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LA MUJER ARGENTINA QUE SOY YO¹/ THE ARGENTINEAN WOMAN THAT I AM

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I. INTRODUCTION

I was raised in an Argentinean household where my gender identity was shaped by my mother's ideals from our home country. My mother's favorite phrase was, and still is, "Así se hace en Argentina." This phrase, which translates into "this is how it is done in Argentina," was the backbone of the very strict cultural upbringing that shaped me as a woman. My mother used these words as a rebuttal to anything that would question my upbringing as a Roman Catholic girl: how I spoke, and how I conducted myself in public. My religion defined my femininity, my behavior and my future, since a young lady was to be virtuous and moral and ultimately aspire to be a wife and mother. My mother realized that in the process of making me a lady, I would be thrust into a cycle of male subordination at work or in marriage; through her own experiences she knew that society attempted to dominate women within these spheres. She adapted the formula of my upbringing by adding assertiveness as a tool to be used against societal control. By instilling in me this quality of assertiveness, she departed from the tradition of many women in my family. This was due to the fact that self-reliance, confidence, and courage were considered male traits or qualities. My mother, according to societal norms, was raising her girl to be like an hombre.² For this reason, my mother has had a conflict within herself, one that is hard to reconcile to this day. She is proud of my accomplishments at work and at school, and the lady that I have become, yet she believes that I would be married and she

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¹ I have deliberately decided not to italicize the Spanish words in the main text. Italicizing these words would indicate that Spanish is alien to the content of this paper. Quite the contrary, since this work should have originated in Spanish, the English language is alien and have therefore italicized the English translations in the footnotes.

² *Man*

would be an abuela,³ if I were less assertive in achieving my public goals and more focused on my natural private role as a woman.

II. BAILANDO EL TANGO/DANCING THE TANGO

My mother's turmoil became very clear to me a couple of years ago, when I told her that I wanted to learn how to dance the Tango. Her response was, "You'll never be able to find a partner who would dance with you, since you'll want to lead . . . eso ase el hombre."⁴ Although I was perturbed by her declaration, I also knew that it was partly true. Herein lies my dilemma: I struggle daily with how to reconcile my womanhood, as I define it, and with my culture and religion that fervently define it for me. I want to begin my exploration en lo que me hace una mujer⁵ by looking at the forces that define us as women in Argentinean society: the Church, the State, and culture.

III. CONSTRUCCION DE GENRE/GENDER CONSTRUCTION

Although I cannot explain in extensive detail the intricacy of the framework of Argentina's social, political, and religious structure, I will explore specific interconnected points from the birth of the nation to the present, that I believe contribute to the delay or even disregard for women's issues. The rigid gender schema created is sustained through religion and culture, and together they work to devalue and ignore a woman's work whether in the public or private sphere. I divide my analysis into four observations: the creation of a national identity through the Church and State, Tango as a model for gender relations, the cultural construction of gender, and the impact of traditional interpretations on women's issues past and present.

IV. LENTES ADICIONALES/AN ADDITIONAL LENS

My goal in this research is to offer an additional lens, through the comparison of icons such as Evita (Eva Peron), Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, Tania la Guerrillera, through the imagery of the Tango, a dance that epitomizes the struggle in gender relations, and through the investigation of a current issue: pensions for housewives. In my work, I will try to give an honest interpretation of the resources used; one that stems from el amor y respeto para mi patria,⁶ and one that embraces debate.

³ grandmother

⁴ and that is what the man does

⁵ in what makes me a woman

⁶ the love and respect for my country

V. JUBILACION DEL AMA DE CASA/PENSION FOR HOUSEWIVES

Revolutionary women throughout Argentinean history, such as Evita, Las Madres and Tania have provided advancements for women politically and socially. Yet one avenue still not achieved is economic advancement. Jubilacion del Ama de Casa (Pension for Housewives) is an important current economic issue for women in Argentina not only because it is an assertion of self-determination as mothers and wives, but because it is also a fight for economic rights. This current law attempts to dissolve the lines between the private and public spheres. The work of a mother is considered the natural role of a woman. For the State to compensate a mother's role, as a childcare provider would economically, mean that a mother's work would become a new economic category.

Pensions for housewives emerges from the Sistema Integrado de Jubilaciones y Pensiones.⁷ Law 24.347 (1994), in addition to Law 24.828 (1997) allows housewives to join the system in the lower economic category.⁸ Their contribution is fixed at 11% minimum wage level, even if they can opt for a higher economic category.⁹ Article 4 of the latter law states that the executive power may create a Fondo Solidario Amas de Casa¹⁰ with both public and private contributions.¹¹ Housewives may also be covered by the Integrated Retirement and Pension system on a voluntary basis according to Article 5.¹² Law no 24.241 provides coverage for old age invalidity and death.¹³ It establishes two schemes: one public or contributory, and another private individually funded scheme.¹⁴ Everybody has the option of choosing between the two, and it increases gradually the age limit for retirement, that is, sixty-five years for men and sixty years for women.¹⁵ Participation in the system is compulsory for every worker over age the age of eighteen who is employed or self-employed in both the private and public sectors.¹⁶ In the case of death, the widow and widower as well as cohabiting partners of unmarried children and children to the age of eighteen are beneficiaries of a pension.¹⁷

Sadly, the problem with these laws is that women are made to wait endlessly for the pension, ultimately having to prove the legitimacy of their

⁷ Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 11 (Arg.).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Cód. Civ 24.828. (Arg.).

¹⁰ Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 4 (Arg.).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 5 (Arg.).

¹³ Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 1 (Arg.).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 19 (Arg.).

¹⁶ Cód. Civ 24.241 art. 3 (Arg.).

¹⁷ *Id.* at. art. 1.

claims. This occurred to my Tía-Abuela, Marika.¹⁸ She battled for over twenty-five years to receive her husband's military pension. In the year 2000, she was awarded back-pay of her husband's pension, only after she proved her marriage to her husband was legitimate. My Tía-Abuela had to prove that, although in Argentina divorce was illegal, she had not obtained a divorce outside of the country, which would have been considered invalid, or that she did not seek a divorce after his death, after 1987 when divorce was made legal. The suspension of pension award stemmed from my aunt's separation from her husband as a result of spousal abuse; yet never getting divorced because she considered morally and religiously wrong. The extremes to which my aunt had to go in order to prove her worthiness seemed ridiculous, but necessary, if she was ever hoped to receive the pension. I am sure that my Tía-Abuela's story is not different from other women seeking pension in Argentina. No woman should have to submit to useless exhaustive procedures for pension determination. One should be validated by law as a recipient and thereafter receive the pension.

"State intervention poses no special problem as long as the State reflects the hierarchy chosen by God. To the extent that the law accurately reflects the hierarchy and this hierarchy was considered legitimate, the law itself would be deemed legitimate."¹⁹ If the State's mentality is still guided by the Church, it would be unheard of to pay housewives for work that they are inherently responsible for or to pay women pension for their husband's work. Furthermore, if the State is trying to reclaim family values as supportive of democratic and progressive roles for the nation, the state would unlikely support or advance women being paid for housework in the private sphere.²⁰ It is neither in the interest of the Church nor the State to eliminate purposely traditional roles that facilitate their agendas; therefore, any delay or dismissal is intentional.

Another issue impeding the progression of pension for housewives is the divide between public and private realms that facilitates the ideology behind delaying awards of pensions.²¹ This division is socially constructed and designates how specific spheres are to be regulated under law, as well as qualifies those who are to be most affected by it.²² The ideology of why legal reform has not gotten a hold of women's subordination under man, has its foundation in canon law: It explains a natural separation between the public

¹⁸ *Great-aunt*. Telephone interview with Great-Aunt Makika in Argentina (Feb. 23, 2002) (on file with author).

¹⁹ Frances E. Olsen, *The Family and the Market: A Study of Ideology and Legal Reform*, 15 HARV. L. REV. 1497, 1514 (1993).

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at 1498.

²² *Id.* at 1514.

and private spheres.²³ Law operates under the sociological assumption of a market and family dichotomy. This dichotomy is defined by a division and hierarchy between family and market, which are both separate and yet unequal.²⁴ Law reproduces this dichotomy and sustains the division.²⁵ Therefore, laws have failed women because women are not inherently socially equal as people, but are given political equality, an inherent right to freedom, through laws.²⁶ Legal equality does not result in social or economic equality.²⁷ Public and private spheres are created separately, unequal and rigid in order to maintain the social order. Pensions for housewives would succeed in obliterating the division in public and private images and create a new one where the private and public spheres are seen as interdependent.²⁸ This denial deals with the fear of having gender lines blurred, thus private and public spheres becoming one, and women becoming an economic force.²⁹ Work in the family, originally a private, natural role, would be legitimated through pay, in the public sphere. As a result, many traditional structures would have to change.

Pension for housewives, although not publicly stated, is perceived by the Church and the State as a political evil. In obstructing the pension law by preventing it from working smoothly, the Church and the State deny the issue positive space in the good. In trying to give the appearance of fairness, the State does not totally abolish the legal notion, as historically it once might have done, yet facilitates the disregard or delay to the rapid disbursement. If women ultimately cannot raise the scale to be paid for doing traditional women's work, or are forced to fight for pensions of their spouses, they remain casted and repressed to a lower economic sphere. One can expect that the economic system, as opposed to being restricted to growth, would expand and account for the needs of women, especially housewives.

VI. LA IDENTIDAD NACIONAL, Y LA CREACION DE RELIGION Y ESTADO/NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE CREATION OF THE CHURCH AND THE STATE

The most prevalent characteristic of Argentina's identity is the unbreakable connection between God, the government, and the Argentinean people. The foundation of Argentina's national identity can

²³ See *id.*

²⁴ See Colette Guillaumin, *Women and Theories About Society: The Effects on Theory of the Anger of the Oppressed*, in RACISM, SEXISM, POWER AND IDEOLOGY 153, 165 (1995).

²⁵ Olsen, *supra* note 19, at 1512.

²⁶ *Id.* at 1514.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

best be described as enlightened yet religiously authoritative. As one nationalist thinker expressed, "the people will languish in the most shameful stupor unless they are be given the right and liberty to talk about all subjects so long as they do not oppose in any way the holy truths of august religion and the dictates of the government."³⁰ Essentially, the definition created of democratic ideals is that there is a freedom to discuss anything as long as it favors Catholicism and the government.³¹ Thus, the interconnectedness of the Church and State dominates Argentina's philosophical creation.³² Included in this personality is the subordination of the people through their unquestioning loyalty to these institutions and their willingness to play natural roles dictated by a Catholic patriarchy.³³ *La gente de Argentina*³⁴ accepts the Church and the State's discourse of political evil defined as "the absence of good."³⁵ A political evil is defeated by denying it space in the good of the nation.³⁶ The notion of evil, without any literal definition, allows for the meaning to be manipulated conforming to the Church and State's agenda, particularly in gender relations.³⁷ Evil, traditionally, is a woman not following the natural and biological roles destined for her, therefore risking denial of space in the good, male space.

VII. DESIGNADO ROLES DE LATINA/OS-LATINA/DESIGNATED ROLES

The Latino patriarchal perspective, alive in Argentina, assigns dual roles of servitude to women.³⁸ Wives and mothers are made saints but "when the wife or would be wife, the mother or would be mother questions out loud the servitude and devotion, she will be quickly seen as false to her obligation

³⁰ NICHOLAS SHUMWAY, *THE INVENTION OF ARGENTINA* 28 (University of California Press 1991) (citing MARIANO MORENO, *ESCRITOS DE MARIANO MORENO* 238 (1896)).

³¹ *Id.*

³² Evidence of the Church's influence on the State is in Article 2 of the Argentinean Constitution, which provides that the Federal Government "sustains the Apostolic Roman Catholic faith." CONST. ARG. art. 2 (Arg.). The Government provides the Catholic Church with a subsidy of \$15 million (15 million pesos), which is administered through the Secretariat of Worship in the Office of the Presidency. See http://www.State.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/argentina.html.

³³ GUILLAUMIN, *supra* note 24, at 154. The creation stories form the basis for this position. Such stories established marriage as the foundation for society and as a representation of an ideal holy State. See, e.g., Hebrews 13:4; Titus 2:4-5, available at BibleGateway.com (last visited Feb. 24, 2003) ("Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.").

³⁴ *The people of Argentina*

³⁵ SHUMWAY, *supra* note 30, at 39. The Scripture speaks of all to aspire to the holy State of matrimony while clarifying that those who stayed single were "lacking in good." Hebrews 2:18.

³⁶ SHUMWAY, *supra* note 30, at 39.

³⁷ *Id.* at 39.

³⁸ Norma Alarcón, *Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object*, in *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 186 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

and duty thence a traitor."³⁹ In the religiously permeated and oriented minds of Argentines, devotion is equated with obedience; obedience being an expected trait in the women.⁴⁰ Males do not have to submit to defined gender roles, because they are inherently superior for ruling, not obeying.⁴¹ This mentality is the fabric that is sewn into the Argentinean people, consciously or subconsciously, and determines how law and society functions. The most critical aspect in society is that a woman has to subject her mind, soul, and body to satisfy the expectations of dominant forces, such as religion and culture. The song and dance of the Tango epitomizes this expectation of women.

VIII. EL TANGO Y GÉNERO/GENDER AND THE TANGO

"El Tango, la canción de Argentina que tan bien refleja nuestras virtudes"⁴²

Argentina's most important aesthetic expression of its identity is the Tango.⁴³ The dance, symbolism, and lyrics of the Tango epitomize the control forced upon women physically, symbolically, and verbally.⁴⁴ The Tango, more than any other dance, is gender-led.⁴⁵ The traditional explanation of the Tango is that it epitomizes male power. The steps of the male and female partners are identical yet there are no "flourishes or caprices" given solely to the woman.⁴⁶ Her steps must be performed to give the appearance that they are entirely caused by her partners' masterful guidance.⁴⁷ The reason attributed to this choreography is that it follows the natural order. Male dominance in the Tango is, therefore, unquestioned.⁴⁸

The same facts can give a completely opposite understanding, an alternative view, to the patriarchal interpretation of the Tango. The woman

³⁹ *Id.* at 186. Through such models of women such as Eve and the Virgin Mary, women are given examples of the saint and the sinner. Eve, although she was intended to be the mother of all the living, ended up being a source of temptation and responsible for original sin. See Genesis 3:15. The image of the Virgin Mary is a very powerful symbol in Argentina. See Alarcón, *supra* note 38, at 186. She is the virtuous impeccable natural image that Argentinean women should follow. *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 186.

⁴¹ In Roman Catholicism, male authority is founded on the creation stories. Man is created first and is put in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and guard it. 1 Genesis 2:23. God said, "It is not good for the man to live alone." The Lord took from man's ribs and Adam named her woman because "she was taken out of man." 1 Genesis 2:23.

⁴² Carlos A. Manus, *Reflexiones Sobre el tango*, at www.Terapiatanguera.com.ar/nota/0/0052.shtml. "The Tango, the dance of Argentina that reflects our virtues well."

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Richard Martin, *The Lasting Tango*, in *TANGO: THE DANCE, THE SONG, THE STORY* 177 (Collier, et al. eds., 1995).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 177.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 175.

is the one who decided with whom she wants to dance, since the men are vying for her attention. She opens the door to any advancement to her. Furthermore, the very equality of the steps is liberating for the woman.⁴⁹ The voluntary intervention of the woman's legs into the man's stride is a bold departure from male determinations of mobility.⁵⁰ Viewed through this lens, the Tango is a dance of independence, one that exemplifies female assertiveness.⁵¹ This new interpretation identifies the strength of woman and the right to choose to lead and not to be taken. Moreover, the new interpretation defines the Tango as created by the standard of a woman.⁵²

The standard of traditional interpretations of the Tango permeates the culture through its symbolism, as "viejos títulos que nos hacen sonreír,"⁵³ portrays women as either evil or good. The Tango is called "el lamento del cornudo."⁵⁴ The name is derived from the image of the bullfighter and the bull at the moment when the bull charges the bullfighter with his horns. The man symbolizes the bullfighter and the woman the charging bull, ready to attack its target. Therefore, when a man is betrayed by his love, either by deceit or infidelity, they call him "Cornudo" and say "ella le puso los cuernos."⁵⁵ La canción del cornudo⁵⁶ is a warning to men to be careful of the conniving woman, because she is a temptress.⁵⁷ It is also as an insulting joke against a man, attacking his manhood, because he is being overpowered and treated badly by his woman or treated badly. The cornudo image reproduces the stereotype that a woman, if not virtuous, is evil, and therefore acts to control her values. The lyrics of the Tango perpetuate the traditional roles that undermine independent women's roles in society.

"Pobre soledad te has quedado, sin ilusión sin fe. Tu corazón de angustia se ha enfermado . . . puesta de sol, que soy tu vida trunca"⁵⁸

Julio Sosa, a famous tanguero⁵⁹ in "Nunca tuvo novio"⁶⁰ speaks of a lonely single woman who is left "without hope without faith" since she does

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 178.

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Id.* at 173.

⁵² Catherine A. MacKinnon, *On Exceptionality: Women as Women in Law*, in FEMINISM UNMODIFIED: DISCOURSES ON LIFE AND LAW 70, 76 (1987).

⁵³ See Manus, *supra* note 42.

⁵⁴ *The lament of the horned one*

⁵⁵ *She put her horns on him*

⁵⁶ *Song of the horned one*

⁵⁷ See generally Manus, *supra* note 42.

⁵⁸ Julio Sosa, *Nunca Tuvo Novio*, on 30 ANIVERSARIO 1994 (Sony Entertainment, 1987). *Poor single girl, you have been left without illusion or faith. Your heart filled with angst is sickened, as the sun sets, I am now your incomplete life.*

⁵⁹ *Man who sings tango*

⁶⁰ *Never had a boyfriend*

not have a novio⁶¹ and love was never materialized for her. Her life goal, as a wife and mother, have not been achieved and since she did not find her *principio sonado*, her life has no meaning and is cut short.⁶² The song reinforces the idea that a woman's goal in life is to create a family, through which she will find "goodness." In this goodness, she will be valued by society. However, if a woman does not choose this path, her worth as a woman is neglected.

This song has a personal meaning for me as it was a joke between my uncle and my mother. My uncle would sing it to hear on occasion. My mother recollects, "Me lo decia, para hacerme burla, pero para decirme . . . che piba apurate y casáte ya."⁶³ My mother admits to the pressure of this joke, and to understanding its underlying message. Several years ago when my mom starting asking me, "cuando te vas a casar?"⁶⁴ I began to sing it to her jokingly and dramatically grabbing at my chest. She consistently reminds me with a somber face that I should not make light of this topic, "no hagas chiste de eso!"⁶⁵ I constantly tell her why I do it, but she is disturbed that I have turned the negative lyrics as a positive symbol of rejecting to the "natural role" pressure. The song still reminds us of "the message" that, as a woman, I am acknowledged through my roles as a mother and wife and not through my efforts in society. My true happiness and goodness is tied to my marital status and child bearing capabilities.

The progressive vision of how the Tango is danced and interpreted does not seem widely accepted in society since the traditional lyrics and gender roles serve as an obstacle. Re-envisioning a new Tango, and thereby creating a new metaphor for gender relations, would translate into men having to accept or being forced to follow a view constructed by women of women instead of men.⁶⁶ The symbolic face of concrete gender relationships would.⁶⁷ The old traditional ways of women accepting the views created by men for women would come to an end, because a woman's "freedom would necessitate the destruction of all systems of oppression."⁶⁸ This new view would facilitate implementation of laws for the benefit of women, since it would be liberating woman's space.

⁶¹ *Boyfriend*

⁶² This concept is often expressed by the phrase "vida trunca," which translates into English as "truncated life."

⁶³ *He would say it to me jokingly, making fun, but also seriously in saying . . . hey girlie hurry up and get married!*

⁶⁴ *When are you getting married?*

⁶⁵ *Don't make a joke out of this*

⁶⁶ MacKinnon, *supra* note 52.

⁶⁷ Guillaumin, *supra* note 24, at 156.

⁶⁸ Gloria Anzaldua, *El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision*, in *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 195 (Anzaldua, et al. eds., 1981).

IX. CONTRUCCION DE GENRE CULTURAL/CULTURAL GENDER CONSTRUCTION

Ultimately, the perception of women, whether transmitted through the Church, the State, or through culture, has a significant role on how seriously women's issues are considered and ultimately handled. In Argentina, each institution supports a natalist framework by defining women as either feminine and beautiful or ugly and masculine.⁶⁹ This type of identification is a definite creation of natural gender social relations.⁷⁰ Argentinean society considers a woman to be feminine and, therefore, "pretty" if she pursues her proscribed, "natural" role as wife and mother. However, she is deemed masculine and "ugly" if she is trying to achieve equity in the workplace and political sphere or speaks out against the institutions in society.⁷¹ When a woman is considered beautiful, she is put on a pedestal and protected. When a woman fails to conform to the "natural" role, Argentine society perceived her as ugly and, therefore, unattractive with whom to deal.⁷²

Women's access to the public sphere is determined by how they are allowed to assert their equality and impacts whether or not their issues will be advanced.⁷³ Women are not denied equality in the public realm; they are offered a chance to assert equality with men through two routes.⁷⁴ The first route is the primary avenue that views women as if they were men.⁷⁵ That is, women are measured with men to assess if women can be men's equal.⁷⁶ In Argentina, this view devalues the notion of equality by not accepting women as women and imposes a male standard, and, therefore, rendering these women "ugly."⁷⁷ By embracing masculinity, women's issues become devalued.⁷⁸ Accessibility to the public sphere, under this guise, is more tangible in Argentina, since it would rest purely on male merits rather than a woman's, and the notion of "ugliness" permits men to accept that some women may be considered equal.⁷⁹ I believe this was the logic behind giving women the vote and representation in Congress.⁸⁰ Women were seen as

⁶⁹ Colette Guillaumin, *Sexism, A Right-Wing Constant of Any Discourse: A Theoretical Note*, in RACISM, SEXISM, POWER AND IDEOLOGY 171, 173 (Routledge 1995) [hereinafter Guillaumin 2].

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 173.

⁷¹ Patricia J. Williams, *On Being the Object Of Property*, 14 U. CHI. J. WOMEN IN CULTURE & SOC'Y 5, 11 (1988).

⁷² *Id.*

⁷³ Mackinnon, *supra* note 52, at 71.

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ *Id.*

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ *Id.*

⁷⁸ *Id.* at 72.

⁷⁹ *Id.*

⁸⁰ There are no legal impediments to participation by women in politics and government; however, women remain underrepresented. DEP'T OF STATE, *Argentina, 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, at http://www.State.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/argentin.html (last visited Nov. 2, 2002). The Argentinean Constitution stipulates that

sufficiently competent to vote, especially for male platforms.⁸¹ Changes advanced for women through the women's vote ultimately do not have longevity because of reversions back to traditional forms of government that either ignore or silence the issues. Thus women lack political power in the male space.

The second approach views women from the male perspective, which sees women in need of special protection, help, or indulgence.⁸² This perspective is the typical male standard for women in Argentina.⁸³ Through this view, a woman affirms her natural role through her femininity.⁸⁴ The man becomes the provider and the protector, and the women his subject.⁸⁵ These types of social relations are typical in domination and exploitation.⁸⁶ Through marriage and motherhood, women are taught to believe that their prominent role is a natural one.⁸⁷ "Females have internalized this oppressive imagery" and use it against each other, as others do, reinforcing the patriarchal structure that tells women that they are born ugly or evil if they do not follow their destiny.⁸⁸ This structure breeds inequality but is socially necessary and is dressed up in "complimentary" terms, such as the quest to be beautiful.⁸⁹

A. *"We are named by others and we are named by ourselves"*⁹⁰

In allowing themselves to be named, women allow the dominant system to continue reproducing images that are adverse to their development and advancement.⁹¹ Even if women named themselves, the existence of a contradicting patriarchal view makes their definition illegitimate. Women need to be measured by their own standards, not by men, the Church or the

the internal regulations of political parties and party nominations for elections be subject to affirmative action requirements to increase women's representation in elective offices. *Id.* A 1991 law mandates the use of gender quotas by all political parties in national elections. *Id.* A 1993 decree requires a minimum of 30% of all political party lists of candidates be female. *Id.* As a result, the presence of women in Congress is increasing. About one-fourth of the 257 members of the lower house are women. *Id.* However, gender quotas do not apply in the Senate, in which members are chosen by provincial legislatures, and membership in the seventy-two seat Senate is overwhelmingly male. *Id.*

⁸¹ MacKinnon, *supra* note 52, at 76.

⁸² *Id.* at 71.

⁸³ *Id.*

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ Guillaumin 2, *supra* note 69, at 171.

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 172.

⁸⁸ Cherrie Moraga, *La Güera*, in *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 37 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

⁸⁹ Guillaumin 2, *supra* note 69, at 172.

⁹⁰ Barbara Cameron, *Gee, You Don't Seem Like An Indian From The Reservation*, in *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 52 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

⁹¹ *Id.* at 52.

State.⁹²

A third approach embraces a revolutionary ideal for the Argentinean woman. This approach vehemently opposes and rejects the roles inflicted on her by the Church and the State, and embraces an approach in which women create standards within their own space, a rebirth.⁹³ How powerful is the imagery, "Yo, mujer doy luz: y esta vez a si misma" ("I, woman give birth: and this time to myself.")⁹⁴ This space allows for the chance of this type of self definition.⁹⁵ This new approach establishes a standard that is created by women in a woman's space.⁹⁶ By leaping out of pre-assigned roles, women disrupt the paradigms that institutions are trying to maintain.⁹⁷ By changing the system through action, words, and experience, women challenge the institutions that oppress them.

The task to create a system that would sustain a woman created space, at times seems, impossible, because it would entail changing social structures that have existed for centuries. Most importantly access to the public spheres for the rightful opportunity to create this space is essential; either through revolution, deconstruction, and/or reconstruction of order. Just as important is the teaching of a new model in this space, for generations to reproduce and sustain. This new paradigm would counteract the most common transmission of social order of raising children at home and at school in the Roman Catholic fashion.⁹⁸ A new society would engender the reproduction of a new consciousness that supports and develops a woman's space.

By admonishing the "naming" that the Church, the State, and society force upon us as women, we begin to take ownership of a socialization process that has restricted our movement in someone else's space.⁹⁹ The refusal on the part of women to be abused by the oppression that patriarchy inflicts upon us is the antecedent to creating this new space. This new space would acknowledge collective diverse experience that allows for multiple

⁹² MacKinnon, *supra* note 52, at 71.

⁹³ *Id.* at 71.

⁹⁴ Norma Alarcón, *Chicana's Feminist Literature: A Re-Vision Through Malintzin/or Malintzin: Putting Flesh Back on the Object*, in *THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 184 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

⁹⁵ *Id.* at 184.

⁹⁶ MacKinnon, *supra* note 52, at 71.

⁹⁷ Guillaumin 2, *supra* note 69, at 174.

⁹⁸ *Argentina the Humanist View: The Humanist Case*, INT'L HUMANIST AND ETHICAL UNION, at <http://www.iheu.or/REPORT%20ARGENTINA.html> (last visited Nov. 5, 2002). 85% of the thirty-three million Argentineans are baptized and raised in a Roman Catholic standard at homes and schools. See *id.* Public schools are used as centers of religious indoctrination for children. See *id.* More fervently since 1943 where the military believed that religion would safeguard against socialism. See *id.*

⁹⁹ Alarcón, *supra* note 94, at 186.

definitions of who we are as women, and what we want as women.¹⁰⁰ Whether that be denying all traditional roles or celebrating them, it would be in the context of our own space, not judged or restricted by patriarchal legislation and institutions. There would be a breaking with the thought that "the destiny in all of us in marriage" and the questioning of why you are not yet married, or with child would stop.¹⁰¹ This reconception stops the process of patriarchy because women are valued as more than just mothers and wives. Women, whether in the private sphere or public sphere, are treated as equals and each serve a part in advancing a new space for one another. Creating new space as women, challenges the existing institutions to listen to our story as women, because we control the standard that we are measured by. Several women typify this third approach. The following women's experiences are examples of how a woman's self-definition is received and how women's issues are treated in dominant Argentinean society.

X. EVITA, LAS MADRES, Y TANIA/ EVITA, LAS MADRES, AND TANIA

The treatment of revolutionary women in Argentinean history helps clarify what type of response, a woman receives from the Church and the State, when advancing an idea or proposing some legal change. Typically, the responses to women's demands have been entertained under the guise of "gender equality," yet as discussed, women searching for equality are considered as manly, and, therefore, not taken seriously since this characteristic is not considered for the "goodness" of the nation. Furthermore, when women have demonstrated the will to resist the government, the Church and the State's response remains the same: defining it as a political evil and reacting to it either through violence or omission in society. As a result, the Church and the State's response to women's progressive platforms takes the form of a backlash by reaffirming traditional roles, particularly when women are attempting to deconstruct patriarchal social practices.¹⁰²

XI. EVITA/ EVA PERÓN

Evita was a woman who was defined by many myths. She has been personified as a saint by those who loved and worshiped her, or a whore or a Nazi by those who hated her.¹⁰³ She believed in social justice for the poor and the concept of helping and respecting peoples as individuals.¹⁰⁴ Her public work was accomplished in partnership with her husband, President

¹⁰⁰ *Id.* at 186.

¹⁰¹ MacKinnon, *supra* note 52, at 71.

¹⁰² Guillaumin 2, *supra* note 69, at 174.

¹⁰³ LAURA DAIL, EVA PERON, IN MY OWN WORDS 5, 8. (1996).

¹⁰⁴ *Evita's Legacy*, at www.evita-peron.org/legacy (last visited Feb. 21, 2003).

Juan Perón and Congress.¹⁰⁵ Evita and Perón worked marvelously as a team: He as a Statesman, she lashing out at the oligarchy and other enemies.¹⁰⁶ Their enemies feared both of them.¹⁰⁷ Together, they forged a safety net for the children, the workers, the seniors, and the poor of Argentina.¹⁰⁸

Evita was an atypical wife. She was the woman at Perón's side, but not in the traditional role of the wife.¹⁰⁹ Perón accepted what was unacceptable at the time, an outspoken woman who did not fear political repercussion. The military and the Church called him *cornudo*, saying that he was blinded and tempted by Evita and not a true man.¹¹⁰ Perón, however, trusted Evita and allowed her to run every day operations.¹¹¹ He believed that her beliefs came from him to such an extent that she could never threaten his authority or compete with him.¹¹² He once said Evita was "a product of mine."¹¹³ Evita accepted without hesitation the role that Perón fashioned for her; she never tired of giving him extravagant.¹¹⁴ Flexing her political muscle, Evita did not hesitate to use her authority whether it was to mobilize the workers to rally for Perón or purchase weaponry, as a revolutionary, to support the armed return of her husband from exile.¹¹⁵ Evita yielded power without a formal position and the military and Church feared this.¹¹⁶

The right for women to vote was not won until 1947. That victory came about due to the strong support of Eva Perón.¹¹⁷ Once the government had passed the law granting women equal political rights with men, quick progress followed.¹¹⁸ Evita urged feminists to organize a woman's movement surrounding Perón, arguing that he was a different type of man. She acknowledged that feminists would think it odd, but Evita truly believed that Perón supported her ideals and her visions and, in exchange for their loyalty, would help women advance.¹¹⁹ This also foretold of the fact that Evita knew

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Evita's Legacy*, *supra* note 104. Evita helped build villages for seniors and single mothers to live in, hospitals for the children and for the poor. *Id.* She made available pots and pans, beds, and sewing machines, practical things that make a difference in a poor family. *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 11.

¹¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹¹ *Id.*

¹¹² *Id.* at 15.

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

¹¹⁵ *Evita's Legacy*, *supra* note 104.

¹¹⁶ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 22.

¹¹⁷ *Id.* at 14.

¹¹⁸ *Evita's Legacy*, *supra* note 104. Women's participation in politics reached unprecedented highest, women were elected to public office, a woman's branch of the party was formed and a number of legal reforms were introduced to improve conditions for women workers. *Id.* Positions predominately held by men, were opened as new spaces for woman. *Id.*

¹¹⁹ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 26.

that the Church and the State would not let a woman hold such a high position, or allow women to effect changes by themselves.¹²⁰

Even through her role as the President's wife, Evita was able to create new space for women's. Evita herself had two identities: Eva the wife of Perón and Evita a link for the hopes of the people.¹²¹ Eva was Perón's wife and his unyielding, fanatical supporter. Evita was the bridge that connected Perón to the people.¹²² Evita was the emotional center of Peronismo¹²³ and the Spiritual Mother of Argentinean people.¹²⁴ Evita's ultimo mensaje¹²⁵ is significant because it shows another side of Evita, one that openly attacks the military in harsh language, which she restrained from doing because her husband felt a strong institutional loyalty toward the Army.¹²⁶ In her messages, she also denounced high clerics who were accused of plotting against her husband.¹²⁷ She believed the Church exerted a strong influence over Argentinean society, one that led to corruption.¹²⁸ Yet, she acknowledged the work of the humble priests with the poor and called on the Church to commit itself to the underprivileged as opposed to the rich.¹²⁹ Evita professed belief in Catholicism all her life and always asked God to protect children, the poor, the elderly, and the workers against the exploitation by the Church, the State, and the military—the "scoundrels."¹³⁰

Evita knew who her enemies were and what they were capable of.¹³¹ The pressures from the Church and the military persuaded Perón not to support publicly Evita's nomination for vice presidency in 1951.¹³² She knew that the military and the Church hated her and that, at her death, her enemies would try to erase any advancement her works had made for the people.¹³³ Her schools were abandoned, destroyed, or used for alternative means, such as a refuge for outcasts and thieves.¹³⁴ The loathe of the military's loathe towards Evita is best illustrated by the fact that they hid her dead, embalmed body for several years before they returned her to Perón.¹³⁵

¹²⁰ *Id.* at 22.

¹²¹ *Id.* at 16.

¹²² *Id.* at 18.

¹²³ *Peronism*

¹²⁴ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 19.

¹²⁵ *last message*

¹²⁶ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 33.

¹²⁷ *Id.* at 33. Under the Argentine Constitution, Roman Catholicism enjoyed the status of a State religion, and the president of the republic at that time had to be a Catholic. *Id.* at 33.

¹²⁸ *Id.*

¹²⁹ *Id.* at 34.

¹³⁰ *Id.* at 39.

¹³¹ See *Evita's Legacy*, *supra* note 104.

¹³² DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 23.

¹³³ See *Evita's Legacy*, *supra* note 104.

¹³⁴ See *id.*

¹³⁵ DAIL, *supra* note 103, at 38.

Her final manuscript was locked away in an Argentinean Archive as a result of military dictate.¹³⁶ As a demanding and opinionated wife as well as the adopted mother of the people, Evita was a threatening, political evil that the government consistently and unsuccessfully tried to silence. In effect, they have tried to erase her memory from la nación (the nation), deny her space, yet she remains in the Argentinean people's memories.

In 1974, Argentina fell under military dictatorship and returned to a more traditional era.¹³⁷ The absence of opposition allowed a more conservative view of a woman to re-emerge and permeate national culture.¹³⁸ During this time, referred to as the "Reign of Terror or the Dirty War," politically active women and men were "disappeared" by the government as a method of silencing opposition. These people were known as "los desaparecidos."¹³⁹

XII. LAS MADRES/THE MOTHERS

Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo are a group of women, who have been demonstrating, marching around the Argentinean Statue of Liberty, for the past twenty years every Thursday afternoon at 3:30 in the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires.¹⁴⁰ Their children and family members were victims of Argentina's 1976-83 military dictatorship, described by the Madres as "the murderers."¹⁴¹ Las Madres demand to know the fates of their loved ones and the names of the murders that are being protected by the government and military.¹⁴² They label the State as criminals and charge them guilty in assisting the cover up.¹⁴³ Las Madres believe that the list naming their queridos¹⁴⁴ as dead is worthless if the names of their murderers are not included.¹⁴⁵ "It is not enough to know what they have done; we want to know

¹³⁶ *Id.* at 1.

¹³⁷ *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, at www.madres.org/ingles/historia/textos/historia.htm (last visited Mar. 11, 2002).

¹³⁸ *Id.*

¹³⁹ "the disappeared"

¹⁴⁰ *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, *supra* note 137.

¹⁴¹ *Id.* Most reliable estimates place the number of those who disappeared during the dirty war at between 10,000 and 15,000. *Id.* In 1984 the National Commission on Disappeared Persons ("CONADEP") issued a report listing 8,961 names of such persons, based on public testimony from friends, relatives, and witnesses, *Argentina, 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, *supra* note 80. Although Las Madres reject CONADAP stating approximately 30,000 people have disappeared. *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, *supra* note 137.

¹⁴² *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, *supra* note 137.

¹⁴³ *Id.* The absence of documentary records of those who disappeared means that the Government must rely on public testimony, either voluntary or court-ordered, *Argentina, 1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, *supra* note 80. As CONADEP noted in its report, "It has been possible to determine that an important quantity of documentation existed which has been destroyed or which is being concealed by those responsible for the repression." *Id.*

¹⁴⁴ *loved ones*

¹⁴⁵ *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, *supra* note 137.

who's done it. We don't want their confessions we want them in jail forever."¹⁴⁶ The list of los culpables has never been seen by Las Madres and probably will never be released by the government.¹⁴⁷ Forcing the dissemination of the truth by presenting the list would mean that the government has to admit to their involvement, concealment, and culpability in the disappearances. The government fights against releasing the information because it would mean seizure of power by a group of women.

Las Madres use the imagery of Christian motherhood, as an effective tool, against a Catholic military regime.¹⁴⁸ Their image represents powerful mothers rejecting the notion of their subordination in motherhood that which tells them to obey and be silent.¹⁴⁹ They use their pain and suffering against a contradictory Church and State that purports to support the image of the mother, yet denies them their children.¹⁵⁰ Their continued presence internationally reaffirms the role of a virtuous Argentinean mother fighting for her child. They confront the Church, accusing them of being criminals and guilty in the cover up.¹⁵¹ They have denounced the Pope and the President of Argentina for pardoning the murderers of innocent people.¹⁵² The Vatican responded by issuing a statement declaring the allegations of Las Madres as defamatory and without any content or foundation.¹⁵³

The Argentinean state and military try to repress Las Madres through violence, "like in the hard times of the dictatorship."¹⁵⁴ However, Las Madres still believe in resisting the system. The following statement is illustrative of Las Madres' spirit: "Till the last day, to our limit, the voices of Las Madres will be heard in Plaza de Mayo. Defeat will never be a reality."¹⁵⁵ Police protection is needed every day. Las Madres' building has been vandalized with "long live Massera (Long live massacre)" and "Old Whores."¹⁵⁶ One time, they were asked to leave at gunpoint from the Plaza De Mayo.¹⁵⁷ Las Madres did not want to obey and move because the memories of their disappeared children were tied to the Plaza. They dared the perpetrators to

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*

¹⁴⁷ *Id.*

¹⁴⁸ *Id.*

¹⁴⁹ *Id.*

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*

¹⁵¹ *Id.*

¹⁵² *Id.* President Menem was denounced for his pardon of military officials involved with the desaparecidos (the disappeared ones). *Id.* One of the Catholic Church's most senior figures has been accused of taking part in the torture, murder and disappearance of political dissidents while a papal ambassador to Argentina. They also asked that Pope John Paul II lift Laghi's diplomatic immunity so he can be brought to trial. See U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, *supra* note 80.

¹⁵³ *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, supra* note 137.

¹⁵⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵⁵ *Id.*

¹⁵⁶ *Id.*

¹⁵⁷ *Id.*

fire at them and stood up to the guns as their children once had, and were eventually permitted to remain.¹⁵⁸ Several members of Las Madres, including their founder, have disappeared as a result of their struggle for justice against the group in power.¹⁵⁹ The government fears and needs to silence the threat of a powerful revolutionary mother.

Las Madres now embark on a new mission, the creation of an educational facility. They have decided to create a new space of struggle and resistance, which can be a public example of what can be done in Argentina and abroad.¹⁶⁰ They believe that the building of a new society requires men and women with ethics and political formation, sensitive and imaginative, who are capable of using scientific as well as artistic tools.¹⁶¹ Las Madres wish to develop the new person, one that knows how to articulate revolutionary theory and practice.¹⁶² The objective of the People's University is the production of critical thinking and the organization of collective spaces of creative reflection.¹⁶³ Las Madres issue a call for people to commit to words and actions in order to change the hegemonic social model.¹⁶⁴ They call out "to a cultural adventure that demands a clear head, a heartfelt solidarity and a combative fist."¹⁶⁵ This program is opposed to the educational model that attempts to vertically transmit knowledge that legitimizes oppression.¹⁶⁶ Las Madres see this program as giving birth to a new type of child who will struggle for life and dignity each and everyday.¹⁶⁷ In this same spirit, Las Madres call Che Guevara one of their sons and Tania as one of their daughters.¹⁶⁸ They believe that a "new way of thinking is possible, history will be what we want it to be."¹⁶⁹

XIII. TANIA

Another characterization of women is one who violently rejects the standards created for her by the State, by taking up arms and being apart of revolution to combat oppressive social structures. Haydee Tamara Bunke Bider, known to many as Tania, was born in Argentina on November 19, 1937 to German parents, who immigrated to Argentina in order to escape

¹⁵⁸ *Mothers of Plaza de Mayo*, *supra* note 137.

¹⁵⁹ *Id.*

¹⁶⁰ *Id.*

¹⁶¹ *Id.*

¹⁶² *Id.*

¹⁶³ *Id.* The University offers masters degrees in Human and Political Rights, Psychology, Political and Social Economy. *Id.*

¹⁶⁴ *Id.*

¹⁶⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*

¹⁶⁸ *Id.*

¹⁶⁹ *Id.*

Nazi persecution.¹⁷⁰ Tania's parents were members of the Communist Party of Germany and, at age eighteen, she became a member herself.¹⁷¹ She learned, through her parents' example in personal conduct and activities, that young people had the duty to participate in the continental revolutionary process.¹⁷² Tania had a deep interest in Cuba, particularly its history and confrontation with imperialism.¹⁷³ She was deeply impressed with its leaders whom she felt "opened the new road and gave birth to new hopes for the exploited masses".¹⁷⁴ She came to Cuba in 1961, at the age of twenty-four.¹⁷⁵ Tania met Che Guevara, a revolutionary leader, when he was on a trip to the German Democratic Republic as the head of a Cuban trade delegation, where she was his translator.¹⁷⁶ From that day, they became comrades.¹⁷⁷

Tania was trained politically and theoretically in preparation for clandestine work and guerilla war.¹⁷⁸ As a result of her fluency in Spanish she was able to assume many identities and become an integral part of undercover work.¹⁷⁹ Tania's concept of a true woman was one who did not need to wear elegant, expensive clothing, or avoid work that would hurt her hands.¹⁸⁰ She usually wore no make-up and wore army fatigues and did not like buying new clothes.¹⁸¹ Once she had to buy a dress in Brazil, in order to keep up her disguise, and she bought the cheapest dress she could find. Her rationale behind this purchase was that the extra money would be wasted on a better dress as it would be better spend going back to Cuba to help the revolution.¹⁸² Major Inti, another leader of the revolutionary struggle, said of Tania, "Tania traveled that road, daily rejecting the values so important to other people."¹⁸³

As a result of her work in Cuba, she was admitted to the Communist Party of Cuba.¹⁸⁴ She began to work directly with the guerilla forces,

¹⁷⁰ TANIA: THE UNFORGETTABLE GUERRILLA 22 (Marta Rojas & Mirta Rodriguez Calderon, eds., 1971).

¹⁷¹ *Id.* at 23.

¹⁷² *Id.* at IX.

¹⁷³ *Id.*

¹⁷⁴ *Id.*

¹⁷⁵ *Id.* at 143. While there, she worked in differing capacities, for the Ministry of Education, the national executive board of the Federation of Cuban women, and many organizations all in defense of the revolution. *Id.* at 43.

¹⁷⁶ TANIA: THE UNFORGETTABLE GUERRILLA, *supra* note 170, at 39.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*

¹⁷⁸ *Id.* at 105.

¹⁷⁹ *Id.*

¹⁸⁰ *Id.* at 103.

¹⁸¹ *Id.* at 170.

¹⁸² *Id.* at 103.

¹⁸³ *Id.* at IX.

¹⁸⁴ *Id.* at 67.

attending to the indoctrination of new combatants, and the logistics of transporting them to other areas of operations.¹⁸⁵ She was trained in Cuba in the handling of various infantry weapons, tactics, political work, and other skills of revolutionary people's war.¹⁸⁶ Shortly thereafter, she became an active member of the guerilla army under Comandante Vitalio ("Vilo") Acuna, as well as a soldier alongside of General Che Guevara.¹⁸⁷ As a member of the guerilla army, Tania was determined.¹⁸⁸ Although she was not accustomed to long treks necessary for guerilla tactics, she silently endured them and refused special treatment on the basis of being as a woman.¹⁸⁹ She insisted on being treated like the rest of the comrades in the guerilla groups, and was able to break through the barriers that prevented women from being fully accepted members of society. Her comrades saw her as "strong, intelligent, tactical . . . beautiful, more skilled and with more endurance than her comrade male guerillas."¹⁹⁰ Tania was able to surpass the male standard and earned the respect of her compañeros.¹⁹¹ Had she survived, she would have had a significant role in gender construction in Cuba and Argentina after the revolution. She had a dream that was similar to like Che's, i.e., to return and bring the revolution to Argentina. She stated, "My greatest desire is to return to Argentina, my homeland, and do everything possible to help the party there."¹⁹²

One of her greatest moments came when Che afforded Tania the honor of giving her an M-1 rifle.¹⁹³ Trekking through the mountains and cliffs of the jungle was a difficult, but her Comrades commented that she managed to keep up with the leaders better than other soldiers.¹⁹⁴ At the age of twenty-nine, she was gunned down while crossing a riverbank and died from a shot to the lung.¹⁹⁵ According to reports, when she heard shots, she raised her arms to bring her weapon her head into a shooting position.¹⁹⁶ She died for what she believed in—Patria o Muerte!¹⁹⁷

However, Tania is not revered in Argentina because she is the ultimate political evil and, therefore, denied recognition in Argentinean history.

¹⁸⁵ *Id.* at 100.

¹⁸⁶ *Id.* at 194.

¹⁸⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸⁸ *Id.* at 194.

¹⁸⁹ *Id.* at 200.

¹⁹⁰ *Id.* at 195.

¹⁹¹ *friends*

¹⁹² Tamara Bunke, *Statement Signed in Berlin* (Feb. 4, 1958), in *TANIA: THE UNFORGETTABLE GUERRILLA 15* (Marta Rojas & Mirta Rodriguez Calderon, eds., 1971).

¹⁹³ *TANIA: THE UNFORGETTABLE GUERRILLA*, *supra* note 170, at 200.

¹⁹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁹⁵ *Id.* at 207.

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁹⁷ *Country or death*

Argentines even consider her Cuban and not a fellow countryman. Within a traditional Argentina view, she would be considered "ugly" for wearing fatigues and manly for joining an army. Tania set a precedent for women, by stepping out of the *nación*¹⁹⁸ in order to fight in a revolution for social change. She opened a space for women to be a part of reconstruction through armed rebellion as opposed to change via laws or socialization. Tania's absence in Argentinean history is deliberate because the Church and the State do not want women to view themselves through a revolutionary lens. Major Inti aptly described the importance of Tania in Argentinean history with the following words,

Tania is an example to women everywhere, demonstrating the importance of participation in the revolutionary struggle. In our continent, where there are still many vestiges of feudal life with regard to women, she was able to break through these barriers and play a role which makes us remember her with love. She died heroically for the freedom of Latin America, but she will always live on as an example of what a brave and truly revolutionary woman can do!¹⁹⁹

Argentinean women need to recognize the revolutionary achievements of Tania.²⁰⁰ She is an example of an Argentinean woman taking aggressive steps to change the social order.

XIX. CONCLUSIÓN/CONCLUSION

"The pull between what is and what should be"²⁰¹ still greatly affects me. I am a proud Argentinean woman born in the United States that still is guided by "como se hace en Argentina."²⁰² My culture is inseparable from who I am. Yet, "what should be" is a work in progress, for me and for Argentina. For Argentina "what should be" is a *nación* who is progressive in its thoughts and actions for women. For me, "what should be" is difficult because I need to break free from the Argentinean cultural bias into which I was born and raised. It is easier to fall into this role, than to fight it and take control of my life as I see fit. It is easier for me to feel the guilt I was raised with, when I went against my mother's traditional teachings or what the *iglesia*²⁰³ tells me is right. The guilt that I was not becoming who I was suppose to be, this ideal woman, would ultimately lead me to succumb and

¹⁹⁸ *Nación*

¹⁹⁹ TANIA: THE UNFORGETTABLE GUERRILLA, *supra* note 170, at IX.

²⁰⁰ *Id.*

²⁰¹ Gloria Anzaldúa, *La Prieta*, in THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR 208 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

²⁰² *How it is done in Argentina*

²⁰³ *The Church*

follow not only my mother's but the Church's ideas. It may take many years or even a lifetime to unlearn these traditional beliefs, but that is my and my children's fate. I know there is a happy medium where I do not compromise my beliefs and also make my mother and patria²⁰⁴ proud. Therefore, "I walk the tightrope with ease and grace . . . expert at the balancing act"²⁰⁵ each day, assessing how true I have been to myself, my culture, and God.

In writing this paper, I did not intend to deny the role of wife and mother or to denounce Catholicism and its faith or my culture. My goal was to promote the discarding of traditional gender roles that are taught in religion and Argentinean culture in order to allow for the opportunity for women to define themselves beyond what the Argentine society has deemed as their "natural" role. By creating a new space that is not defined as oppressive, public or private, natural or radical, women may be liberated from old traditions and can create new lenses from which to view themselves and society. Women should not be raised to believe their most important social contribution to society dedicating their lives as wives or mothers. I do not have to denounce my desire to have a family; what I denounce is the oppressive framework in which that role exists. I do not want to be subjected to feeling like my husband's property or that I am a poor mother for having a career. I do not have to carry the burden of raising children alone. The space I create for myself is open to a partnership in marriage and in parenting. It is a space that is conducive to open and respectful exchanges of ideas and issues in a relationship, where each individual is viewed as important in their own right.

"Coming into spirituality the way I did changed the Christian myth that there is nothing that we can do-(that) we are totally powerless."²⁰⁶ As a mujer,²⁰⁷ I know that I am not powerless. We as women have the power to make social and legal change and create a society where faith and spirituality allow for consciousness, for awakening. I have faith that Argentinean women, given the path already open for them, will create a space that not only redefines women but the nation as well. Argentina's nationalist thinking today is a spiritual Argentina, le "La Gran Argentina," which is the country's true destiny. Argentina is "destined to be a leader, bearer of God's prodigious seal, liberator of an entire continent, and standard to the world."²⁰⁸ Whether this view of the future includes women equally, incorporates a sphere created by women, or a more progressive Catholicism

²⁰⁴ country

²⁰⁵ Anzaldúa, *supra* note 201, at 208.

²⁰⁶ Gloria Anzaldúa, *El Mundo Zurdo: The Vision, in THIS BRIDGE CALLED MY BACK: WRITINGS BY RADICAL WOMEN OF COLOR* 195 (Anzaldúa, et al. eds., 1981).

²⁰⁷ woman

²⁰⁸ SHUMWAY, *supra* note 30, at 243.

that sheds the traditional natural role, remains to be seen; but I am hopeful. What I am sure of is that Argentina has been blessed with a diverse group of women of whom I am proud to be one. Sus cuentos hacen a la mujer Argentina que soy yo. "Their stories make the Argentinean woman that I am."

