inner workings, its interior, its secretions, that which is reflected in the speculum) as the source of poetic creation. Critiques of reflection in Marçal (Fernàndez 2004, for example) choose to focus on the mirror, whereas the speculum seems a more adequate source of (in)sight. Focusing on touch (the tactile) and corporal proximity displaces the gaze so central to phallogocentric discourse and psychoanalytic exclusions of the female.

Orality, through bodily organs is as central to Terra de mai as it is to poetry itself. Marçal, like Irigaray, inscribes the body in poetry and poetry in corporality. The very nature of the sestina depends on its sounds, as troubadouresque poetry “was created to be sung by the jongleur” and the troubador was, in fact, “both a poet and a musician” (Diaz Vicedo 43). Kaminsky, in writing on Sylvia Molloy, notes that spoken texts cause harm and written texts are healing, but in the end, writing and speech converge in the desire for communication (243). In Marçal, this desire for communication is realized. This relation extends to language itself: in Irigaray sexual difference as manifested in the message, in Marçal’s case extending the reach of poetic female embodiment.

In multiple texts, Marçal has likened poetry to an ordering of chaos, a skeleton to her “medusa.” Writing as “una activitat vertebradora” (“Qui soc i per que escric” 21) and poetry as “el meu esquelet intern, la meva manera de dir-me a mi mateixa, d’ordenar provisionalment amb la paraula el caos que l’imprevist desencadena” (“Qui soc” 21) are recurrent in her poetry and prose. She understands poetry in general as a corporally generated process and her poetry as specific to her body. The symbol of the medusa is further complicated within the context of the Castilian and Catalan languages, understood both as a proper name, Medusa, “dona monstre, el femení indomenyat, salvatge i
perillós…” (“Més enllà” 164) and *medusa*, or jellyfish, a symbolically pure, unstructured, sea-dwelling flesh in constant movement. The concept works as a singular, notoriously corporal and dangerous mythical figure and anonymous plurality. In *Desglaç*, Marçal borrows the image of a “medusa dessossada” from Sylvia Plath, drawing a contrast between two versions of the same concept, seemingly acknowledging the ambiguity of the word within her own corpus.

The medusa immediately conjures her laugh (laughs that “exude from all our mouths” [Cixous 1975]), *écriture féminine*, woman’s *jouissance*, “what is in excess of phallic logic: the subversive, all-transcending force that displaces the binary oppositions of Western thought” (Braidotti *PD* 240). Although carrying her own contradictions (namely, the question of the [im]possibility of expression in an undetermined, unnamed, undiscovered language), Cixous makes a point particularly relevant to writing the lesbian/feminine body in general and to Marçal’s emerging lesbian body in particular. In *Coming to Writing*, the philosopher states that “There must be an attentiveness to…beings who are so close, so feminine-familiar that they are forgotten, that is just as powerfully thoughtful, alert and open, if there is to come a time that the women who have always been there will finally appear” (qtd. in Braidotti *PD* 241). The sestinas as written by Marçal portray illuminated shadows, visible and readable crevices (a concept favored by the poet throughout her career) where bodies that at once were hidden are now central and readable. Poetic convention, familiar in its own right, offers skeletal form to pure flesh: flesh that is not contained but limitless, that overflows the limits of canonical poetry.
In *Le corps lesbiène*, Wittig understands writing as flesh in a similar vein. The work deals with a body fragmented: a body that is in itself text within text that gives form to the lesbian body. Wittig shines a light on the feminine corporal interiors to which Irigaray alluded. At times violent and murderous, the flesh embodied in Wittig’s work privileges the position of lesbian as a radicalized third pole. Although problematic in its utopic potential, Wittig’s work illuminates another possibility for the text as flesh not absent in Marçal’s poetry: the possibility of pain, violence, and fragmentation. Pain is alluded to (albeit not corporally) in *Terra de mai* as the utopia is never realized but emerges with violent potential in *Sal oberta* and *La germana, l’estrangera*.

The Wounded Body: Poetry, Maternity and the Abject

As the (utopic/dystopic) lesbian body is affirmed as flesh in *Terra de mai*, painful possibilities emerge in *La germana, l’estrangera* and *Sal oberta*. These works treat corporality in terms of plurality, hostility and communication and are Marçal’s first to deal with pregnancy and motherhood. Composed concurrently (*Sal oberta* in 1982 and *La germana, l’estrangera* between 1981 and 1984), they reflect the poet’s contemplations of motherhood and articulate her philosophical and corporal concerns.

The body in these works is one capable of being wounded, evoking the dialectical relationship between secretion and congealment, containment and excess. The *divisa* of *Sal oberta*, for example, refers to the pouring of salt on a wound and equates poetry and language with the body. Marçal herself has spoken of the link between poetry and the wound: “com un intent segurament il lusori de no tancar-la” (Muñoz 175). She understands poetry as a corporal act, as a process of “speaking through blood” (“parlar a
traves de la sang”) (175). Poetry therefore carries with it the potential to speak from and of a multiplicity of corporal surfaces; it provides an opening that exposes interior to exterior and exterior to interior; it is a writing of open convergence. Poetry itself carries with it a similar integration of speech and writing. For Marçal, it emerges through bodily secretions, through excess: in Terra de mai, erotic secretions: in the works currently discussed, referring to those emerging from wounded, exposed flesh. Like Wittig’s writing, in which terms designating secretions and excretions predominate, Marçal’s exposes “the body’s outer and inner surface, with its organs and substances; the body’s reactions and expressions, movements and actions; the body’s encounters with another (female) body; and the various parts of this body…” (Ostrovsky 72). Her poetry portrays poetic text as a reassembly of fragments that reconstitutes and affirms the lesbian body as a site of inscription.

A particularly relevant illustration of the close, shared relationship between language, poetry and the body in Marçal is the notion of naming. The name in Marçal’s poetry is crucial to her identity as poetic voice and integral to her treatment of the corporality of pregnancy and childbirth. Wittig traces equally corporal connections in her work, which focuses as much on proper names as on those of body parts. In Les Guerilleres and L’Opoponax the (proper) names of women form a mosaic of places and time periods and a unified collectivity. While proper names are absent in Le corps lesbienne, the author’s naming of parts of the lesbian body serve a similar function; according to Ostrovsky, the list serves to emphasize unity in multiplicity, plentitude through diversity, and totality despite disparity” (73). Wittig offers a list of “names” that affirm the existence of the whole they represent: “And just as the use of names
emphasized the act of naming as a form of creation, the use of terms relating to the female body is tantamount to the creation of that body…what is…affirmed is the power of the word for giving life” (Ostrovsky 73).

According to Irigaray, when a child is named, it replaces “the most irreducible mark of birth: the navel” (Whitford 39). She understands the navel as the “most irreducible trace of identity: the scar left when the cord was cut” and highlights the corporality of naming so relevant to Marçal (39). Her references to naming refer to those imposed by masculine authority, names that designate possession (in the case of surnames for example) and take control from the mother. She argues that by denying the mother her generative power and by wanting to be the sole creator, the Father, according to our culture, superimposes upon the archaic world of the flesh a universe of language \([\text{langue}]\) and symbols which cannot take root in it except as in the form of that which makes a hole in the bellies of women and in the site of their identity. (Whitford 41)

The “scar” of language is equated with the corporal, birth-related scar, a sign of the role of woman’s body in creation and the violation of that body through patriarchal language.

The body as source of generative power first emerges in Marçal’s writings of pregnancy and childbirth. The birth and naming of her daughter, Heura, occupies a central space of \(\text{Sal oberta}\) and \(\text{La germana, l’estrangera}\). In the moment of Heura’s transition from \(\text{heura, “ivy,”}\) to “Heura” as proper name, her birth, Marçal employs once again the \(\text{cloS/So\text{lc}}\) dialectic: openness, vulnerability, blood, interior/exterior, loss/separation, violent detachment/fragmentation as the newly born infant emerges from the mothers’ body. This moment of openness of the female body contrasted with the
emergent female infant’s body affirms the generative powers of the poetic voice as mother. Irigaray responds to the metaphor of the open female body, in which in the face of psychoanalysis, “the openness of the mother [ouverture de la mere], appear to be threats of contagion, contamination, engulfment in illness, madness and death” (Whitford 40). Marçal re-appropriates the threat of contagion, opens the wound and pours salt on it, maintaining the openness, exposing the raw flesh, preserving corporality, facilitating poetic expression. She welcomes the contamination so feared by psychoanalysis and contamination in the form of dialogue; if the scar is silence (Muñoz 176), the open wound/body is communication.

Most crucial to the notion of corporal openness and dialogue is the female-female nature of this communication. Irigaray draws a striking parallel between motherhood and female-female homosexuality using her critique of psychoanalysis as a point of departure: “it is important to remember that women always stand in an archaic and primal relationship with…homosexuality” (Whitford 44). She argues not for a recognition of a sexually ambiguous relation between mother and daughter, daughter and mother, but for recognition of the corporal relevance of homosexuality to feminist discourse. It is a relationship rooted in birth and in familial ties, motherhood and sisterhood, that implicates complex knowledge of a multiplicity (or at least a duality) of female bodies. In the case of Marçal, a poetic parallel is created.

That there is a hidden desire (not necessarily sexual desire, but simply one based on proximity) within the family structure also calls to light the genealogical; according to Irigaray women must assert their genealogy “in order to not be accomplices in the murder of the mother” (Whitford 44). This notion extends then not only to motherhood, but to
daughterhood and sisterhood. The cloS/Solc dichotomy is exercised again in that the woman writer must guarantee her emergence from silence by placing herself within the limits of genealogical lines: “Let us try to situate ourselves within this female genealogy so as to conquer and keep our identity” (Whitford 44).

Irigaray speaks of re-appropriating the “maternal dimension” in order to affirm that women “engender something other than children: love, desire, language, art, the social, the political…” (Whitford 43). She proclaims that the mother, “within us and between us,” must be given the “right to pleasure, to jouissance, to passion…to speech…to cries and anger” (43). It is necessary to guard these maternal bodies while facilitating their emergence from silence and subjugation; women must remain “guardians of the flesh” (Whitford 43). This process is articulated by Marçal through her treatment of childbirth and motherhood. She appears to be speaking not only on behalf of the newly born female, but of the lesbian subject. There is more to what Irigaray calls the “maternal dimension.” She, like Marçal, poses a re-appropriation of motherhood in terms of desire and rejects the archetype of “desireless mother” (Whitford 43). Clytemnestra, adultress, mother of Electra and murderer of Agamemnon, does not obey the virgin-mother archetype. She remains “a passionate lover” and presents love and desire as the antithesis of archetypal motherhood (Whitford 36). She embodies the open wound and mutual “contagions” so feared by psychoanalysis and the desire annihilated by the law of the father.

We must also find, find anew, invent the words, the sentences that speak the most archaic and most contemporary relationship with the body of the mother, with our bodies, the sentences that translate the bond between her body, ours, and that of
our daughters. We have to discover a language \([\text{langage}]\) which does not replace the bodily encounter, as paternal language \([\text{langue}]\) attempts to do, but which can go along with it, words which do not bar the corporeal, but which speak corporeal. (43)

Marçal seeks to maintain the search for words that “speak corporeal” through pouring salt on an open wound and depicting the bonds and struggles unique to female corporality in terms of maternal proximity.

The poet highlights the generative and regenerative powers of the maternal and the lesbian and highlights the notion of the wounding of the body and its subsequent scabbing. Writing of Sylvia Molloy, Amy Kaminsky likens verbal representation to the (re)generation of skin. Once a scab is encrusted, “the text made material,” the writer departs, “both leaving the text behind and taking it with her” (241). The text as secretion gives form to the body and maintains the possibility not only of interior/exterior simultaneity, but of constant generation and regeneration. At the time of the publication of *Sal oberta* and *La germana, l’estrangerera*, Marçal expressed fear of “fossilization” of her poetic archetypes and tropes. This fear of congealment may be interpreted as one rooted in and specific to the lesbian body.

*Desglaç* includes poems composed between 1984 and 1988 and represents a “painful but open” (“dolorosa però oberta”) process initiated towards the end of the writing of *La germana, l’estrangerera*. The poet herself describes the collection in terms of disintegration and fluidity (“La desintegració apparent és també la possibilitat de fluir”) (*Llengua abolida* 9). She notes that during the “hour of thawing” (“l’hora del desglaç”), “Hi ha una mort. Desapareix la carcassa que immobilitza, però que també sustenta, el
solid dóna pas al líquid, els contorns es fonen” (9). She recalls once again the corporal dialectic of skeleton and flesh, fluid and solid, interior and exterior in a collection that begins as elegy and evolves into a celebration/affirmation of lesbian desire. The “hour of thawing” embodies a conflicting transition, the loss of an immobilizing yet stabilizing force and the struggle to maintain corporal excess and fluidity. For Marçal, writing is an attempt to give form to the formless (9). The poet notes that, “el Desglaç consisteix en re-nàixer, encara una volta, en l’embolcall líquid de l’esglai” and affirms the notion of rebirth in light of death (Llengua abolida 10). The works comprising Desglaç, “Daddy,” “Ombra de presa” and “Contraban de llum,” portray the death of a father, the rebirth of a poetic voice and the birth of a new era of lesbian desire; the collection embodies process, viscosity and transition.

The Transitional Body

Marçal continues the preoccupation with fluidity initiated in her earlier works, particularly with regard to childbirth and the “openness” of the female body. As an elegy to her father, “Daddy” portrays a monolithic figure that exists in direct contrast to the thawing reflected in the title of the collection, an earthly process that seeps, oozes and invades. Elizabeth Grosz, following Irigaray, points out that the patriarchal “disquiet” regarding the fluid and the viscous involves the “unrepresentability of fluids within prevailing philosophical models of ontology, their implicit association with femininity, with maternity, with the corporeal” (VB 195). These elements are subordinate to the “self-identical, the one, the unified, the solid” (195). A vision of female sexuality as marginal and indeterminate renders it in terms of negative connotations associated with
the viscous: disturbing, sticky, and unclean (195). Mary Douglas, author of *Purity and Danger* (first published in 1966) along with Julia Kristeva (in *Powers of Horror*) deem the fluid a “borderline state” that disrupts solidity. The marginal, according to both authors, risks possible pollution or contamination and is “always located as a site of danger and vulnerability” (195). Marçal exploits and re-appropriates this apparent vulnerability in terms of a daughter’s emergent lesbianism faced with the loss of her father.

The elegiac poetic voice describes herself as a shadow of her father: “fantasma lívid que te’m dessagnes entre les mans de l’ombra” (*Desglaç* 23). Her hands, skeletal, lacking in flesh and blood, pertain to a body that faithfully (like a loyal dog, “gos fidel”) follows his invisible footprints. As a shadow without shadow (“ombra sense ombra”), the poetic voice is faced with the loss of all that is solid and unified, that which casts long shadows and defines her as “other.” The body of this obedient daughter is buried and frozen by an assertive and hopeful poetic voice who calls for a new dawn: “Que el dia neixi, nu, del desglaç” (26). The poem depicts a frozen moment in time, a climactic period that calls forth the rising temperatures that induce the earthly process of thawing.

“Desglaç,” or thawing, is a process that embodies the viscous and facilitates fluidity. As an elemental border-stage, it represents instability and transition. When Mary Douglas described the viscous (with Sartre as a guide) she maintained the feminine as dangerous, impure and repulsive:

> Viscosity repels in its own right, as a primary experience. An infant, plunging its hands into a jar of honey, is instantly involved in contemplating the formal properties of solids or liquids and the essential relation between the subjective
experiencing self and the experienced world. The viscous is a state half-way between solid and liquid. It is like a cross-section in a process of change. It is unstable, but it does not flow. It is soft, yielding and compressible. There is no gliding on its surface. Its stickiness is a trap, it clings like a leech; it attacks the boundary between myself and it. Long columns falling off my fingers suggest my own substance flowing into the pool of stickiness…to touch stickiness is to risk diluting myself into viscosity. Stickiness is clinging, like a too possessive dog or mistress. (39)

Douglas’s analysis portrays viscosity as an invasive, contaminating, sickening stage that threatens boundaries and inhibits movement. Her thoughts lend themselves to a vision of the feminine that restrains, paralyzes and stifles growth and development. Marçal’s viscous preoccupation, through the metaphor of thawing, sheds light not on paralysis, but development and evolution. She combats long-held philosophical fears of feminine interiority and fluidity through a re-appropriation of corporal process.

The fluidity of Desglaç is not without pain; upon the death of her father, the poetic voice struggles with the transition from subjection to his law to her emergence into a “purely” lesbian existence. The collection is a struggle for completion and manifestation of difference. The process as depicted in Marçal rejects the horror experienced by Douglas and Sartre towards the female body and its fluids. Marçal’s are like fluids according to Grosz:

They are engulfing…any separation from them is not a matter of certainty, as it may be in the case of solids. Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a matter of vigilance, never guaranteed. In this sense, they betray a
certain irreducible materiality; they assert the priority of the body over subjectivity; they demonstrate the limits of subjectivity in the body, the irreducible specificity of particular bodies…they level differences while also specifying them. (VB 193-94)

The notion of the wound, central in *Sal oberta* and crucial to understanding the maternal in *La germana, l’estrangera*, continues to be present in *Desglaç*, in less explicit terms. The poem that opens the section entitled “Ombra de presa” begins with a river:

El riu s’escola, com una sang extemporàniament blava.

Pretensiosa ferida del temps!

Jo em trobo, mes aviat, enmig dels arbres que escorten: verd tendre i compassiu d’hospital o d’unguent. Verd luctuos de liquid emniotic que embolcalla un fetus que sofreix, o potser mort.

O entre els gossos que el borden, sense entendre el seu secret –la il lustre bastardia d’alta nissaga que el fa gallejar.

Com ells, sols se abocar-hi l’escreix del ventre I del dolor per rellepar-ho, fos en el corrent,
cercant, inutilment, cremar la set. (43-44)

The river is source of non-congealed, running water, an open wound evoking elegiac notions of sexuality and the need for the mourner’s “willingness to accept not only a detour but a sacrificial change” (Sacks 112). The river, like the section “Ombra de presa,” ushers a new phase of mourning that highlights the corporality (and sexuality) of the poetic voice. As she begins to understand her mourning in terms of her own body, she finds herself amidst the landscape that surrounds and borders the running water, the vulnerable edges of the wound. She is located precisely within the space that embodies the wound and healing, pain and pleasure, fluidity and congealment.

In describing the multiple facets of her intermediary position as a mourner (the repetition of “o” [“or”] reiterates the instability, vulnerability and the need to “flow” with the circumstances of her situation), the poetic voice recognizes the crucial role of language. As Mudrovic observed in his study of Claudio Rodríguez’s elegiac work, if the poetic voice “is to come to terms with the death of the loved one…the substitution of the veil of language is a necessary part of the renunciation of lost desire and the deflection, redirection, and recathexis of desire” (263). Through her repeated allusion to barking dogs, un Possessing of their “secret” language, Marçal employs language as integral to healing the corporal and Symbolic wound.

The poetic voice only knows excess and insatiable thirst. Excess, in linguistic and corporal (fluid) terms, leads the poetic voice on a path (or stream) to an entirely new linguistic, poetic possibilities. As Mudrovic notes, the wound, although painful, provides a path to the Symbolic; this entryway “recapitulates the primary loss of unity” and “advances the reacquisition of the Symbolic (language, poetry)” (272). Mudrovic’s
central argument relies upon an understanding of Rodríguez’s equation of elegy and quest and facilitates a reading of Marçal’s elegy as one in which a new, corporal desire emerges from the poetic work of mourning.

Another poem in the collection, “Cançonetalleu” highlights fluid secretion as naturalized nourishment. The poetic voice asks a solitary bee, “de què fas mel si cap flor no se’t bada?” (58). How to produce a nourishing secretion despite the lack of fertile source/origin? The bee’s dependence on the flower is contrasted with the deafening “bitter wax” produced in the flower’s absence. The poem portrays a relation of interdependence. The section of the collection deals with the struggle to exist independently of the father and all he represents. In breaking free from him, through his death, the poetic voice must now explore how to create independently.

In breaking free from the reign of the father, “el regne del teu nom,” the poetic voice is liberated from the limits of his language yet intimately tied to his name. Upon his death she pronounces that the name that nourishes her being, renounces his own and in turn, (re)originates in her (32). She recognizes the force of the confines of his language and calls for him to untie himself from his name so that hers may be revealed (“Abandona el teu nom fins que jo trobi el meu”) (33). She, ensuring her voice is heard, in turn, makes him listen. Language and body are intimately connected in the poetic voice’s quest for self-discovery.

The intimate, familial link between Sylvia Plath’s elegy and Marçal’s (discussed also in Chapter 3), trace the law of the father(s) in terms of nation and language. Plath famously declares she cannot understand the harsh German of her father as she equates herself with a Jew in the face of his nazism. Although Marçal does not appear to be
equating her own father with Spain’s dictatorship, the echoes serve to reinforce the oppressive, inescapable power of the father’s language and law over the poetic voice. She is forced to inhabit the structure of his language in order to facilitate thawing.

The poetic voice remains as a “medusa desossada” (29). Comprised of pure flesh, she feels the absence of the skeletal, embodied by the lost father: “allò que de mi resta malda per completar-se sense tu, lluny de tu” (29). She seeks corporal and linguistic form/structure in the face of the absence of his law. The body portrayed by the medusa is one of excess, one in which *écriture féminine* problematizes the simultaneous defining of the other without his terms and the struggle to admit the necessity of his terms.

Although much of *Desglaç* reflects the struggle, the poet implicitly offers a solution to the problematic of re-entering the Symbolic. Included in the genealogy of *Desglaç* (in the case of this work, a sisterhood in terms of a common, fascist father) is the life and art of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. The first of two poems that allude to the artist opens with an epigraph in Castilian; “Sobre una pintura de Frida Kahlo” (30). The language of the epigraph, in addition to strengthening the genealogical tie with the artist, enhances the poetic voice’s struggle and highlights the complexity of the father’s linguistic reach. The epigraph highlights one of Catalonia’s central struggles as a nation in the face of Franco’s imposition of Castilian as official language, as language of the father. Marçal abides by the fascist law that made publication in Catalan illegal, reverting to the law of the father.

Inspired by a work of visual art, the poetic voice speaks of invasive, masculine oppression that she needs to exorcise: “Donar-lo a llum em mata, servar-lo em fa morir” (30). The third eye of Kalho’s subject (most likely referring to *Pensando en la muerte*
placed chakra-like on the forehead watches over the poetic voice, “perquè cap culpa no m’exilï d’aquest vell paradís” (30). Marçal appears to be playing with elegiac notions of substitution moving beyond the linguistic connection employed in the Castilian epigraph.

Another poem alludes to Kahlo as a historical figure; the poem is written in homage to the artist (“Homenatge a Frida Kalho”) and alludes to “la columna de pedra que em vertebra” (47). The poet here refers to a body supported and defined by exterior forces and utilizes terms reminiscent of Marçal’s previous descriptions of poetry. When the poetic voice asks, “¿D’on, la força que en guix m’emmotlla, em solda, m’apuntala rígidament, m’encuirassa d’acer? Claus, agulles de cap em fixen la pell morta damunt la carn encesa que no tolera l’aire,” she alludes to learning to thrive within the stifling structure of plaster and pins (47). The notion of a body encased in plaster, held together by pins, flesh supported by suffocating yet necessitated forces, recalls Kahlo’s own biographical circumstances as well as the symbolic relation of Marçal’s poetic ivy and the maternal body.

The last verse of the poem recalls both Kahlo’s art and life experiences. The poetic voice declares she has learned to thrive within the gaps, the crevices, the space between and through the blood that flows far from her: “I a través dels forats sols sé ja viure en la sang que s’esmuny enllà de mi” (47). The structure offered both to Frida and the poetic voice develops as a type of protective covering, an exoskeleton that offers structure and protection.

Desglaç is a collection recognized both as an elegiac work devoted to a particular, albeit metaphorical, father and as a personal quest for lesbian self-expression. Although
the work begins with a focus on the loss of the father, it produces elegiac echoes that weave other women artists including Kahlo, Rosalía de Castro and Sylvia Plath into a textual work of mourning. The poetic voice creates an elegiac genealogy that seeks to embody the artists behind the art, visual and poetic, to whom she is indebted. She questions the limits of elegy and seeks to offer form, structure and protection to the bodies of the women absent from the Symbolic representative of the father. In her more canonical role as a mourner, the poetic voice prevents a “congealing” of her “own impulses” and avoids “the imprisonment of” her “affective energies” (Sacks 22).

Sacks illustrates that “Just as the ancient vegetation rites sought to unlock the frozen or withered energies of nature,” the mourner must “set free the energy locked in grief or rage and to organize its movement in the form of a question that is not merely an expression of ignorance but a voicing of protest’” (22). Marçal exorcises not only the art of Plath and Kahlo, but their bodies; she participates in the elegiac process of weaving and fabricates a text in the place of a void. The poet weaves a burial shroud in the form of an exoskeleton (similar to the exoskeleton portrayed in Kahlo’s art and referenced in Marçal’s poem). She weaves a body from the outside in a way that maintains and facilitates motion in the face of paralyzing fascism and corporal limitations. Marçal’s recuperation of artists such as Plath and Kahlo enable her to partake in an exercise of self-preservation which in turn generates a new “structure” with which the body may be considered.
The Apparitional Body: Renée Vivien and Poetic Excess

The poetic creation of a woven protective covering born of a bodily secretion creates renewable, regenerating scales that give form to the body. Elegiac overtones persist as Marçal continues weaving the dialectic of containment and excess, interior and exterior, presence and absence in *La passió segons Renée Vivien*. The novel portrays another lesbian body, that of British born North American poet Renée Vivien. Vivien serves as a lesbian body reconstituted through poetic verse, narrative, fiction, history and polyphony. In terms of Marçal’s “refiguring” of lesbian embodiment, the work explores the lesbian body and its ghostly manifestations within the context of the life and poetry of Renée Vivien. The novel is a refiguring as contemporary as it is ancient and mythological; it explores the existence of Sappho and the fragmented nature of her poetry. Marçal reconstructs the poetry (and in turn, the corporality) of the Greek poet in light of Renée Vivien and creates an extensive (anti)genealogy of writers and artists, including her own fictional, contemporary (alter-ego), filmmaker Sara T. *La passió segons Renée Vivien* is a multi-faceted, kaleidoscopic vision of the lesbian literary body.

Marçal takes as a starting point the “disembodied muse,” articulated by Wittig as the fragmented lesbian body (a theme seen in other writers such as Sylvia Molloy, Clarisse Lispector and Gloria Anzaldúa), Sappho herself (as well as Sappho’s conceptualization of the woman poet), and Renée Vivien (portrayed fictionally and otherwise, her life blurring boundaries between fiction and biography, life and death). Marçal recuperates Renée Vivien as Sappho’s descendant, foremother to Marçal and contemporary lesbian writers, illuminating what they have in common and illuminating not only how to write the lesbian body, but how to read it. Her project is one that attempts
to “speak the silence” of lesbian embodiment and lesbian poetics; it seeks to give form to a body that has been disembodied, stripped of its organs, “dis-organ-ized.” Camilla Griggers evokes Deleuze and Guattari’s “body without organs” when she declares that the “immediate challenge facing lesbian bodies in postmodernity is how to make a dis-organ-ized body of signs and identities work for a progressive, or even a radical, politics” (130).

Sappho’s plurality is often manifested through examinations of her name. Elaine Marks refers to Sappho’s name, noting, “Sapho, Sappho, Psappha, Psappho, the lesbian from Lesbos. A confusion of facts, a profusion of semantic and phonemic connotations emanate from and surround the name” (356). The numerous portrayals of her name offer as many connotations and possibilities. The names of Renée Vivien, especially as portrayed in La passió, echo the phenomenon of Sappho’s names and contribute to the many facets of the kaleidoscopic narrative that forms her. She appears in the text as Pauline, Pauline Mary Tarn, Renée Vivien, “Pauline, Paule, Paulette,” “Según el día y el matiz” (19). The names reflect Renée as signified (tellings and re-tellings about her by others) and signifier (she re-baptizes herself as Renée Vivien and with one of her lovers, Hélène, publishes under the name Paule Riversdale). The proper name, particularly significant for Derrida, is a mark of ownership on the part of the various voices composing the narrative. As each narrative voice refers to Renée with one of her many names, they compose a polyvocal propriety. They are united in their “ownership” of Renée despite their temporal geographic and linguistic incongruencies.

According to Derrida, every use of a proper name “calls out at once for recognition (translatability) and for singularity and a status of non-appropriation (non-
translatability)” and is therefore structured by this double bind (Roffe 108). The example of Babel, key to Derrida’s thoughts on the proper name (in this case, that of God) and translation, provides a useful illustration of Renée Vivien as excess, what is “beyond” the plurality of names exercised in the text. Roffe explains that in pronouncing his proper name, God imposes an unresolvable aporia;

on the one hand, hear my name and obey my voice…(that is, translate my words into your tongue and obey them); but also…do not understand my proper name, understand that I am beyond…(that is, above all, do not translate me, for I exceed your worldly economy of life). (108)

The paradox of simultaneous recognition and “absolute non-appropriation” structures every use of the proper name and echoes the struggles of representing the literary lesbian.

By understanding, like Derrida, translation in terms of readability in general, embodied by a “’gap’ that no context can ever completely close up” (alterity), we can begin to understand Renée Vivien’s presence within the multiplicity of words used to name her (111). At the same time, it is this multiplicity that provides unity, drawing from Derrida’s concept of traces. As Roffe explains,

For translation, this means we cannot determine the meaning of a word, because this word and hence its meaning are bound up with the multiplicitous traces of other words from which it cannot fundamentally be detached, and thus that it is quite simply an impossible task. Rather than imagining language as a discrete set of signifiers, Derrida’s concept of the trace indicates something like a boundless sea of shifting, fundamentally interrelated, references. (105)
Renée Vivien embodies (and is embodied by) the trace; her transformations (translations, transpositions) are written as her names. The “boundless sea” of shifting references are often repetitions, echoes of themselves (much like Sappho’s multiple names mentioned above by Marks) and similar to the elegiac texts woven by Marçal’s poetic voice.
Conclusions

The writing of Maria-Mercè Marçal, as evidenced in this dissertation, merits in-depth critical study. The poet’s fame, earned by winning numerous literary prizes and honors, the frequent citation of the *divisa* to *Cau de llunes* (among other verses), the translation of her poetry into song by popular songwriters of the late twentieth century, and her premature death at age 45, have led to a somewhat romanticized, sympathetic view of her work in literary criticism that in the very least, generally only references some of her poems or minor aspects of her novel. This dissertation represents the primary stages of an emerging book project that aims to be the first full-length manuscript study (published in English, Castilian or Catalan) of Marçal’s writing in its entirety. Its primary divisions - into archetypal re-workings and poetic structure, studies of place and space, intertextuality, and the body - provide a framework within which the complexities of Marçal’s work as a whole may be presented in an organized manner (perhaps in spite of a tendency to exhibit overlapping themes and commentary, embodying Marçal’s writing in itself) and examine her quest to problematize the “writing” of lesbian desire. From Lacanian and Foucauldian theories of sexuality (predominating in Chapter 1), rhizomatic systems of interrelatedness (most visible in Chapter 3’s intertextual genealogies), eccentricity (most relevant to the study of space in Chapter 2), this dissertation as a whole provides a multi-faceted study that considers questions of nation, language and sexuality in Marçal’s portrayal of an eccentric lesbian subject. Culminating in Chapter 4, “Theorizing the Body,” this dissertation concludes by developing theoretical framework through which the more philosophical elements of her writing may be effectively understood.
The notion of a “queer ecology” is deployed as it considers both practical (social, political, activist) and philosophical explorations of homosexuality. Lesbian desire, for example, may be treated in terms of the dis-location of the lesbian body from social, natural, or even literary spaces and the simultaneous re-situating of lesbian bodies by lesbian authors, poets and essayists (Stein 288). By deeming homosexuality unnatural (drawing “upon the Judeo-Christian belief that certain sexual practices are natural and others are unnatural, even crimes against nature” [Stein 286]), it was deemed unspeakable and therefore unreadable. The element of “non-reproductivity” often employed in homophobic discourse is often re-deployed as excessively natural in the writing of lesbian desire (Stein 287). Reading Marçal, I liken the non-reproductivity of anti-homosexual discourse to non-productivity, to which the poet responds in terms of the potential productivity of her writing. For example, Stein shows that Adrienne Rich combats notions of barrenness with richness and prolific gardens, much like Marçal in her intertextual genealogies and seemingly infinite echoes of writers and artists. As she embeds texts within texts, Marçal creates an operatic “conflation of voices” constantly aspiring towards the limits of…expression, the limits of meaning; the voice is heard under the constant threat of the loss of voice” (Blackmer and Smith 1). The affirmation of lesbian writing is not without risk as Marçal captures

the paradox of a being that is at once captive and absent in discourse, constantly spoken of but of itself inaudible or inexpressible, displayed as spectacle and still unrepresented or unrepresentable, invisible yet constituted as the object and the guarantee of vision; a being whose existence and specificity are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled. (de Lauretis Figures 151)
Emerging theories of “queer ecology” (Gaard 1997, Sandilands and Erickson 2010, Stein 2010), enable the present study to circle back to Marçal’s earliest, most consistent preoccupation – political activism, particularly that which challenges injustices and abuses directed toward women and the LGBTQ communities (or any minoritized group that challenges and therefore poses a risk to heteropatriarchy), many of which permeate political debate today, both in Spain and the United States. Throughout this study, it has been argued that much of Marçal’s feminism was informed by that of the United States, in which political activism was central to concerns of the North American women’s movement and was echoed in poets read and studied by Marçal such as Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde, among others. Though l’écriture féminine and so-called “French feminism” are also detectable and contemplated in her writing, instead of subscribing to one school, Marçal creates a complex network of theories of the body that embrace the interconnectedness and “openness to excess” (Grosz 1995) inherent to queer ecology and her attempt to surpass, subvert and exceed pre-established discursive frameworks (Sandilands and Erickson 37). In line with basic formulations of queer ecology, Marçal presents a literature that “embraces deviation and strangeness,” “sexual pleasure and transgression” and “resistance to heteronormativity” (Sandilands and Erickson 39).

This study has not only shown how Marçal has re-worked archetypes, spatial configurations and intertextual genealogies, but how to begin to learn to read these re-workings and detect the presence of voices that have been deemed unreadable. When Rosi Braidotti articulates some of the strategies necessitated by Marçal’s writings, she affirms the possibility (the “something”) produced by the poet’s contemplations and
captures the binaries of legibility and illegibility, visibility and invisibility, memory and oblivion traversed and subverted by Marçal’s literary, activist and philosophical voices illuminated in this study:

Echoes of silenced insights, of unspoken truths, of untold accounts reverberate in the inner chambers of a feminist’s mind – forcing upon her the realization that something, in feminist discourse, resists direct translation into the language made available by academic propriety. Something of the feminist countermemory is in excess of convention, it is transgressive of canonical knowledge – something…calls for new ways of listening. (NS 208)
Notes

Chapter 1
Moon, Witches, Salt and Blood: Archetypes and Poetic Form

1. She made this connection explicit in an interview with Mercè Ibarz (Sota el signe 14).

2. In her study of Marçal, Diaz Vicedo makes note of the “fluid language” of “Solstici” but limits her discussion to the natural elements of the poem.

Chapter 2
Spatial Resonances: Architecture, Urbanism and Space

1. Postcolonial studies evidence spatial focus through concepts such as Homi Bhabha’s “third space,” which he describes in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford as a space that “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives…” (211).

2. Marçal has noted that all of the poetic influences cited in the work are masculine, marking the persisting vulnerability felt by the poetic “moons” (“Llengua abolida” 193).

3. Deleuze and Guattari describe the smooth space inhabited by nomadic peoples as consisting of dwellings that are subordinate to journeys, where the interiors conform to the exterior conditions. They cite the cave-like structure of the igloo as an example (478).

4. Sabadell-Nieto cites “la veu antiga, però de nou jove, i reconeixible de les albades provençals, de les jarchas i les cantigas de amigo galaico-portugueses” (“Domesticacions” 193).

5. “Penetrate” is a privileged verb in La passió segons Renée Vivien, especially when describing her poetry.

6. The naming of Heura Marçal is discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

7. McDowell and Sharp (1997) analyze the “gendering of everyday spaces” and note that women have been historically perceived, particularly in Europe as “out of place” in the street and point out that the term “street walker” in Britain remains a colloquial expression connoting “prostitute” (264).

8. The only calligramme designed by Marçal, Clos/Solc, appears in this work.
9. In a 1980 interview, Marçal refers to “armes quotidianes” or “daily arms” (Ràdio Sant Boi November 22, 1980).

10. Although it is also grown in northwestern Africa, the reference here is purely Spanish. Perhaps an allusion to the warmer, drier climate of Andalucía, it is a subtle reference to the work of Federico García Lorca, particularly his emphasis on the domestic/public distinction as evidenced most lucidly in La casa de Bernarda Alba. Marçal cites García Lorca as one of few male literary influences on her writing. I draw further connections to La casa de Bernarda Alba in my analysis of Marçal’s use of frames and white walls. I thank Dr. Michael Mudrovic for his initial suggestion to examine Marçal’s walls in light of García Lorca.

11. The image pertaining to the brand’s mascot (“el mayordomo de Netol”) in addition to the radio refrain (“cara de sapo, chaleco a rayas, es Netol, Netol, no alcohol, autobrillante, es importante, no busques un gazapo, es correcto, sigue todo recto…”) has since become part of the popular cultural imaginary.

12. The publishing house founded by Marçal, Llibres de Mall, also references mall.

13. The prevalence in the –mall syllable in Mallarmé should be understood with Mallarmé’s preoccupation with live poetry readings in mind (Preminger and Brogan 894).

14. Grosz explores the relevance of urban space (communities such as Oxford Street in Sydney or the Castro district in San Francisco and events like Mardi Gras) to homosexual culture. According to Grosz, it is important in that it privileges sexual pleasure over conformity (AO 9-10). See also Abraham 2009.

15. The concept of the chain (baula) is an important one throughout Marçal’s poetic career. In her introduction to Sota el signe del drac: Proses 1985-1997 (2004), Mercè Ibarz observes that “Baula es una paraula molt de la Marçal, diu grafia els diversos significats que cada anella de la cadena, temporal o espacial, històrica en definitiva, té en el seu univers. Idees que es poden concretar en una de principal: una genealogia, la de l’escriptura de dona, que emergeix malgrat les <<mentides, secrets i silencis>>” (16).

16. Julià has also made note of Marçal’s play on her name, particularly within the context of Terra de mai (“Añoranzas” 202). Julià does not however, link the geographical elements with Barcelona.

17. Though Whyte’s piece is written in English (he translates his conversations with Marçal), the title is in Catalan, “L’escriuràs tu,” further highlighting the significance of her statement.

18. Munt argues that Barnes is the first to export the flaneur and appropriate it for United States culture exemplifying the flexibility of the figure and its potential to work as a
“cipher of desires” despite and within “variable and historical and geographical circumstances” (37).

19. Castle documents artistic suggestions of this homoeroticism and includes James Huneker’s *Painted Veils* (1920) (212). Significantly, this work is also discussed by Jeannette Foster in *Sex Variant Women in Literature*, a text which has many resonances with Renée Vivien and other writers and characters who have influenced Marçal’s novel.

Chapter 3
Intertextual Genealogies

1. Brossard, in addition to a lesbian thematic, serves as an interesting counterpart to Marçal as she writes within bilingual contexts. A number of studies of Brossard provide useful insight into interpretations of corporality within the context of an author writing in a bilingual nation/context.

2. In the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Preminger and Brogan distinguish literary allusion from intertextuality on the basis of intentionality. I disagree with this distinction with regard to Marçal’s work as much of her intertextual “wanderings” serve many of the same functions as her allusions with a more pronounced intertextual echoes.

3. Violette is a kaleidoscopic and ghostly character in her own right in that she is often cited and referenced by other voices: the narrator for example, tellingly describes Violette as the friend who was “tan sovint…als llavis” (25).


5. Spenser’s *Faerie Queen* also famously employs this alliteration and may have been consciously echoed by Marçal in *Bruixa de dol* as fairies appear as mythical figures throughout.

6. Writing in “white ink” had been contemplated by Cixous in opposition to Mallarmé’s description of the writer as writing in black ink on white; she described her text as written in “white and black, in ‘milk’ and ‘night’” (*White Ink* 76). She advances a connection between a type of invisible writing and the feminine body; the text “treats of the black continent, of the entrance of woman into the (her) body (75).

7. Butler sees Antigone as representative of “neither kinship nor its radical outside but becomes the occasion for a reading of a structurally constrained notion of kinship in terms of its social iterability, the aberrant temporality of the norm” (29).

8. Mary Doane points out that within the context of cinema, “There is always a certain
excessiveness …associated with women who appropriate the gaze, who insist upon looking” (50).

9. Another Catalan author, Esther Tusquets, wrote explicitly of the Liceu and it’s constant presence in her life and fiction. In the case of Tusquets, the opera as genre, within the space of the Liceu in particular allowed her to explore questions of class. Mercè Rodoreda’s frequent preoccupation with the architectural space of Barcelona does not exclude the iconic Liceu. Marçal shares Rodoreda’s passion for movement through the urban space of Barcelona.

Chapter 4
Theorizing the Body

1. Upon the publication of “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” in 1978, Rich inspired a debate still unresolved today. Lorde’s essays, including “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” and “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” deal with racism, sexism and sexuality and were integral in understanding tools of oppression.

2. For a summary on the development of homosexual activism in the United States and its subsequent effect on Western philosophy in general, see “La teoría queer y el activismo social” by Rodrigo Andrés published in Feminismo y crítica literaria, a collection edited by Marta Segarra and Angels Carabí.

3. For more on the issue of multiple minoritizations and Catalan women’s writing, see Diaz Vicedo 2004, Dupláa 2001 and Martí-Olivella 1993.
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