

Iván Feo's *Ifigenia*: Adapting Teresa de la Parra's *Ifigenia* for Film

RoseAnna Mueller

Columbia College Chicago

When Teresa de la Parra published her first novel *Ifigenia, Diario de una señorita que escribió porque se fastidiaba* (1924), she wrote this inscription in the dedication page to her mother in July 1925: "Close your eyes to one or another case of nudity; remember that you gave birth to all of us with very little clothing: you dressed us. Dress these pages too with the white skirts of indulgence (*Iphigenia* 5).

It is fitting that in Ivan Feo's film adaptation of the novel, *Ifigenia* (Venezuela, 1986), the film's protagonist, María Eugenia, in a surprise move, removes all her clothing at the end of the film. The director took serious note of De la Parra's dedication to her mother since the film ends abruptly, with the actress coming out of her role as she disrobes and walks off the set. Nothing prepares the audience for the "walk away shot" as the actress Marialejandra Martín slowly removes all her clothing until she is standing nude, gazing at herself in a three-way mirror. As the actress steps out of character, she puts on a robe and slowly walks out of the set as the camera follows her, and we hear the director praise Marialejandra for her performance. The movie set is revealed--with its lights, booms, and the director's chair--, and the actress disappears off-set.

Although Iván Feo's film is a rather politicized interpretation on De la Parra's novel, both the novel and the film are responses to a social crisis as Venezuela was opening its doors to capitalism. New value systems and the ability to amass fortunes and establish reputations took root in Venezuelan society after the discovery of oil. More to the point, the landed aristocracy and the elite, the *criollos* or *mantuanos*, the descents of

the Spanish conquistadors, were losing their money and their power as these were redistributed to those connected to the oil industry. Returning from Europe, where she received an education appropriate to her status, María Eugenia Alonso rejects the values of a provincial and patriarchal society that sets limits and poses obstacles to her freedom. Thinking that she had been left an inheritance when her father died, she foolishly spent what would be the last of her money on couture clothing and gifts in Paris. When she learns her avaricious uncle has deprived her of her inheritance, her hopes for freedom and a life of luxury and travel are dashed. Her rebelliousness eventually and painfully gives way to the reigning conformity of the time. Her spirit is broken by her conservative family who urge her to marry for money. The man she will marry is newly rich and needs a wife with a lineage and a good name. She gives in and agrees to an arranged marriage. And that is where the story ends, as María Eugenia contemplates what she deems to be her sacrifice to society, like the Greek heroine's. The film depicts a symbolic María Eugenia as it portrays life in Venezuela under the dictator Gomez' rule, a dictatorship that profited from the discovery of huge oil fields.

Iván Feo and Sagrario Berti based their screenplay for their 1986 film on De la Parra's groundbreaking novel. Feo had to deal with the ambiguous and problematic ending of the work; that is, the spirited young woman's contemplation of what lay ahead of her. Women readers were unhappy with the heroine's self-sacrifice, her capitulation to a marriage of convenience, and they hoped for a sequel in which María Eugenia did not marry the rich, crass and controlling César Leal. In reality, the ending to the novel is left open-ended: alone in her room after a bungled attempt to elope with the married man she loves, María Eugenia stares at her wedding dress as she contemplates her sacrifice, and

both the novel and the film end before the wedding takes place. In the novel, the reader might be led to believe, however, that the heroine must go through with her marriage to a man she does not love, since she foiled her own attempt to escape with the man who loves her and who literally promised her the world. The novel, which just before the ending lacks dramatic action, follows the young heroine as she adjusts to life in Caracas. The first part of the novel consists of a long letter written to a school friend. The second part is the diary which lends the novel its title. The narrative picks up speed and suspense in the last chapters as María Eugenia plans her escape with Gabriel Olmedo. Then the reader learns the curious turn of events that eventually drive the heroine's decision not to run away with her married lover.

While its European readers loved De la Parra's novel and found it witty and exotic, *Ifigenia* was not critically well received in Caracas. In one of her letters, the author attributed the bad press to jealousy. She was also criticized for presenting Caracas in a bad light. Some critics complained she showed the older, more conservative side of Caracas instead of the modern activities its inhabitants were engaging in at the time, such as dancing the Charleston and playing golf at the country club. She chose instead to describe the daily life of a young girl "imprisoned" in a household headed by a conservative grandmother who lives with her spinster daughter and four old black servants. The women readers who were unhappy with María Eugenia's marriage of convenience proved that the author's message had struck home: contemporary Venezuelan women did not like what happened to the heroine in the novel because it reflected their own reality. Teresa de la Parra, unlike Venezuelan novelists who preceded her, did not take her material from the past, which would have been a safer strategy. She

wanted to depict her own world and its problems as she saw them. In doing so, several critics accused her of being unpatriotic. She dared to show a socio-economic group, Venezuela's *criollos*, in decline and scrambling to save themselves through various alliances, sacrificing the happiness of their daughters in the process. And although society and the bases for societal status were changing, some traditions in Venezuela, like arranged marriages and prolonged periods of mourning, continued to be observed, as the author depicts in the novel.

Teresa de la Parra always identified herself as a Venezuelan, even though she had been educated in Spain and lived for a while in France. Upon returning to Venezuela, she observed and questioned contemporary Venezuelan traditions and brought them to life in the pages of this novel. She insisted that María Eugenia Alonso was just one example of many women she was acquainted with who shared the heroine's fate and suffered in silence.

In his classic study of how novels provide the inspiration and the story line for films, George Bluestone reminds us that the novel is a linguistic medium and film is a visual one. Novelistic elements have to be abandoned and replaced through the manipulation of space and images. The novel is conceptual and discursive while film is perceptual and representational. The novel provides the raw material onto which the filmmaker can build his own structure. Readers of novels are frequently unhappy with the adaptations necessary for the screenplay. Bluestone reminds us that the changes the screenwriter makes are inevitable. Since film is an artistic and social instrument, sometimes the novel's ending must be altered in the screenplay to accommodate meaning and structure. Such is the case in Feo's *Ifigenia*. Perhaps because of the painful and dead-

end reality of the heroine's plight, the director's decision to "finish" the film before the story ends is a way to alter the end of the novel to the point that the end is non-existent.

Ifigenia presents an interesting challenge to a filmmaker, since the novel is very much a linguistic one, composed of a long letter María Eugenia writes to her school friend Christina, and later a diary in which the heroine chronicles the world around her and describes her relationships with members of her family and her suitors. The film expresses some of the verbal content through dance, music, and it contains many visual clues. But it must also express María Eugenia's physical and psychological reality, her growth and development, and her final capitulation. These are important issues in *Ifigenia*, since the novel is about a young girl's coming of age and is based on her thoughts and feelings. The reader is invited to share the inner world of a rebellious eighteen-year-old, and witness her growth over a period of two years as she changes into a browbeaten twenty-year-old doomed to marry a man she doesn't love. The reality is that the newly-rich Cesar Leal can provide a comfortable life for her and keep her *criollo* family afloat.

Teresa de la Parra set out to portray a transitional time in Venezuela's history through the experience of one girl, who, according to the author, was representative of several young women she personally knew upon her return to Caracas. The author was a sensitive and keen observer of her social scene and continues to be praised by literary critics for her wit and use of irony. While in the novel María Eugenia reveals herself through her letter and her diary, Feo has to reveal her through images. The filmmaker has to select key moments in the novel to show the changes in the protagonist as she interacts with the other characters. At his disposal are symbols and gestures, which increase the

possibilities for expression in the film. Dialog, music, costumes, and aural effects must be chosen to capture the heroine's mood. The spectator must be drawn to the character's dilemma since the complicit reader plays an important role as an accomplice in the novel. Although María Eugenia's long letter is addressed to her school friend María Cristina, the newsy and lively tone of the letter immediately draws the reader in. The director must provide visual equivalents for the letter, the diary, and María Eugenia's figures of speech and the witty literary and cultural references that enliven the novel.

The film begins with an exterior night scene aboard a ship, as we catch a glimpse of María Eugenia's white chiffon scarf floating in the night air. The transatlantic journey from Paris to Venezuela took eighteen days at the time. She unwinds the long scarf from her throat, and after fingering it longingly, she releases it, and we see it drift in the air and out to the ocean. She releases the white scarf because she is in mourning for her father, and custom dictates she should dress only in black. María Eugenia's hair at this point is cut very short, in the latest boyish yet chic style she acquired in Paris. Later in the film she wears her hair in more traditional and feminine curly coiffure. The French ship, the *Arnus*, bears María Eugenia home to Caracas. The scene shifts to her daytime arrival at La Guaira, Caracas' port, where blacks and mulattos are unloading the ship. María Eugenia is rowed ashore, while her Uncle Eduardo and Aunt Antonia and her cousins wait for her arrival on the dock. She is now dressed totally in black, but very stylishly so, a black scarf having replaced the inappropriate white one. Following the day's fashion trend, she has dark red cupid-bow lips (Guerlain Red, according to the novel) and her eyes are heavily made up. The family lunches at a restaurant near the beach in Macuto, a

fashionable watering hole for the Caracas elite, and people dance to a live band playing “It’s Only a Paper Moon.”

While María Eugenia is the object of attention to her aunt, uncle and young cousins, her oldest cousin, Pedro José, whom she calls Perucho, is smitten by her and can’t keep his eyes off her. María Eugenia and her family drive to Caracas, a city represented by the colonial architecture of one-story, stucco-covered houses built to the edge of the street, with large shuttered windows covered by grilles. María Eugenia is greeted by her strict, conservative grandmother Eugenia, her pious maiden Aunt Clara, the black servant Gregoria, who will become her confidante, and three other old black retainers. María Eugenia is given the room that used to be Aunt Clara’s, which has been lovingly remodeled for her. Her facial expression shows that she is clearly disappointed in the décor as she struggles to put on a good face and appear to be grateful. Aunt Clara points out the bust of the Sacred Heart of Jesus she has placed over the bed to “watch over her.” In her letter, María Eugenia summarizes the contents of the house as “everything, absolutely everything, was contrary to my taste and sentiments” (41).

The following day María Eugenia attends a gathering at her Uncle Pancho’s apartment. She sees César Leal enter the room, and is later introduced to the exotic Mercedes Galindo. After dinner, Uncle Pancho takes his niece aside and tells her that her Uncle Eduardo has cheated her out of her estate, the San Nicolas hacienda. The following day, when María Eugenia tells her grandmother that Eduardo appropriated her inheritance, her grandmother ignores this, instead chastising her for coming home late. Grandmother disapproves of Uncle Pancho and his bohemian friends. The next day, rebelling against her grandmother’s rules, María Eugenia puts on her best clothes,

including a stylish black cloche with a net, and she and her uncle drive to Mercedes' house, where she meets Gabriel Olmedo. The next scene shows her back home, bored and restless, flipping through a magazine, watching her aunt embroider. Her boredom leads her to type the letter to her friend. She helps Gregoria clean the floor, and braids her hair. This signals the beginning of a loving relationship with this wise black servant, the keeper of family secrets.

Alone in her room, María Eugenia cuts out a picture of Charlie Chaplin and glues it onto a painting of an insipid landscape. She tries on the gowns she spent the last of her money on in Paris, but which she can't wear. She gazes at her reflection in the three-way mirror in her bedroom, a foreshadowing of the film's end, when she once more will gaze into the mirror as she disrobes and tries to find herself. She learns to cook. She plays solitaire and learns about reproduction from an illustrated book. She irreverently flings her black scarf over the statue of Jesus. Her aunt and grandmother pray the rosary. She attempts to play the piano, but her grandmother reminds her that they are in mourning. She can't play the piano, for "what will the neighbors think?" María Eugenia points out the hypocrisy of this practice and tells her grandmother she is bored. Her grandmother suggests a visit to the Hacienda San Nicolás, the property her uncle appropriated. María Eugenia visits Mercedes and confides her boredom to her new friend, and in turn Mercedes confides her own unhappiness in her marriage. María Eugenia returns from shopping with Aunt Clara and finds César Leal visiting her grandmother. He invites them to an outing to see an airplane, and during this encounter that we learn that this suitor is domineering and self-important as he lectures María Eugenia, who is disappointed because she expected to ride in the plane, not just to see it.

At a gathering at Mercedes' house, María Eugenia plays the piano and an enraptured Gabriel declares his love to her. The next morning her grandmother scolds her for staying out late and tells her she is being sent to San Nicolas for her own good. María Eugenia takes the train to San Nicolas armed with a butterfly net and a fishing pole. She is wearing a pith helmet, as though she is on safari. She immediately begins to flirt with her cousin Perucho, to the disapproval of her aunt. She looks over the hacienda, which should rightfully be hers. Although she is bored in Caracas, her banishment to the hacienda becomes a pastoral interlude where María Eugenia is seldom bored. There are fewer restrictions on the hacienda than in her grandmother's house. Although her aunt and uncle disapprove of her behavior, María Eugenia is more physically active here and goes horseback riding and swims in the stream, where she communes with nature. She takes advantage of and teases her cousin Perucho, who in the novel is thirteen years old, but closer to her own age in the film.

She writes a letter to Gabriel in a voice-over. Perucho has an admirer closer to his age, but she dances the tango with him, to her aunt's shock and disapproval. In bucolic scenes at the river she writes to Gabriel as Perucho tries to impress her with his fishing and tree-climbing skills. The next day, Perucho and María Eugenia return to a deeper part of the river where she bathes in the nude while her cousin tries to avert his gaze, but sees her nude back nevertheless, and his frustration mounts. At the dinner table, Aunt Antonia announces Gabriel's marriage to María Monasterios, an heiress to a petroleum fortune. A devastated María Eugenia returns to her room, contemplates her reflection and removes her makeup, the last sign of her rebelliousness and search of identity.

When she returns to Caracas, we witness a subdued and more traditionally coiffed María Eugenia (she has substituted the lighter shade of *Rouge vif de Sainte-Ange* for the Guerlain Red lipstick she used to wear), is complemented on her cooking skills. Her grandmother declares the two-year mourning period over. César Leal sends María Eugenia a corsage. At a gathering in the family's parlor, he gives a pompous speech when María Eugenia makes a grand entrance in one of her fashionable Parisian gowns, which she is now allowed to wear.

The following day, María Eugenia, dressed in white, is in a garden with her uncle Pancho, who confesses he disapproves of the overbearing Leal. But their courtship begins nevertheless: she attends the opera with him, takes walks, goes to the movies, and strolls at the water's edge, always chaperoned. Leal begins to assert himself and micromanages her. He tells her where to hang a birdcage and how to play the piano. He constantly demonstrates, instructs, or lectures her. Through her grandmother María Eugenia learns that Leal wants to marry her. Grandmother sums up all of Leal's good attributes and entices María Eugenia by offering her the proceeds from the sale of her emerald earrings, which will fetch 8,000 *bolivares*, which will in turn purchase a fine Parisian trousseau. María Eugenia is speechless. Flowers are delivered and Leal makes his appearance. In a wordless scene, María Eugenia accepts his proposal. When Uncle Pancho asks María Eugenia how her writing is coming along, she denies she was writing, claiming she was copying recipes. This shows that her rebelliousness is gone. In a voice-over we learn that Tio Pancho is ill and returns home so Aunt Clara and María Eugenia can nurse him. A changed and shaken María Eugenia mixes medicine we assume is meant for her patient, but she drinks it herself. Gabriel, who has agreed to be Pancho's doctor, reveals that

Pancho is not doing well, and shows concern for his beloved. Using the excuse that he must show her how to mix medicine for the patient, the lovers find themselves alone. A confrontation follows: Gabriel inquires after her Leal, her betrothed, and María Eugenia retorts “How’s your marriage to María Monasterios?” As Gabriel confides his love for her, Aunt Clara walks in. The lovers are shown at the patient’s bedside, feeding, shaving, bathing and reading to him. They kiss as the uncle is dying. María Eugenia reacts to Gabriel’s passionate kiss, but once again they are interrupted by Aunt Clara, her guardian.

In total silence we see close-ups of Leal, Grandmother, Gregoria and other family members at Uncle Pancho’s funeral. Gabriel and Leal are in the same room, and everyone is dressed in black. Using Pancho’s death and her grandmother’s illness as an excuse, María Eugenia begs Leal to postpone their wedding. Gabriel overhears her request. But Leal won’t postpone the wedding, and María Eugenia’s fate is sealed. As María Eugenia and Gabriel leave the graveside service for Pancho, Gabriel walks alongside her, takes her aside and kisses her once more. In a voice-over we learn of his plan to convince her to run away with him: she is to meet him at five a.m. and they will set sail for Europe.

In her bedroom, María Eugenia packs her suitcase and is dismayed that her trousseau will not fit into it. The clock strikes four a.m. She walks through the patio holding her suitcase. As she reaches for an item on a shelf, Clara turns on the light and surprises her. At this point, María Eugenia breaks down, sobbing hysterically and babbling that she wants to stay with Clara and her grandmother. Clara sends her to the grandmother’s room, which is filled with holy images and crucifixes. As the clock strikes five, María Eugenia returns to her own room and realizes it’s too late to run away. She

places the box holding her wedding gown on her bed and writes a letter to Gabriel. She takes the dress out of its box and arranges it on a chair. She sends Gregoria to deliver the letter to Gabriel. María Eugenia sits in her room, first contemplating her wedding gown, which reminds her of a corpse, and then her reflection in the three-way mirror, like a fragmented identity. At this point she removes the black dress she is wearing and stands nude before the mirror for several seconds. The music stops. We hear the off-camera studio noise. The actress puts on a robe, picks up the cutout of Charlie Chaplin as the camera follows her off the set as she steps out of character, smiles and waves goodbye.

The film is a faithful adaptation of the novel as far as characters are concerned, but some character's roles are enhanced while others are diminished. Perucho has a more important role in the movie. María Eugenia's young cousin is smitten by her from the moment he sees her at La Guaira and he wears a lovesick expression throughout the film. The heroine uses her power over her younger, besotted cousin to get back at her strict Aunt Antonia. She uses her cousin, and her aunt objects, with reason. He gazes on her while she is bathing nude in the river. She acts as though she is unaware of the effect she has on him, maybe she is not aware of her own power.

The film portrays the heroine's sexual awakening in several ways which the novel does not. Her eroticism is reduced to her love of fine things and, in one scene, Feo shows María Eugenia physically in love with her trousseau, imported from Paris and purchased with the proceeds of her grandmother's emerald earrings. María Eugenia revels in the dainty silk lingerie under the disapproving gaze of the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which her Aunt Clara placed over her bed, but only at the beginning.

The film brings the novel into historical context through costumes. María Eugenia wears the fashionable clothes she purchased in Paris. Mercedes Galindo wants to see every one of her Lanvins. When María Eugenia visits the gatherings at her Uncle Pancho's or Mercedes Galindo's house, we see the characters fashionably dressed in Roaring 20's clothing. María Eugenia's hairstyle is a short page-boy. The current Parisian fashion for women in the 1920's was for hair and dresses cut *á la garçon*, and a boy-like streamlined, string-bean silhouette was achieved through dresses with no waistlines or dropped waists. Her chic Parisian hairstyle changes during the film, to a curlier and more feminine look. Her makeup becomes more subdued, and she changes the shade of her lipstick from a bright red to a softer, more natural lip color. She no longer has the arched and plucked eyebrows that were in fashion at the time. Her domestication is shown in progress.

The popular music of the time was ragtime and jazz, which provides background music in the film, and we see characters dancing the two-step. María Eugenia dances the tango with her cousin, a dance her aunt finds scandalous. The period's pop culture is represented by pictures of Charlie Chaplin and the Hollywood film stars the protagonist pins up to enliven her severe, old-fashioned room she seems to disrupt.

The old Caracas house decorated with dark Victorian furniture: Portraits of illustrious ancestors look down from the parlor walls. There are religious statues, paintings and crucifixes throughout the house, and the grandmother and aunt pray the rosary daily. However, the world María Eugenia is drawn to exist outside this house in the European-inspired Caracas of soirées, salons and country clubs. Mercedes' house is an Oriental fantasy and a gathering place for intellectuals. Her exotic boudoir is her

retreat and the showcase for the souvenirs she collects in her travels. Uncle Pancho's apartment is also a gathering place for intellectuals and bohemians, and, like Mercedes' house, it is a place Grandmother disapproves of and declares off-limits. The hacienda San Nicolas represents the vanishing rural and agricultural Venezuelan world where María Eugenia can be out in the open and feel in tune with nature. This agrarian world was disappearing as the oil industry took over the economy which had been ruled by coffee, cocoa and sugar production.

The novel focuses on María Eugenia's inner world and her feelings. The director must represent her environment, and his task is to reproduce her inner life by fleshing out key moments in her development, as well as showing how she fashions her "other selves." The sensory environment of scent is conjured up in the first pages of the novel when María Eugenia describes her grandmother's house which smells of "jasmine, damp earth, wax candles and Elliman's Embrocation." This cannot be captured on film.

Iván Feo's film *Ifigenia* is a paraphrase of Teresa de la Parra's novel. According to Bluestone, "In the fullest sense of the word, the filmist becomes not a translator for an established author, but a new author in his own right" (62). Bluestone concludes, "In short, the filmed novel, in spite of certain resemblances, will inevitably become a different artistic entity from the novel on which it is based" (64).

The director captured the monotonous, hermetic mood of the conservative and religious household, and María Eugenia's unhappiness with the décor of her room when she is first taken there is clearly visible on her face. The musical score by Miguel Angel Fuster with its theme of four repetitive notes is spare and monotonous, echoing the life inside the house. The changes in María Eugenia's makeup, hairdo and clothing record the

physical changes she undergoes during the two years she spends with her grandmother, as she is forced to adapt to the life that has been destined for her. The director portrays the world inside the house, a throwback to colonial tastes and values, and contrasts it to the world outside the house, with its contemporary social life. The hacienda represents a rural Venezuela when the coffee, cocoa, and sugar plantations fueled the country's economy before oil was discovered. María Eugenia finds relief in the natural surroundings of the hacienda, and she can openly flirt with her cousin there. Although she is with an aunt she dislikes and the uncle who has dispossessed her, here she seems freer, rides on horseback, bathes nude in the river, and writes letters to her lover.

Race and color issues mentioned in the novel are omitted in the film. In the novel, María Eugenia is light-skinned and blonde, which increases her value as a wife. Comparing herself to the beautiful Mercedes, who is “white on all four sides” the heroine declares, “But I am much prettier than she. It’s beyond question. I am taller, blonder; my hair is silkier” (106). Ironically, Maríalejandra Martín, who plays María Eugenia in the film, is dark-haired. María Eugenia’s relationship with the black servant Gregoria is reduced to a minimum in the film. The “text” of the novel is María Eugenia’s letter to her friend and the journal she writes partly to dispel her boredom. In the film, we see María Eugenia typing in her room, but we have no idea what she is writing. Cristina, the recipient of the letter and one of the heroines of the *Mama X* story interpolated in the novel, is never mentioned in the film.

Feo succeeds in portraying key scenes, such as María Eugenia’s restrictive life, her happy and hopeful days at the hacienda, and her clear dislike of Leal. While he does not omit any characters from the novel, Feo intensifies the focus to some of them, such as

Perucho, the love-struck cousin. We are shown the stylish Caracas of the 1920's as well as the more conservative, colonial Caracas with its old-fashioned values. We live in María Eugenia's room with her and experience the boredom that leads her to write, the experiences that shape how she perceives the world, and her obsession with her appearance as she gazes at herself in the three-way mirror. "Simply because cinematography cannot penetrate consciousness, it naturally and systematically bends all its creative, formative efforts toward finding new and significant special structures. We can see how another person sees; but not how he thinks. Only language can approximate the quality of thought" (Bluestone 208). Since most of the "action" in the novel takes place in María Eugenia's head, in her letter to her friend, and in the diary in which we read about the changes in her life, Feo has to substitute images and gestures to capture these qualities in his film. Throughout the film, and in the novel, María Eugenia is defined through her clothing and her makeup and hairstyle. When she puts aside her wedding dress, when she disrobes and the actress who plays her walks off the set, the character from the novel is reduced to the naked reality of her pure being. It is as though all her efforts at self-fashioning have ceased.

The representation of reality in the film *Ifigenia* is as faithfully captured as can be by the filmmaker, given that the novel depends on the inner thoughts and reactions to a changing world as the heroine gives up her independence. "The most liberated images of women on film come from those directors whose concern is to visualize how particular social forms have been working upon conditioned impulse to enslave women" (Mellen 54).

According to Teresa de la Parra, María Eugenia was driven by her ancestors, forced to make her sacrifice like the heroine of the Greek myth. It is her ancestors who enslave her, and it is her living relatives, her grandmother and her aunt who soften her for her impending sacrifice. As Annis Pratt posits, “The women’s novel asks questions, poses riddles, cries out for restitution, but remains itself merely rhetorical, an artifact or an idea rather than an action . . . The synthesis does not occur within the individual novel or even in the field as a whole but in the mind of the reader, who, having participated in the narrative reenactment, must put its message into effect into her own life” (177). The ending of the film is unsettling, as though the heroine’s choice is too brutal to make. The viewer, having participated in Feo’s adaptation of Teresa de la Parra’s novel, must put the film’s final scene with its ambiguous and open-ended conclusion into effect into her own interpretation. Anibal González posits that the heroine is caught in a lose-lose situation, and that although the author claimed that her novel was concerned with manners and morals, psychological and emotional violence are its subtexts (69). Perhaps the unfinished ending suggests that the director can only hope to “rescue” the heroine from her sacrificial choice by not providing any ending, other than the character’s own search of her own self as a Venezuelan woman that has returned from her Parisian exile.

Works Cited

- Bluestone, George. *Novels into Film*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U Press, 2003.
- Feo, Iván. *Ifigenia*. Cinemateca, Universidad Central de Venezuela, 1986.
- González, Anibal. *Killer Books*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Mellen, Joan. *Women and Their Sexuality in the New Film*. New York: Horizon Press, 1973.
- Naremore, James, ed. *Film Adaptation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000.
- Parra, Teresa de la. *Iphigenia, The Diary of a Young Lady Who Wrote Because She Was Bored*. Trans. Bertie Acker. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.
- . *Obra: narrativa, ensayos, cartas*. Ed. Velia Bosch. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1982.
- Pratt, Annis. *Archetypal Patterns in Woman's Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981.