

On Simulacra and Theatre: A Study of Cristina Escofet

Jennifer Rathbun

Since the fall of the last dictatorship in Argentina its national theatre marks an emergence of female dramatists whose plays contribute to an intellectual and emotional debate about the construction of an Argentine feminine identity. This moment in history coincides with an intense period of self-examination where everyone, especially women, examined their roles both during and post dictatorship. The work of emerging female dramatists such as Susana Torres Molina, Aída Bortnik, Lucía Laragione, Beatriz Mosquera, Nora Glickman and Susana Freire, among others, collectively represents the female voices and experiences from this time period. One dramatist in particular, Cristina Escofet,¹ stands out for the themes she explores in her plays. Her work centers on a search for feminine identity as it creatively analyzes, questions and represents how simulacra affect women. In her search Escofet's discourse reevaluates, destabilizes or reinvents the image of women that has been perpetuated through Hollywood and through patriarchal discourse. These images exemplify what Judith Butler calls the performative nature of gender and Jean Baudrillard names simulacra. In fact, simulacrum is such a key element in Escofet's exploration of identity that its presence and importance in her plays requires further and more detailed elaboration. In this article I speak in general about all of Escofet's plays and analyze *Ritos del corazón*, *¿Qué pasó con Bette Davis?* and *Eternity Class*. I approach Escofet's work from the theoretical concept of simulacra as proposed by Baudrillard and as reflected in the writings of other critics and thinkers such as Butler and Paul Virilio.

Judith Butler in her article "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" parts from

Simone de Beauvoir's assertion proclaiming that one becomes a woman as opposed to being born one and theorizes that gender is performative. According to Butler there is no original gender identity and any gender construct is neither true nor false:

Because there is neither an "essence" that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, then, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. (273)

Butler later states that in theatre it is easy to distinguish between reality and fiction, that is, between performative gender acts and reality but in every day situations one is blind to the performative nature of gender. According to Butler it is indeed an act, or rather a creation of society. However, the act is so common that it has been transformed into reality. Butler explains that this act is taken very seriously, in fact "performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect" (279). To mistake or misinterpret the act for the real to the extent that one is sanctioned for a poor performance is a direct consequence of simulacra. The act is now mistaken for, and interpreted as, the real.

At the onset of this new millennium, images or performative acts have engulfed the sign as well as the rest of the world. Jean Baudrillard outlines the phases through which the image has passed in order to reach its current state of simulacrum:

Such would be the successive phases of the image: it is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the absence of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (6)

Baudrillard then speculates that society has not yet advanced out of the fourth phase of the image into the next, and as a consequence it is impossible to predict what comes next.

Baudrillard's idea of pure simulacra, a copy without an original, is crucial for the understanding of Escofet's drama because it is an essential element in almost all of her play texts. Simulacra represent a radical negation of the sign as value. Simulacrum substitutes the signs of the real for the real, consequently, the real ceases to exist and all referentials are liquidated. Thus, the image, the surface effect or rather simulacra in its endless proliferation

becomes all powerful. Simulation, as opposed to the real, is more dangerous than the real for it questions the very nature of our being. We all may only be pure simulacra.

Escofet, conscious of the nature of signs in today's society, presents the problems that arise out of the performative nature of gender, or rather, out of simulacra in relation to female's identity as her protagonists search for some definitive stable sign or image of women. In her critical work *Arquetipos*, Escofet, like Baudrillard, theorizes about a situation that approximates Butler's idea of the simulacra while describing its effects on Argentine women at the beginning of the twenty-first century:

¿Cómo llegamos? Andróginas. Maravillosamente hegemonzadas, androginizadas. Hasta los maniqués son anoréxicos. El sexo se ha bulimizado. La figura se ha hecho más que etérea, volátil. Lo femenino, sin curvas. Pelado. Sin culo, ni tetas. Y si hay culo. Plástico. Y si hay lolas, de siliconas. Los '90. Las mujeres ya no pueden poner el cuerpo. Lo han perdido. Cupido ha guardado su carcaj. Cerrado por Sida. Pero ya no importa. La realidad es virtual. La única realidad es la virtualidad. Y al cuerpo hay que buscarlo allí... Esqueléticamente asexual. Eternamente joven. Las madres y las hijas tienen la misma edad. (147)

According to Escofet, women have lost their bodies to simulacra. They are socially not allowed to be overweight, flat-chested or have imperfections of any kind on their bodies. Consequently, women replace and repair their authentic selves through plastic surgery. The search for physical perfection is perceived as being better than their real bodies. This is particularly the case in Buenos Aires where women walk on the streets wearing their facial bandages and boasting about their scars from plastic surgery. In fact, it is such a common place in Buenos Aires that when I performed field research there for a month the hotel's maids where I stayed did not understand that I personally was not undergoing any procedures.² The majority of the hotel's guests with extended stays were indeed receiving a variety of medical treatments including plastic surgery. In addition to medical alterations to the body, Escofet mentions that the female body is also lost to anorexia and rightfully so being that it is a serious illness afflicting hundreds of thousands of women in Buenos Aires.³ After the body is lost either to extreme dieting or plastic surgery, it is replaced by its image. Escofet later explains (*Arquetipos*, 193) that this virtual image becomes the only valid one and this substitution greatly affects how we view women particularly in Argentina.

Escofet's plays explore the effects of simulacra to different degrees. In *Ritos del corazón* and *Eternity Class* simulacra can be read as one of the plays' main themes while in other spectacles it manifests itself either through language, staging or through the multiple layering of the characters' identities. For example, in *Té de tías*, *Nunca usarás medias de seda*, and *Ritos del corazón* much younger versions of the protagonists confront their contemporary aged image. They are not merely hallucinations or vocalized memories. These younger characters appear in the list of characters and indeed are separate protagonists and the stage notes indicate that these characters should be interpreted by different actors.

In *Té de tías* there is a Bebé I and II as well as a Negrita I and II. In *Nunca usarás medias de seda*, María Bonita is the adolescent version of María and Laura II in *Ritos del corazón* is the 20 year-old revolutionary version of Laura. Furthermore, in *Solas en la madriguera*, *Señoritas en concierto* and *Ritos del corazón* the characters undergo a complete and sometimes multiple identity metamorphosis. In *Solas en la madriguera* there are a total of 13 small acts; each one calls for a distinct image of women and sometimes a woman's image changes drastically within one act. The characters in *Señoritas en concierto* are extremely fluid, they change from one identity to the next without any change in scenes or acts and in many cases even without any stage notes.

Ritos del corazón lists a total of ten characters; however Escofet states that "Por razones de distribución escénica esta obra puede ser representada por no más de cinco actrices" (*Teatro completo* 131). Zatlin names the complex layering of roles within roles the Russian nesting doll effect, where each unmasking reveals yet another mask. In Zatlin's analysis of *Ritos del corazón* she rightly observes that

The ten roles may be played by five actors; in the original production (directed by Eduardo Pavelic), two performers doubled in three roles each, while a third took on two roles. With a change of costume, an actor can be Marilyn Monroe one minute and a ten-year-old girl or an eighteenth-century country woman the next. Only the actor playing Laura has a single role [...] The mature Laura, however, is doubled in the form of Laura II, the ghost of what she was in her militant youth. For other characters there is also a layering of roles within roles. (Zatlin)

Consequently, the female character, lost in her various masks or layers, searches, if not for an original identity, for a new one. It is interesting to note, particularly in *Ritos del corazón*, that the nesting doll reveals images of images, or rather, of movie stars; instead of uncovering an authentic woman beneath the masks the de-layering reveals simulacra. Escofet's plays, then, can be characterized through the multiple and varied image of the characters and their loss of an original identity and search for new one.

The layering and masking of images is just one of simulacra's effects. First of all, if two Lauras, like in *Ritos del corazón*, appear on the stage, which one is the original? Which one is real? Which one is trying to achieve the image of the other? Furthermore, who is Juanita if she masquerades as Greta Garbo who in turn was a creation or invention of Hollywood? Secondly, when the women fluidly change their identities, like in *Señoritas en concierto*, that translates into a loss of original identity where the character can be a gypsy one minute, a famous movie star the next and change yet again into a fairy tale heroine. If there is no original identity, returning to Butler, it does not matter what mask the character wears; she can assume any role for none of them is authentic.

Simulacra manifest themselves at the level of staging as well. (I am analyzing Escofet's written texts; the staging could drastically change in a performance text.) For example, in *Té de tías* there are three oval pictures of deceased family members hanging on the wall. Throughout the course of the play, these three family members come to life and emerge from the frames. The photographs, mere images or copies of the deceased characters, are interpreted as the real life family members. In addition, the action in *Ritos del corazón* occurs in an abandoned theatre, so there is a play within a play or, depending on the set design, even a theatre within the theatre. Generally, theatre set designs disguise the fact that the action is taking place in theatre whereas in this case it is highlighted. It forefronts its own existence as simulacra.

In *Eternity Class* one of the few stage props is a mirror in front of which the plastic protagonists dance and admire themselves. Traditionally, the mirror's symbolism in literature has been ambivalent since it portrays reflections of images and not realities (Cirlot 211). Reflection has from its Latin and Greek roots an optic connotation joining together the concepts of reproduction and images to that of reflection. Thus reflection can be referred to and conceptualized by "a beam of light thrown back upon itself after impact with a reflecting surface" (Gasché 16). This indicates that reflection gets

caught up in the continuous play of reflection. Just as the child loses himself in the house of mirrors in the amusement park because he is unable to identify his original reflection, the original reflection gets lost in the interplay of light and mirrors. In this case the reflection of a reflection underscores the importance of simulacra in the play.

With the insertion of female voice into the past, the present, and the future, Escofet's drama *Ritos del corazón* strives to show how hard it is to be free of existing images of women. Laura, the main protagonist can be interpreted as the literary representation of the author herself as she, too, is a dramatist and intends to write a play without resorting to mythical or historical women. Laura, however, fails in her search for identity or rather for a sign that signifies the woman of future history. She sets out on a journey that is ended from its very conception because of the *episteme* on which it is grounded. That is to say, Laura seeks a sign of identity in a world in which signs do not faithfully represent what they are signs of; moreover, it is a world of pure image and of surface effects.

What would it mean to create a new sign for women? Is this task even possible? If a sign can indeed be created, how will it be incorporated into knowledge? In the play, Laura desperately grapples with and attempts to answer these questions; for her, the new sign is a rupture with reoccurring stereotypes traditionally attributed to and imposed upon women throughout history. To begin with, her new image is disconnected from the past. From the onset, she rejects a trio of phantoms that begs her to represent their voices in the present (*Teatro completo* 149). Although the three phantoms originate in different epochs they appear simultaneously suggesting that the signs of women from the past have been connected to one another. When Laura refuses to lend her voice to these women they consequently vanish. Laura realizes that her search is not historical in nature. It is not something she can go back and trace chronologically; instead, she must analyze what is contemporary. The very nature of sign which she is seeking has not always been present; hence she finds it inappropriate for her to impose it on women from the past. Furthermore, unlike Rosario Castellano's Lupita in *El eterno femenino*, Laura is not satisfied with resurrecting historical figures; she moves towards the future.

Subsequently, the images that Laura evokes belong to the twentieth century: Marilyn Monroe, Greta Garbo, the representation of her mother and grandmother and a much younger version of herself. Laura discovers numerous shortcomings in the images these women offer to her. None of

them accurately represents what she envisions a woman to be. Her grandmother, for example, suggests that she write a play using the chair as a symbol for women because in her life she has done nothing but sit and wait. Laura rejects this suggestion because her desire is to create a new sign for women and not merely to use some never-before-thought-of symbol, “Vos te creés que yo me maté revisando dentro de mí y voy a terminar en esa estupidez? Vos te creés que yo estudié los significados y los significantes para elegir una silla como símbolo de mujer?” (*Teatro completo* 154). Laura is very articulate when it comes to stating what her sign is not and she does not entertain her grandmother’s idea for even a moment. Nevertheless, she still has not yet given any indication about the nature of her new coveted sign.

Laura struggles in her search because she finds herself encircled by the simulacra. Although Laura is aware that something prohibits her from creating a new sign, she, unlike Escofet, is not conscious of the effects of simulacra but rather operates from within its effects. As Baudrillard explains in this age of simulacra, images and signs are divorced from reality. Laura cannot create a meaningful sign for women or search for significance or depth within Hollywood icons because nothing lies beyond the surface. There is nothing real behind the image. This is not to say that Escofet managed to create the sign or image that Laura could not, however Escofet demonstrates her awareness of simulacra through its consistent incorporation in her play texts.

Bette Davis: Simulacra par excellence

While Laura in *Ritos del corazón* grapples with changing the image of super stars such as Marilyn Monroe, the play *¿Qué pasó con Bette Davis?* questions to what extent the Hollywood image is tied to the actress. Its title alludes back to the film *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), starring the mature actresses Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. This film also explores the image and the importance of youth and beauty and it represents literally what happens to Hollywood actresses as they age and “lose” their beauty. In an interview with Whitney Stine, Bette Davis explains that her witch-like appearance in this movie was achieved by the application of a white pasty make-up that showed every wrinkle in her face. While she allowed herself to be filmed as such a horrific character, she mocks Crawford’s desperate attempts to cling to her beauty and youth in the filming. For the two superstars from Hollywood’s golden age, it was extremely difficult to interpret old,

wrinkled, and sagging characters. The viewing public in general tends to forget about aged actresses and asks itself years later “what ever happened to....?” The wrinkles, the illnesses and death of actors, however, are not a part of their allure and one almost never knows the answer to the question. In fact, neither the play nor the film answers the question they pose in their titles; the film even warns the viewer that she will not witness the response: “The answer is total suspense!”

In Escofet’s play Bette Davis has just recently died and her life is being judged in order to determine if she will enter into heaven. Instead of being judged for her qualities and demeanor as a human being, she is mistaken and condemned for the numerous roles that she interpreted in a career that spanned nearly 60 years in a total of 80 films. Bette states that she died free of sin; however, the angel replies that she is charged with espionage, seduction, rebellion, and kidnapping among other heinous crimes. Bette Davis was typecast as a strong defiant woman; therefore, a number of her characters did in fact commit such crimes even if Bette Davis, the person, did not. Escofet critiques the extent to which the actress is mistaken for her roles, or rather, the possibility that simulacra could affect us in the afterlife as well. Shocked at the accusations, Bette defends her honor by stating: “Pero si cualquiera sabe que han sido personajes... Fingir ha sido mi oficio...” (*Teatro* 120). The angel accuses her once again but this time adds her profession to the list of crimes: “bruja, asesina... actriz” (*Teatro* 122). He further explains that acting is indeed a sin: “Por la propia definición de actuar: éxtasis de penetrar en lo prohibido.... Y lo prohibido, está absolutamente prohibido. Incitó a los hombres al lado oscuro del paraíso. Su madre fue un súcubo...” (*Teatro* 122). The angel does not distinguish between actually committing crimes and pretending to commit them; both acts are punishable.

Bette Davis, now deceased, begins to lose contact with her body. She mentions that she can only see or feel portions and the stage notes indicate: “Aparecen en un vaho neblinoso: Erzebeth, Maitagarri, Ana Bolena, Juana de Arco y Trinidad Guevara, Betanzos pasa por detrás y las va nombrando” (*Teatro* 124). The text does not clarify the appearance of the above named women; however, it can possibly be interpreted that they represent the roles that Bette Davis acted in her career. For example, she played numerous martyrs even though she never represented Joan of Arc. While Bette Davis was never cast as Erzebeth Maitagarri, she most definitely interpreted many malicious, blood- thirsty characters and she was known as

a cut-throat herself in her career. Even though Davis did not act as Ana Bolena, she played several royal roles in films such as *Juárez* (1939) or *The Virgin Queen* (1955). Nevertheless, these four characters that appear to Bette Davis in Escofet's text, are indeed very similar to the actress Bette Davis as well as to her Hollywood characters. In the play they, too, are defiant and strong-willed women.

The action then turns to these specters; each woman, beginning with Joan of Arc and proceeding in chronological order, voices her opinion about her own life. They unmask certain mysteries that surround their life and death and at times admit that struggles for youth, beauty, stardom or martyrdom were not worth their personal sacrifice. Bette Davis does not figure into these scenes. As each act concludes she and the angel remark about what they have witnessed. After having witnessed the testimonies of these five ghastly figures, Bette turns to herself and questions: "He sido más mujer o más actriz ...?" (*Teatro* 159), to which the angel replies: "Confundiste ilusión con realidad como cualquier bruja. Has sido sólo una actriz. Tu mujer no ha nacido nunca" (*Teatro* 159). As Baudrillard explains, "simulation threatens the difference between the 'true' and the 'false,' the 'real' and the 'imaginary'" (3). Therefore there is no difference between the flesh and blood Bette Davis and the roles that she simulated for she appropriated those roles in the simulation. They became an inseparable part of her and consequently she is judged and condemned for her image and for the characters that she interpreted.

Eternity Class: The struggle with simulacra

Simulacra, the proliferation of the image, and the resistance to or acceptance of the effects of simulacra are the predominant themes in the spectacle *Eternity Class*. Escofet self-censors this piece by including a disclaimer at the beginning of the play. She advises those readers/viewers who find themselves encircled by simulacra that reading/watching the play could be hazardous to their health and that they should choose something else to read or watch.

The very title of the play criticizes simulacra. Escofet states that the title:

de una manera expresa el cambio en el imaginario argentino; todos quieren ser norteamericanos porque ser norteamericano es salvarse, es estar en el primer mundo, es acceder a la clase que no va a perder sus privilegios ("Atravesando el inconsciente femenino" 166)

Just like the way Spanish speakers often say “high class” instead of “la clase alta,” “eternity class” is a social classification aligned with the upper classes who would, incidentally, speak English. The use of English, as Escofet explained, stems from the Argentine’s mental image of what the high/eternity class would be like in the United States. Furthermore, the eternity class appears to be an invention of a Mr. Edward Evens, “personaje siniestro que como a Godot, se le espera sin que llegue nunca, aunque sea invisiblemente” (Nigro 12), who is assumed to be North American.

The title, however, can take on another interpretation as well. It could refer to the required classes and preparation that the protagonists must complete in order to be admitted to the eternity class. One must learn how to be an immortal plastic being. Either interpretation indicates the theme of simulacra. Nigro underscores the play’s cultural relevance in terms of simulacra and technological advances:

En *Quedar para siempre*⁴ la compleja subjetividad humana, tanto femenina como masculina, es reemplazada con pilas, cables, “chips” y “blips.” Nos reímos de esto, claro, pero luego, al darnos cuenta que ya no es ciencia ficción, que la visión del *Sleeper* “WoodyAllensco” de sólo hace unas décadas atrás, bien puede ser realidad en unas pocas en el futuro: el clonig; los experimentos genéticos, el desarrollo y mercadeo constante de drogas que nos permiten vivir más y más años – todos son maneras de hacer que lo antes imposible sea posible. (10)

Nigro warns that even though the reader/audience may laugh at Escofet’s extreme representation of simulacra, its consequences are serious and they are affecting our world.

Eternity Class acts out the story of an upper class Argentine family that undergoes the national “plastification” treatment. Upon completion of the program the family will live for eternity; their brains will be replaced by rechargeable batteries, their blood with silicone and their body parts will be replaced by plastic removable pieces (one personage even requests removable nipples) that can be ordered as if from a fashion catalog. The individual family members are at different stages of “plastification”: Maricarmen, the wife, is all but finished while Gualberto, her husband, cannot memorize the Eternity Class creed, a prerequisite for future treatments. The family is assisted by an Eternity Class representative who supervises their progress and development. The assistant, like the other Argentineans who do not have

enough capital to participate in the program, will be placed in an ecological reserve, or rather, a zoo for the Eternity Class' future entertainment. They will amuse themselves with natural human beings who did not convert themselves into simulacra. This demonstrates how those who resist the effects of simulacra are a minority that can be gathered and displayed in a reserve.

The play opens with Gualberto, the only male character, conducting international business transactions on the telephone. It becomes obvious that he imports pornographic films. He negotiates the purchase of an x-rated version of *Lady Macbeth* recorded in Japanese. Later in the play while conversing with Lina, the Eternity Class representative, Gualberto reveals that he met his wife when she was a porno star and he confesses: "Le juro que mi mujer de la única manera que me calienta, es en una porno.... Prefiero verla jadear en una película y no escucharla en carne y hueso" (128). Gualberto's disinterest in his real wife and his fascination with the porno queen is a direct consequence of simulacra. This is precisely what contemporary French philosopher Paul Virilio, who follows the same line of thinking as Baudrillard, theorizes about in his book *Open Sky* (1997). Virilio explains that as cybersex, long distance sexual relations and the porn industry thrive and increase in popularity, humans become increasingly more disgusted with actual physical contact and copulation. He states:

To prefer the virtual being – at some remove – to the real being – close up – is to take the shadow for the substance, to prefer the metaphor, the clone to a substantial being who gets in you way, who is literally on your hands, a flesh – and blood being whose only fault is to be there, here and now, and not somewhere else. (104)

The actual sexual experience disappoints when compared to the virtual; real sex has much less to offer and consequently no longer satisfies sexual desire. In fact, real sex may even become irritating. Maricarmen's panting in real life repulses and annoys her husband while on video, most certainly accompanied by mood lighting and music, it is so exciting that other men actually pay to hear her pant.

In today's society where virtual sex is literally one mouse click away and in which the representation of sexual intercourse is common even in daytime television, one becomes almost numb to any feelings of personal sexual excitement in response to the theatrical representation. Gualberto's business suffers these effects. He complains: "El sexo ya no circula... Ya nadie se excita..." (158). His reduction in sales results in a change of lifestyle

for the entire family. Mamie, the grandmother, is excluded from the family's "plastification" process because it would be too pricey to pay to remove all of her wrinkles. Gualberto explains to her: "Había que optar entre tu plastificación y la de toda la familia.... Además, no puedo poner en riesgo mi capital" (150). Mamie, who has just recently let her apartment to Edward Evans, blackmails her son by threatening to report him to Mr. Evans and emphasizes that even though she is 86 years old she wants to look as if she were 20 so that she can shake her behind wearing a bikini (151). If she were to be included, Maricarmen, her daughter Pía María, and Mamie, three generations of women, would all look and behave as if they were the same age.

Mamie is not the only family member affected by the economic cutbacks. The immediate family members also suffer from the loss of capital; Maricarmen and her adolescent daughter received the same standard rear-end instead of the top-of-the-line personalized models due to the standardized family "plastification" package that Gualberto purchased. When Pía María discovers that she has the exact same rear-end as her mother she questions why she would want to be immortal if she has to tolerate an average bottom for all eternity. She exaggerates her disappointment to such an extreme that she attempts suicide. However, she has almost completed the Eternity Class program and is already immortal.

Maricarmen, notably disturbed with the standard bottom as well, scrutinizes herself in a mirror while she asks, "lo ves muy standard?..." (136). Later, in a rare display of sexual excitement, Gualberto accidentally caresses his daughter's butt mistaking it for his wife's. The escapades involving the plastic bottom do not end there; Pía María's butt falls off in the last act of the play and her mother reacts: "¿Qué? ¿Cómo que se te cayó? Escondelo... Quedate sentada, yo qué sé, mové el coxis, disimulá.... No podemos reprobar el examen mensual de integración familiar. Fíjese si mi culo está fijo..." (172). Since the image has totally replaced everything real, Maricarmen only concerns herself with the appearances of the family, and, of course, with her own rear end.

If the question of simulacra negates the sign as value and is void of any real meaning, then what does this say about the image and identity of women? What is Escofet's critique and why is it so prevalent in her work? Simulacra undermine our very existence and Escofet unmasks and reveals its effects and prolific nature so that the readers or spectators may come to

their own conclusions or raise their own questions. Is there really nothing behind the image of women? Are women mere “surface effects” void of any deeper or significant meaning? Are we the spectators unable to find or create this deeper meaning like Laura? Do we condemn, mistake or even replace women for their images like what happens in *¿Qué pasó con Bette Davis?* Are women measured by the number of plastic surgeries they have performed as in *Eternity Class*? Escofet’s play texts aim to raise the consciousness of their readers and/or spectators so that they become aware of simulacra. They do not solve the issue of identity nor do they explain why simulacra affect their identities. However, Escofet’s texts speak directly to women and present them with a medium through which they can analyze their own images.

Mt. Holyoke College

Notes

¹ Cristina Escofet began acting when she was fifteen; in the 1980s she started publishing theatre for children including the plays *Cyrano* and *Las valijas de Ulises*. Escofet wrote her first and only novel, *Primera piel*, in 1984, and she debuted as a playwright for adults in 1985 when she presented *Té de tías* in Buenos Aires as part of Teatro Abierto. The dramatist published her first volume of theatre in 1994 which includes the plays *Té de tías*, *Solas en la madriguera*, *Nunca usarás medias de seda*, *Ritos del corazón*, and *Señoritas en concierto*. The Mexican critic and dramaturge Felipe Galván published Escofet’s play *Los fantasmas del héroe* in his anthology *Diálogos dramáticos México-Argentina* (2000). In the spring of 2000 Escofet also published a collection of essays and reflections titled *Arquetipos, modelos para desarmar: Palabras desde el género* in which she further analyzes the feminist themes developed in her theatre and in literature in general. In August 2001 she published volume two of *Arquetipos* under the title *Teatro* which includes her most recent plays *Eternity Class*, *¿Qué pasó con Bette Davis?* and *Las que aman hasta morir*. The latter was awarded the SADE prize in 1995 (Sociedad Argentina de Escritores). Escofet’s piece, *Eternity Class*, won an award from New York University in 2001 and was published in the anthology *Obras argentinas premiadas en New York*. Escofet currently resides in Buenos Aires where she continues to actively write and produce plays and participate in conferences and workshops for aspiring dramatists.

² The Website zonalatina.com cites the September 1998 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: “Porteños are equally artful with their bodies. They’re wild about plastic surgery and brag of their tummy tucks, breast implants, and reformed noses. Even the nation’s President, Carlos Menem, proudly announced that he has had his hairline moved and his cheekbones touched up. Cosmetic surgery is only the latest manifestation of porteños’ self absorption.” For a detailed discussion of Plastic Surgery in Buenos Aires, Argentina please consult this Webpage.

³ *Clarín*, one of the two major newspapers in Buenos Aires reported on July 5 1995 that “El porcentaje de bulimia y anorexia triplica el de los Estados Unidos y probablemente sea el más alto del mundo.” The report then mentions that in Argentina one out of every ten young women suffers from either anorexia or bulimia. This information exemplifies how simulacra effects the Argentine female – she strives to replace her body with that of an unattainable image which eventually engulfs the real body to the point that it is lethal. Escofet in her writings and play texts incorporates this social phenomena.

⁴ *Quedar para siempre* was the original title of the play before publication.

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