Ley seca by Angie Cervantes: The Ordeal of a Costa Rican Teenage Girl[1]

Elaine M. Miller

During adolescence, a young woman searches for her identity, determining who she is and how she fits into the world. Gender norms, peer groups, socioeconomic status, cultural background, and family expectations can influence this quest, which becomes even more complicated when the teenager starts to have sexual relationships and faces an unplanned pregnancy. Costa Rican playwright Angie Cervantes dramatizes this situation in *Ley seca*, which was published and staged in San José in 2007 as part of the Proyecto Teatral Emergencias. An independent initiative by Chilean professor and director Adolfo Albornoz Farías, the project mentored university students with acting experience who were writing their first plays.[2] In this work, seventeen-year-old Eva faces loneliness and social pressure as she seeks an illegal abortion. Cervantes's setting of the play during Holy Week and use of the Stations of the Cross as its structural framework call attention to how the weight of the Catholic Church's moral teachings and their influence on the legal regulation of reproductive rights in contemporary Costa Rica create obstacles for women. Rebelling against these norms, Eva refuses to submit to her parents' pressure to marry and form a family with a boyfriend who, she ultimately decides, is not a suitable partner.

As Eva searches for someone to help her obtain a clandestine abortion, she encounters a variety of attitudes concerning women's reproductive rights while suffering her own Stations of the Cross, which parallel those that commemorate Jesus Christ's crucifixion. As she moves through these stations, she confronts a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality, an institution that, according to Judith Butler, "requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire"

(31). By subverting this notion that sex, gender, and desire are coherent, Cervantes reveals gender to be what Butler has described as performatively constructed: "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized* repetition of acts" (191). Rather than conform to the rigid codes of acceptable models of masculinity and femininity in Costa Rica, Eva and other characters in the play enact different possibilities for conceptualizing gender. In particular, they challenge hegemonic masculinity, the configuration of gender practice that "maintains the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 77). Although there is no universal hegemonic masculinity, Connell notes that it is "culturally linked to both authority and rationality, key themes in the legitimation of patriarchy" (90). Butler also observes that "the ontological distinction between soul (consciousness, mind) and body invariably supports relations of political and psychic subordination and hierarchy," with the mind being culturally associated with masculinity and the body with femininity (17). Upon closer examination of *Ley seca*, it is clear that this mind/body binarism, in which men exercise solely their intellect while women remain rooted within their bodies, serves to limit Eva's options and increase her agony. Cervantes illustrates Eva's anguish while at the same time providing insight into the character's thoughts by inserting throughout the play the voice-over of a thirty-year-old Eva, who, expecting a child, narrates memories of important milestones in her life. By having Eva speak openly about something on which Costa Rican women, under the pressure of legal restrictions and moral censure, normally remain silent, Cervantes represents a young woman's assertion of control over her life and identity as well as a rationality for women in general that belies the concept of the mind-body divide as something specific to a single sex. This is not the only binarism associated with Costa Rican hegemonic masculinity that Cervantes contests in the play. She also shows how men express emotions and assume nurturing roles that are traditionally linked to women as mothers and caregivers. Ultimately, Eva's voice and her interactions with the other characters critique compulsory heterosexuality as the ideal family model in past and present Costa Rica and instead propose alternative configurations of the family and accompanying gender roles.

Before considering how *Ley seca* challenges the gender norms that have resulted from this compulsory heterosexuality, it is necessary to examine the influence of Catholicism on Costa Rican morality and laws. Cervantes centers

the play around the observance by Eva's family of Holy Week. By setting the play in this time frame and having Eva's mother, father, and brother be the characters who appear with her most frequently on stage, Cervantes shows the beliefs about motherhood held by Roman Catholicism and the patriarchy that Eva confronts in reaching a decision to end her pregnancy. The protagonist's name, Eva, references the biblical figure, Eve, expelled from heaven for eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, whose name literally means "life," "life-giving," or "mother of all who have life." The negative associations with Eve's name as a sinner follow Eva in the play, as she is reminded of the prohibitions against premarital sex and abortion. Additionally, the name Eve evokes the bodily suffering experienced by women during pregnancy and childbirth. Eve as a symbol of all women, with the emphasis on the suffering female body, is part of the creation of the patriarchal binary division between the rationality of the mind, "marked as an attribute of men alone," and the body, within which women remain rooted, "held back by their supposedly natural biological processes" (Price and Shildrick 2).

The play's title refers to the law prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages in Costa Rica on Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and other special dates such as elections. Nonetheless, this law does not necessarily reduce liquor consumption. Instead, people smuggle alcohol, purchase it on the black market, or simply buy extra beverages in advance. Returning from the supermarket before the restriction goes into effect, Eva's father, Rafael, notes: "Compran guaro como si viniera el diluvio universal, desapareciera el alcohol, y todo después fuera sólo agua" (97-98). Although the play does not focus on alcohol consumption, the law referenced in its title is often enforced to promote the solemn observance of Easter, the most important Catholic holy day. Rafael's reference to the Great Flood, which God used to destroy the world and punish mankind's evilness, evokes the idea of judgment and punishment for those who do not behave according to God's expectations. By titling the play *Ley seca* and setting it during the week before Easter and Christ's resurrection, Cervantes underscores the influence of religion on the Costa Rican legal system and social norms.

Like the *ley seca*, the legislation concerning abortion reinforces the teachings of the Catholic Church, which opposes not only abortion but contraception in general. An additional link between the laws is that they do not ultimately prevent the behavior that they seek to regulate. Costa Rican women have clandestine abortions despite their legal prohibition,

attempting to keep the procedure secret even as they risk their lives should they experience medical complications.[3] Cervantes has expressed interest in confronting dogmas in her dramaturgy (personal interview).[4] In *Ley seca*, she examines how the patriarchal, Catholic dogmas that underpin Costa Rican laws concerning reproductive rights impact Eva's decision to terminate her pregnancy and cause her to experience isolation as she searches for medical and emotional support.

Eva's young age makes her even more vulnerable to loneliness as she faces an unplanned pregnancy. Her parents, Rafael and Mercedes—unlike the Angel of Healing and Our Lady of Mercy, the religious figures after whom they are named—do not provide her solace or compassion. In fact, they remain completely unaware of their daughter's ordeal, as Eva chooses not to confide in them. Their role in the play consequently centers on reminding Eva of her religious obligations during Holy Week and of social expectations, such as eventually marrying her boyfriend, Andrés. Although Eva's reluctance to attend the Stations of the Cross and her refusal to attend lunch with her family at Andrés's house confuse them, her parents do not question her motives for not wanting to participate. This lack of communication between older generations and young adults is in fact a common thread in the works of the dramatists who participated in the Proyecto Teatral Emergencias.[5] Albornoz Farías notes that the older generations are absent, unaware of the situation, or simply unable to help the young characters in these plays: "La prescindencia respecto de los mayores a propósito de las cuestiones verdaderamente vitales pareciera ser la más clara declaración de principios respecto del estado de las cosas y del rol que a cada uno le corresponde frente a éste" (9). Consequently, Eva and the other young protagonists in these plays rely on themselves or their peers to deal with their reality.

The young female characters in the plays created by Proyecto Teatral Emergencias confront the female body as a cultural construction, showing how it is regulated to conform to patriarchal norms in Costa Rica. In their overview of the first *Emergencias* anthology, Albornoz Farías and Patricia Fumero explain how the focus on the female body in the three plays by Cervantes, Elvia Amador, and Milena Picado encourages the audience to examine the impact that this construction has on society and to think about how to resist and reconfigure the characteristics traditionally associated with being masculine and feminine. Albornoz Farías states that, "[L]a construcción dramática deviene una forma de registrar y exponer lo que el cuerpo habita y lo que en el cuerpo se inscribe, apareciendo la experiencia corporal como

vehículo privilegiado de comunicación y síntesis entre el sujeto y su entorno" (8). Fumero, contextualizing the work of the three young playwrights within Costa Rican theatre, emphasizes their treatment of "el aborto, la victimización de la mujer y la disociación cuerpo-ser, temas que han sido tratados reiteradamente en la dramaturgia costarricense desde la década de 1980" (86). As implied by the title of the workshop in which Cervantes created her play and the anthology in which it was published—*Emergencias*—these emerging young playwrights present social issues of continuing urgency in which the lives of women are at stake.

Abortion has been a provocative topic on the Costan Rican stage since the last century. In *Tarde de granizo y musgo* (1985), Leda Cavallini not only spoke indirectly about abortion but also broke the silence surrounding another taboo topic: incest. The protagonist, a forty-year-old woman, recalls how, beginning at age eight, she was sexually abused by male relatives. Although she never directly states that she had an abortion as a teenager, the audience can infer she did from references to the family's refusal to acknowledge her pregnancy symptoms, her bleeding while lying on a stretcher, and the purchase of herbs at a market. In Claudia Barrionuevo's transgressive play *15 para 40* (2000), four female friends have a frank discussion of women's sexuality and one of them, after getting pregnant with her soon-to-be ex-husband, has a clandestine abortion performed by her gynecologist. In Ana Istarú's *Hombres en escabeche* (2001), a critically and commercially successful play in Costa Rica and abroad, the protagonist has an ambiguous discussion with her boyfriend about their unplanned pregnancy. She rejects his offer to sell his saxophone, which could potentially fund an illegal abortion or help to support the child financially, but later has a miscarriage. Milena Picado's *Juegos a la hora de la muerte* (2007), published in the same anthology as Cervantes's *Ley seca*, shows the fatal medical complications resulting from clandestine abortions performed on children with the death of one of its protagonists, a nine-year-old girl forced to terminate a pregnancy by those who had been prostituting her. In *Ley seca* and Janil Johnson's *100 gramos* (2009), another play from the Proyecto Teatral Emergencias, two teenagers survive clandestine abortions. Unlike the women in *15 para 40* and *Hombres en escabeche*, they lack financial and emotional support. Additionally, the fourteen-year-old character in *100 gramos* deals with the psychological trauma of discovering that she is pregnant after being raped by her teacher.[6] In *Gestación* (2009), an independent, commercially successful film directed by Esteban Ramírez and based on a true story, a high school student considers taking abortion

pills illicitly before finally deciding to raise her child as a single mother with emotional and financial support from her ex-boyfriend.[7] Nonetheless, after deciding to become a mother, she faces moral censure when her Catholic school prevents her from attending regular classes while pregnant. The critique of religious dogma in these works anticipates the public debate about the 2017 case of a 17-year old who got pregnant when raped by her father, a case that "is being approached not from a medical or legal perspective but via a Christian viewpoint" (Arroyo Navarrete).

The secrecy surrounding abortion in these artistic works stems from Costa Rica's legal code, which only permits abortion when pregnancy threatens the mother's life or health (Campos Salas 16). The constitution affirms that human life is inviolable, and the penal code sets prison sentences ranging from one to ten years for causing the death of a fetus (Campos and Salas 15). Despite requests from the United Nations that Costa Rica reconsider "its legislation in cases of rape, incest, or when fetal impairment exists," abortion remains illegal in these circumstances as well as for psychological or socioeconomic reasons (Arias, "UN Committee"). The spread of the Zika virus—which is linked to microcephaly in infants born to infected mothers—throughout Central America has recently drawn attention to Costa Rica's strict abortion law, as have three well-publicized cases in the media. In 2003, a nine-year-old Nicaraguan immigrant living in Costa Rica who was the victim of sexual abuse was not allowed to have a legal abortion in Costa Rica and instead returned to Nicaragua for the procedure (Arroba 237). In 2008, a mother was arrested after her sixteen-year-old daughter died from an infection after taking the abortion pill, and the woman who illicitly obtained the medication faced criminal charges (Vargas M.). In 2017, a twelve-year-old girl who was raped by her father was never offered by doctors the option of requesting legal permission to terminate the resulting pregnancy, despite her suffering from extreme nausea and depression and saying that she wanted to die (Arroyo Navarrete). Human-rights activist and feminist Larissa Arroyo Navarrete attributes the doctors' reluctance to discuss the possibility of obtaining a legal abortion in this most recent case to "the lack of a technical protocol that provides legal protection to doctors who perform abortions under these circumstances."

The guiding force behind Costa Rica's policies and legislation concerning abortion and reproductive rights is the Catholic religion. As Arroba notes, Costa Rica is "one of the few nations in the world with an official religion: Roman Catholicism" (230). In 2007, when *Ley seca* was first published and performed, high school students did not receive any sex education, which

limited their knowledge about and access to birth control (230). While contraception is used in Costa Rica, despite the Church's opposition to it, adolescents from lower socioeconomic classes generally do not seek contraceptive counseling in public health clinics, "because they are often turned away and told not to have sex until they are married" (237). Eva's situation in *Ley seca* reflects the reality faced by many Costa Rican teenage girls. Andrés reveals that they were using the rhythm method, noting after she takes a pregnancy test: "Yo estaba seguro de que era matemáticamente imposible. Las cuentas a mí no me salían" (86). If his approach to the situation centers on using numbers to demonstrate the statistical improbability of conception, evoking the rationality linked to hegemonic masculinity as described by Connell, Eva's viewpoint is initially intimately connected to the physical changes occurring in a woman's body and the social expectation of being a nurturing mother, as she replies to him: "¡Como si supieras llevar cuentas! Por algo somos las mujeres las que menstruamos y las que llevamos a los hijos adentro" (86). When Eva discovers that their precautions have failed, she must choose between becoming one of the 20 percent of Costa Rican women who have children before age twenty or undergoing a clandestine abortion ("20% of Costa Rican Women").[8]

As a cultural construct, the mind-body divide has been an integral part of the gender roles established in the Costa Rican patriarchal family. Entering literary discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as the symbol of the nation, this family, as analyzed by Margarita Rojas and Flora Ovares in *La casa paterna: Escritura y nación* and by Rojas, Álvaro Quesada, Ovares, and Santander in *En el tinglado de la eterna comedia*, is headed by the father, who, representing reason and order, holds absolute power, in addition to the Church's divine authority (24). Sexual relationships within marriage are for procreation. Characters in Costa Rican cultural production who attempt to transgress these norms by rejecting marriages that would consolidate the family's socioeconomic position or by seeking romantic relationships outside of marriage either fail or are expelled from these literary works, being obligated to leave Costa Rica and live away from the family, reflecting the marginalization of those members of society as a whole who do not comply with these expectations (Rojas, et. al. 124). This same familial structure is present in Cervantes's play. Here, however, the patriarchal family is displaced in favor of familial configurations not based on marriage, in which women are not limited to the role of mother and men are a source of emotional support. Although Eva never reveals her pregnancy to her parents, they make clear

their expectations for her to be a wife and mother. Eva's relationship with Andrés gives them hope that she will marry him. As her mother reminisces about Eva's first communion, she adds, "Ya casi la vemos de blanco otra vez," alluding to the white wedding gown that Eva will wear, a symbol of her purity (105). An additional sign of the parents' marital expectation for Eva is their eager acceptance of an invitation to lunch at Andrés's house on Good Friday, already calling his parents Eva's "suegros" (105). They attend the lunch even in Eva's absence, when her brother, Ricardo, relays the message that she cannot go because "le duelen mucho los ovarios" (99). These parental expectations sustain what Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* has described as "a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain" (185). Even Eva's resistance to attending the lunch is framed in reference to the female reproductive organ, highlighting women's social role as mothers.

In *Ley seca*, Cervantes gives visibility to the emotional anguish that is often silenced when a Costa Rican teenage girl finds herself unexpectedly pregnant and offers an opportunity to contest official beliefs regarding motherhood, romantic relationships, and women's reproductive rights. By titling the play's fourteen scenes as Stations of the Cross involving Eva, rather than events on the day that Jesus Christ was crucified, Cervantes emphasizes her character's solitude and agony.[9] These scene titles are visible to those reading the playtext and were presented via voice-overs during the performance.[10] After the title announcing Eva's passage through the next Station of the Cross, the audience hears thirty-year-old Eva's voice-over recalling an important milestone from her life before the dialogue begins between the characters in the scene. For the performance, Albornoz Farías opted to make the entire stage and all the actors visible to the audience throughout the play, even when the performers were not participating in a scene. This decision, which broke the theatrical illusion by having the non-participating performers acting like a second audience, replicated how many witnessed Christ's suffering while carrying the cross on the way to his crucifixion and encouraged the audience members to reflect how in real life they might encounter young women in Eva's situation and either refuse or agree to assist them. Prayers from the Catholic Stations of the Cross as well as discussion between her parents, who are responsible for leading the prayer at one of these Stations, also help to establish the parallel between Christ's suffering and that of Eva. Like Christ obtaining solace from the Virgin Mary, Simon of Cyrene, Veronica, and the women of Jerusalem on the way to his crucifixion, Eva receives assistance

during her ordeal. Hortensia, the herbalist at the market, sells her a natural remedy to induce an abortion. When this treatment proves ineffective, Eva seeks help from her brother's friend Alberto, who, unlike the Biblical figures who aided Christ, refuses her plea. She finally turns to Ricardo, who knows a doctor who provides her with medicine that terminates the pregnancy. While Christ dies on the cross and is laid in the tomb to await resurrection in the final Stations of the Cross, Eva, in her own Via Crucis, finds comfort in her brother's arms after having the abortion.

If *Ley seca*'s structure highlights Eva's suffering, its content presents a variety of perspectives about gender roles, compulsory heterosexuality, parenthood, and reproductive rights by interweaving intertextual references to popular music, arguments in favor of abortion rights, the reporting of biological vital signs, and dialogue voicing characters' opinions. What particularly stands out is the play's non-heteronormative configurations of the family, which contemplate gay relationships and single motherhood. Early in the play, the radio that Eva, Ricardo, and Alberto listen to plays a key role in transmitting discourse about gender roles and abortion. The importance of the radio is such that Cervantes lists it as one of the characters at the beginning of the playtext (77). The radio first plays two Mexican songs from the 1980s and 1990s: Juan Gabriel's *Caray* as performed under the title *Popurrí* by the band Pandora and Alejandra Guzmán's *Hacer el amor con otro*. The portions of these songs used in the play address former romantic partners who, respectively, are a woman who rejected a marriage proposal and a man whose love surpasses that of his ex-lover's current partner. Both songs address heterosexual relationships. However, in *Ley seca* the openly gay Alberto and Ricardo, who is later revealed to be straight, sing along to each other. This serves to denaturalize the messages contained in the songs, which the audience might otherwise overlook, opening up romantic relationships to include those of different sexual orientations.[11] The stage directions indicating that Ricardo shuts off the radio when he realizes what he is singing with Alberto signify a self-consciousness that not all of Costa Rican society embraces non-heterosexual relationships (82).

The radio also broadcasts, between the two songs, the well-known analogy of the violinist employed by the American philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomson in her 1971 essay "A Defense of Abortion":

> [U]sted se despierta en la mañana y se encuentra en la cama con un violinista inconsciente, se entera de que la Sociedad de Amantes de la Música lo ha conectado a su cuerpo ya que él padece de una enfer-

> medad renal mortal y sólo usted tiene el grupo de sangre compatible, le dicen que no se preocupe, que sólo tendrá que estar pegada a él por nueve meses . . . (81).[12]

Ricardo responds to this statement by imagining the male violinist to be a woman and the instrument to be a phallic symbol so that he can enjoy sexual pleasure: "Bueno, si fuera una nena la que me toca el violín yo me le pego todo lo que sea necesario . . ." (82). This reaffirms the patriarchal role of men in Central America, who expect subservience in their female partners (Campos and Salas 25). Eva points out that the analogy is asserting that a fetus should not be given priority over a woman's body and decision to terminate a pregnancy (82). Alberto, commenting on how to avoid having to make this choice, proposes two options. One is the conservative approach of abstinence, while the other is more progressive: "[T]e negás a las relaciones heterosexuales. ¡Son peligrosísimas!" (83). While Eva remains silent, Ricardo and Alberto discuss having children. Ricardo wants children but dislikes the idea of physically caring for them. Alberto is enthusiastic about having an only child and claims the role of mother for himself, noting that he would be "una buena madre" (83). In this dialogue, Cervantes includes different attitudes toward parenthood, varying from the traditional, in which Ricardo as the father does not do any physical work involved with childcare, to Alberto's fluid understanding of parental roles, in which motherhood is not linked to a specific sex or gender, and Eva's support for the right to decide when to be a mother.

Eva also discusses the roles of mothers and fathers with Andrés. Although he knows that she took a pregnancy test, she lies about the result, telling him it was negative. His response reveals his view of the father's social role, expressing relief that he is free of financial responsibility: "Ya me había visto yo trabajando dos turnos en M'c Donald's (sic) para pagar la leche y los pañales," and, "Uno teniendo familia que mantener saca el machete y se pone a cortar zacate" (86). This role of financial provider is one of the key traits linked to the traditional model of masculinity identified by Campos and Salas in *Masculinidades en Centroamérica* (24). Eva rejects her boyfriend and his stance regarding fatherhood with her final comment to him: "Que no tenés ni la más mínima idea de lo que significaría un hijo en tu vida y aunque la tuvieras, no es ni cercano a lo que sería para la mía" (88).

In *Ley seca*'s final scene, after the abortion, only Eva speaks, initially in a voice-over. Listed in the playtext as "Eva en cinta" (77), this name of the older version of Eva has a double meaning in Spanish. As it appears in the

script as two separate words, "en cinta" means "on tape," as in recorded, or the voice-over that is heard throughout the play. However, when written as the single word "encinta" means "pregnant." Eva speaks at the beginning of many of the scenes, but it is not until the last time that she speaks that it becomes clear that she is expecting a child.[13] When she says, "La primera vez que no sólo era yo sino que éramos dos, yo no tuve un hijo, un hijo me tuvo a mí," she is referring to the pregnancy at age seventeen (107). The fact that she identifies this as her first pregnancy confirms that she is now pregnant again at an older age. Cervantes's technique of having the older Eva *en cinta* speak throughout the play bridges the mind versus body binarism between men and women. Eva *en cinta* transmits her rational thinking about her identity and milestones in her life. At the same time, since the voice-overs directly reference Eva's bodily experiences, such as injuring herself on her first bike ride, using her tongue when kissing a boy, feeling the pain of her first sexual intercourse, they support the notion that this divide is an arbitrary cultural construct, that she is a rational thinker who is also enmeshed in her biological corporeality.

By making Eva's private introspection public, the voice-overs dismantle the narratives often associated with heterosexual romantic relationships and the attendant traditional notions of femininity and masculinity. For example, rather than her first kiss being a momentous occasion, she remembers its awkwardness: "nos estorbaban las narices y no sabíamos dónde meter las manos" (92). Far from being composed and self-confident, her boyfriend "llegó con la cara blanca como un papel y las manos empapadas de sudor" (92). Here the voice-over emphasizes the boyfriend's biological corporeality, with his emotional state provoking a nervousness that is not linked to Costa Rican hegemonic masculinity, according to which, "se debe evitar que se le note el miedo" (Campos and Salas 24). Her account of the first time she brought a boyfriend home to meet her family places similar emphasis on his corporeality: He arrived "muerto del miedo," and her father "puso la peor cara de la que fue capaz sólo por el placer de ver al chiquillo pidiéndole a la tierra que se lo tragara" (100). The boyfriend's stress was so severe that he became tongue-tied while answering her father's questions. In this description, the 30-year-old Eva is emotionally removed from what is happening, while her boyfriend's feelings affect him physically, an inversion of the characteristics traditionally associated with femininity and masculinity. Central American hegemonic masculinity is evident during the visit; the father assumes an authoritative role to test the boyfriend as her potential husband and, upon

finding him lacking in masculine suitability, asserts his own superiority. Eva notes, however, that her father is not always a domineering figure in the family and that "las apariencias engañan" (100), a comment that relates back to Butler's theory of the performative nature of gender.

The next speaker after the abortion is seventeen-year-old Eva, who tells her brother about the child that she will have one day. She lists a variety of things that she will teach the child and experiences that she wants to share with him or her, concluding that "un día, voy a tener un hijo," as the sound of a baby's cry is heard (108). As Eva lists what she and the child will do, what is noticeably absent is any mention of a father. This omission, coupled with her previous rejection of Andrés, implies that single motherhood is an acceptable option in certain situations. This non-traditional familial structure is common in contemporary Costa Rica, where, according to data from the Ministry of Labor, one third of households are headed by women ("One Third"). This contrasts with the patriarchal structure of Eva's family as represented earlier in the play. In fact, her mother and father do not participate at all in this final scene. Labeled as the "Última Estación: Eva es puesta en brazos de su hermano" and taking place on Easter Sunday, the concluding scene features only Eva and Ricardo on stage (107). This Station parallels the Catholic Station of the Cross in which Christ's body is taken down from the cross and laid in the arms of his mother, the Virgin Mary. In the play, however, the gender roles are distinctively reversed, with Eva acting as Christ who has suffered, although she is still alive, and Ricardo as the afflicted Virgin holding her child. Ricardo displays sensitivity and compassion as he emotionally supports his sister, characteristics not normally linked to Central American hegemonic masculinity (Campos and Salas 24). Likewise, Eva claims roles in raising her future child that are not usually linked to mothers and models of femininity: "Voy a enseñarle que tiene que ser valiente [. . .] a jugar fútbol, ajedrez [. . .] vamos a salir a correr juntos" (108). She can be a mother who is physically and emotionally strong and who also teaches her child how to think. Like Christ following his resurrection, seventeen-year-old Eva can, after the abortion, contemplate a new beginning as well as a future that includes an Eva *en cinta*.

By ending the play in this manner, with Eva as a speaking subject in control of her life and any children whom she should choose to have, with her emotionally supportive brother and uncle of her future children embracing her, Cervantes proposes an alternative to patriarchal and religious dogmas. Although Eva has physically and emotionally survived a clandestine abortion

thanks to a compassionate brother and doctor, other Costa Rican teenage girls are not so fortunate. As the play's title, *Ley seca*, reminds us, the prohibition of certain actions, such as alcohol consumption or abortion when the mother's health is not in danger, will not stop people from doing them. Instead, the play invites reflection about compulsory heterosexuality, masculinities and femininities, familial structures, and who should control the decision to become a parent and under what circumstances. In doing so, it shows how men's and women's roles and family dynamics are transforming in contemporary Costa Rica. A family need not consist only of a man, a woman, and their children. Instead, the play presents additional configurations of the family, which are generating debate both on and off stage.

Christopher Newport University

Notes

[1] A Faculty Development Grant from Christopher Newport University funded the presentation of a preliminary version of this article at the 2016 Congress of the Latin American Studies Association in New York City.

[2] *Ley seca* was published in *Emergencias: Dramaturgia costarricense contemporánea emergente* along with two other plays written in a workshop organized by Albornoz Farías at the University of Costa Rica: Milena Picado's *Juegos a la hora de la muerte* and Elvia Amador's *Sinapsis (Cuatro locas masticando a un imbécil)*. The three plays premiered in 2007 at the Teatro de la Danza del Ministerio de la Cultura in San José as a single, two-hour production directed by Albornoz Farías. During their four-week run consisting of a total of sixteen performances, the three plays were staged together, one after another. The playwrights also acted in the performances.

[3] Jeannette Campos Salas cites data from the Costa Rican Demographic Association indicating that 27,000 abortions were performed in 2008 in Costa Rica. However, she notes that many cases are unreported because abortion is practiced clandestinely (11).

[4] Cervantes further developed this thematic vein in *Pabellón 6*, a play about the seven deadly sins in Christian tradition, which she wrote as a participant in a dramaturgy workshop sponsored by the Centro Cultural de España in 2008 and facilitated by Spanish playwright Guillermo Heras.

[5] The Proyecto Teatral Emergencias organized by Albornoz Farías consisted of three workshops that resulted in the performance and publication of nine plays in three anthologies: *Emergencias: Dramaturgia costarricense contemporánea emergente* (2007), *Emergencias. 2* (2008), and *Emergencias. 3* (2009).

[6] Rather than focusing solely on the teenager's situation, *100 gramos* examines how she participates with other women in ceremonies in which they cannibalize aborted fetuses to achieve psychological healing. Miller analyzes the characters' resistance to the self-disciplinary practices compelling them to embody traditional and modern femininities.

[7] A newspaper article by Alexánder Sánchez identifies *Gestación* as the fifth most-seen Costa Rican film during its premiere.

[8] Although the birth rate has declined dramatically in Costa Rica to 1.76 children per woman in 2013, a considerable number of teenagers are getting pregnant and giving birth ("Costa Rica Reports").

Lack of access to a variety of contraceptive methods as well as limited financial and emotional support in obtaining clandestine abortions undoubtedly are factors leading to this high rate of teenage motherhood.

[9] The Stations of the Cross are also commonly known in Spanish as the "Vía Crucis" and "Calvario," terms used not only for this religious devotion but also to describe anything considered to be a terrible ordeal ("Calvario," "Vía Crucis").

[10] Some examples of Eva's Stations of the Cross from the playtext are "Eva es condenada a la soledad" (78), "Eva cae por primera vez" (85), and "Eva es puesta en brazos de su hermano" (107), which correspond to these respective events on the day of Christ's crucifixion: Jesus is condemned to death, Jesus falls the first time, and Jesus is laid in the tomb. Cervantes provided me details about the performance in an email (16 Mar 2017).

[11] The inclusion of a Juan Gabriel song provides the audience with the real-life example of a popular singer who, despite never having made any public statement about his sexuality, transgressed gender norms by behaving in a manner perceived by many to be effeminate and thus indicative of his being gay. Stacey K. Sowards analyzes the social construction of Gabriel's identity, concluding that "he constitutes a hybrid culture, between masculine and feminine groups, and possibly heterosexual and homosexual groups, ultimately belonging to none of the socially accepted groups" (156).

[12] Although Cervantes does not directly refer to Thomson in the playtext, this quote comes from Thomson's moral philosophy paper.

[13] According to Cervantes, during the performance Eva *en cinta* was a voice-over and was never represented visually on stage ("Re: Consulta").

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