

Ana Teresa Fernandez

tree. Thus coherench patriarchy, of ancestry, of narrative—is made by erasure of totem pole of Jesus's patrilineage as given in Matthewof us in the West from the Bible where long lists of begats link fathers to sons the lineage goes, with the name passed on; the tree branches, and the longer i on it. She just discovered that she herself did not exist, but her brothers did an open question rather than answers. Here, in this painting by Ana Teresa we see only several fingers and a stained glass and other medieval art and is said to be the ancestor of the family and not Joseph is supposed to he the father of Jesus). The Tree of Jesse—a sor According to Matthew goes from Abraham to Joseph (without noting that God The crazy fourteen—generation genealogy given in the New Testament's Gospel history. Her family is from India, but this version of lineage is familiar to thos great-grandmothers, a vast population made to disappear on paper and in goes on the more people are missing: sisters, aunts, mothers, grandmothers father. There were no grandmothers. Fathers have sons and grandsons and so Her mother did not exist, and nor did her father's mother. Or her mother's whose family tree has been traced back a thousand years, but no women exist obliteration. Or rather that obliteration keeps showing up. I have a friend Fer- nandez, a woman both exists and is obliterated. I think a lot about that inviting meaning in without committing to any particular one, giving you latter does what the wordless can do, invoking everything and saying nothing ordinary and extraordinary act, the hanging out of laundry—and painting. The though you can see the curvature of the Earth on the horizon. It's the most she does all this in a landscape so bare and stark and without scale that it's as stretching out from her feet. The sheet flies in the wind, her shadow flies, and step. The sun throws her shadow and the dark shadow of the white sheet onto a kind of dancing. Her crossed legs look as though they are executing a dance it against her body. revealing her contours. It is the most ordinary act, The white sheet hangs in front of her outting out clothes to dry, though she wears black high heels, as though dressed something other than domestic work, or as if this domestic work was alread exclusion. Eliminate your mother, then your two grandmothers, then ;round. The shadow looks like a long—legged dark bird, another species —was represented in but the wind blows

> all the time, when we were told that Picasso beget Pollock and Pollock begat inear narrative of blood or influence or meaning. I used to see it in art history orest down to a tree, a web down to a line. This is what it takes to construct a Warhol and, on It went, as though artists were influenced only by other arta New York art critic on the side of the freeway after the latter refused to ists. Decades ago, the Los Angeles artist Robert Irwin famously dumped a paternalistic pedigree, claiming she was straight out of Kurt Schwitters as upset as Irwin when she was saddled with a catalogue essay that gave her him deeply. I remember a contemporary artist who was more polite but recognize the artistry of a young car customizer making hot rods. Irwin had been a car customizer himself, and hot-rod culture had influenced weaving and all the practical acts of making, out of cumulative gestures nd John Heartfield. She knew she came out of hands-on work, out of that had fascinated her since bricklayers came to her home when she was a child. Everyone is influenced by those things that precede formal education, that come out of the blue and out of everyday life. Those excluded influences I call the grandmothers.

the laundry. Everything and

A woman is hanging out

family, but I saw only a man and children, until I realized with astonishment on the country. The big image at the head of the story was supposed to show a the war in Afghanistan, the New Tori Times Sunday magazine ran a cover story enter into covenant with her: for the grant would be to suppose her separate is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being Arthur Nicholls. Names erased a woman's genealogy and even her existence by Mrs. You stopped, for example, being Charlotte Bronte and became Mrs recently, married women were addressed by their husbands' names, prefaced of naming. In some cultures women keep their names, but in most their separate existence. There are so many forms of female nonexistence. Early in existence. He covered her like a sheet, like a shroud, like a screen. She had no her coverture. For this reason, a man cannot grant anything to his wife, or husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called law-French a femme-covert . . . or under the protection and influence of her protection, and cover, she performs every thing; and is therefore called in our This corresponded to English law, as Blackstone enunciated it in 1765: By children take the father's name, and in the English-speaking world until very are other ways women have been made to disappear. There is the bu

mothers. Ever more lives disappear as if unlived until you have narrowed a your four great-grandmothers. Go back more generations and hundreds, then

nners on the laundry line I hang out.

we might look at five hundred years later. In Fernandez's painting, the white

asands disappear. Mothers vanish, and the fathers and mothers of those

matrilinear societies, that sort of control is not so essential know who their sons were and construct their own lineage of begets. In their erotic energies, necessary in a patrilineal world so that fathers could In so many societies, women have been confined to the house to control childrearing, and so out of public life and incapable of free circulation. veil was a kind of wall of privacy, the marker of a woman for one man, a wear veils, and prostitutes and slave girls who were forbidden to do so. The there were two kinds of women, respectable wives and widows who had to way back. They existed in Assyria more than three thousand years about veils and burkas, they make people literally disappear. Veils go a long She had disappeared from view, and whatever all the other arguments may b kept women confined to houses, to the domestic sphere of housework and portable architecture of confinement. Less portable kinds of architecture that what I had taken for drapery of furniture was a fully veiled woman ago, when

biological tie that the generals then in charge of the country of their disappearances. Motherhood was an emotional and embroidered with the names of their children and the date and grandchildren be returned. They wore white kerchiefs their fury, and to mount their demand that their children gated, forced out of this most public of public places, they walked. Though they would be attacked, arrested, interrothat represented the very heart of the country—in front of the Casa Rosa, the were the mothers of the disappeared and that they began appearing in a place called Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo. Their name came from the fact that the their fear, spoke up, and became visible, were those of mothers. They were into the disappeared, los desaparecidos, but the people who loved them kept grew ever thinner as they tried to protect themselves against nonexistence. The thus eradicated. People stopped talking to their neighbors and their friends, at all possible, taken secretly, so that even the people who loved them might left-wingers, Jews, both men and women. Those to be disappeared were, if junta was said to "disappear" people. They disappeared dissidents, activists. returned again and again to testify openly to their grief, having appeared, they refused to go away. Forbidden to sit, they presidential mansion, at the Plaza de Mayo in the capital, Buenos Airesthem alive. The first voices against this disappearance, the first who overcame word disappear, a verb, became a noun as so many thousands were transformed silenced by the fear that anything, anyone, might betray them. Their existence not know their fate. Fifteen thousand to thirty thousand Argentines were VI In Argentina during the "dirty war" from 1975 to 1983, the military

aing woman who was famously turned into a spider as well as the more powerful and not just straight lines, to be a maker as well as Navajo, Choctaw, and Cherokee peoples, Spider Grandmother is the principal might go, the many sources for it; of the grandmothers a cleaner, to be able to sing and not be silenced, derweb. The spiderweb of gender and history in which the painted woman is caught; the spiderweb of her own power that she is weaving machine, but before the industrial revolution by women whose spinning stories. In this part of the world, in the creation stories of the Hopi, Pueblo, Greek fates, who spun, wove, and cut each person's lifeline, who ensured that as well as the strings of begats. There's a German processing the flax from which linen is made. They to create your own life, to rule your fate, to name the grandmothers as well as the fathers, to draw nets in this painting dominated by a sheet that was woven. Woven now by a reator of the universe. Ancient Greek stories included an unfortunate spinthose lives would be linear narratives that end. Spiderwebs are images wear wooden shoes, dark dresses, demure white caps, that canvas is six feet tall, five feet wide, the figure almost life-size. and weaving linked them to spiders and made spiders feminine in the old of the nonlinear, of the many directions in which something Though it is untitled, the series it's in has a title: Tel'arafio. Spiom, as though they were spiders, as though it came right stretched on a wooden frame so artfully we say we see a woman hanging painting from the nineteenth century of women wall by the fine, slim threads that are invisible in other kinds spin the web and not be caught in it, to create the world, and stand at various distances from a wall, where the out of their bellies. Or as though they were tethered to the From each of them, a single thread extends across the of light. They are spinning, they are caught in the web. To hanks of raw material are being wound up as thread.

> dom of movement in a system in which no one was truly free. itself. The role was a screen behind which they had a limited kind of freecase the generals and in the other, a nuclear weapons program and war became the armor, the costume, in which these women assaulted in one Peace, founded in the shadow of the Cold War in 1961, when dissent was new kind of politics, as it had been for the US group Women Strike for could not portray as merely left wing or as criminal. It was a cover for a still portrayed as sinister, as communist. Motherhood and respectability

images, is already a victory, already a revolt of man, the rule of law. The ability to tell your own story, in words or her story for her, or write her out of the story, the genealogy, the rights Some reappear. Every woman who appears wrestles with the forces that decades of being silenced and erased in the home, in daily life, by threat would have her disappear. She struggles with the forces that would and violence. Some women get erased a little at a time, some all at once erasure, silencing, disappearance. Such deaths often come seeking the most extreme form of containment, the ultimate form of "femicide." Most of them are killed by lovers, husbands, former partners men annually, worldwide, in the specific circumstances they began to call Dandino and her colleagues, about sixty–six thousand women are killed by Ferite a Morte (Wounded to Death), organized by the Italian actress Seren: alogy, from legal standing, from voice, from life? According to the project millennia of disappearances of women from the public sphere, from gene name the disappearances of the Dirty War as crimes, but what do we move and participate, all because of the violence of one man. It is easy to but men were shocked at being asked to disappear, to lose their freedom to Get in the house. (For women, confinement is always waiting to envelope men be excluded from campus after dark. It was an equally logical solution ou.) Some pranksters put up a poster ann vomen students not to go out alone after dark or not to be out at all great university and the authorities responded by telling all the VII When I was young, women were raped on the campus of uncing another remedy, that after years or call the

to take down the veil and appear: all these are the represented is obscured, but the woman who represents is not. Paint in several out a sheet rather than oil on canvas. Ana Teresa Fernandez's image colors was squeezed out of tubes and mixed and applied to woven fabric 

of light and shadow, and it's a source of luminousness against the painter's dark public, to define how we look at the world, to make a living, to make something shadows and ridges and his arms brought together to cradle a skull form a circle apraised in a kind of exhausted surrender, the chains around his wrists keeping backgrounds. Women spun and wore most of the fabric in Zurbaran's day, but ı San Francisco artist, muralist Mona Caron. Though the garlands and ribbon comes from the left and throws the heavy folds of what must be wool into deep expressive substitute, it both hides the body and defines its space, like the bedtown with a beautiful theater whose painted walls and ceilings reminded me of strong hands and one foot and a face in deep shadow from a hood. The light they didn't paint. I saw the exhibition of Zurbaran paintings in an old Italian sheet in Fernandez's painting. It's an occasion for the pure pleasure of paint, though whether the woman in black high heels is a housewife or a maid or a goddess at the end of the world is impossible to determine, as is the questior stories are told by the worn jeans, the kids' clothes, this size underwear, that century Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbaran, painted white cloth over and of Saint Jerome, swirling in light and shadow over Saint Serapion, his arms him from collapse. The fabric gesticulates, absorbs, emotes; it speaks for its laundry line. Hanging out the laundry is generally how textiles got dry until shrouded figures; it replaces the sensuality of flesh with a purer but no less rates out of the clean clothes. It isn't done much by the privileged anymore ; involving cases of obliteration—like its own whose deep folds of cloth radiate outward. His namesake, the seventeenth– over in his depictions of saints, cascading like a waterfall to hide the form recalled her work, few women were able to paint then, to make images in ention of the dryer, and I still hang it out. So do Latino and Asian immigrants in San Francisco, laundry hanging out Chinatown windows and across Mission District yards, flying like so many prayer flags. What of what it means that she's hanging out a bedsheet, though it made me IX This Saint Francis is wearing a white robe so allthink of a string of associations

the one that involves air and sun and the time in which the water evapo-Hanging out the laundry might be the dreamiest of domestic chores, all tangled up with a bedsheet in Ana Teresa Fernandez's painting. can also tell many kinds of stories about the mysterious form hanging out the laundry—putting clothes on the line is a pleasurable task at times, a detour into the light. You

abric with the expressive creases and shadows is a bedsheet. It speaks of houses of beds, of what happens in beds and then gets washed out, of cleaning house, of women's work. This is what it's about but not what it is. The woman who is GRANDMOTHER SPIDER

Rebecca Solnit