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### Publication Date

2015

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,  
IRVINE

Recuperating the *Bildungsroman* in Women's Contemporary Spanish Narratives and Film

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Spanish

by

Ana María Palomar

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair  
Associate Professor Laura Hyun Yi Kang  
Assistant Professor Santiago Morales-Rivera

2015



## DEDICATION

To

my family

whose love and support is endless

There are these women's faces, various  
as dewprints sequined across my life's web  
every grain reflecting a different dawn.  
The interlace of all my years shudders with such a  
weight  
until each pod of moisture bursts,  
flooding toward the center—  
that hub of memory, itself unspeakable  
from which is spoken all that moves us.

Robin Morgan,  
from "The Network of the Imaginary Mother,"  
*Lady of the Beasts*

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my faculty committee, Dr. Gonzalo Navajas, Dr. Laura Kang, Dr. Santiago Morales-Rivera, and other UC Irvine professors for their consistent support and motivation, scholarly excellence, and charm with which they teach.

I am also grateful to my professors from California State University, Dominguez Hills and California State University, Fullerton, who sparked my interest in research, teaching, and literature.

A special thanks to the deceased Dr. Juergen Kempff whose dedication and method of instruction at UC Irvine had a lasting impact on me. Thank you to Professor Amina Yassine whose kindness and commitment to her students extends beyond the classroom. In addition, a heartfelt thanks to Linda Le, Evelyn Flores, and Miriam Torres, who make everything run smoothly in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Office.

Thank you to my best friends, Lissett Acuña, Sandra García, Bella Jones, and Brenda Serpas who always believed in me and whom I love and admire deeply. To my former CSUF classmates Jennifer Barajas and Ana Villarreal: ¡Sí se pudo!

A huge thank you to my parents, siblings, and family whose love and support is everlasting.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

Ana María Palomar

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“Reconstructing the Self in Ana María Moix’s *Julia*.” 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Céfiro Conference on Latin American and Iberian Languages, Literatures and Cultures. Texas Tech University. March 26-28, 2015.

“Deconstructing the Female Body in ‘Carmen’: Vicente Aranda’s Film and Prosper Mérimée’s Novella.” Asociación Internacional de Literatura y Cultura Femenina Hispánica, XXII Congreso Anual: Feminismo, Post-Feminismo, Neo-Feminismo. The Claremont Colleges. 10-12 de octubre del 2013.

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“Treating the Erotic in Rosa Montero’s *Te trataré como a una reina* and Almudena Grandes’ *Las edades de Lulú*.” First Annual Spanish Graduate Student Symposium. California State University, Long Beach, Long Beach. March 16, 2012.

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Recuperating the *Bildungsroman* in Women's Contemporary Spanish Narratives and Film

By

Ana María Palomar

Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair

The coming-of-age novel or story exhibits a search for the individual's meaningful existence within society in conjunction with the attainment of one's true self. In the years following the Spanish Civil War, Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, Mercè Rodoreda, Esther Tusquets and others, published novels of female development that enriched the canon of the Spanish literature. The recent decades have witnessed the publication of a growing number of female formation novels by Lucía Etxebarría, Almudena Grandes, Rosa Montero, as well as many other leading female writers in Spain.

This dissertation examines the silenced voice in women's narrative fiction characterized by modules of the *Bildungsroman* and aided through cinematic representations. It provides an investigation of patterns in women's narrative trajectory revolving around configurations of the novel of self-formation and theoretical perspectives on love and eroticism as seen in the novels *Nada*, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, *Julia*, *Las edades de Lulú*, *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes*, *Primera memoria* and the film *Elegy*. Additionally, I question the interchangeability and reversibility of masculine and feminine traits as demonstrated in the novel *Te trataré como a*



*una reina* and the films *Carmen* and *Lucía y el sexo*, proposing that these notions manifest a discord that subverts the hierarchy of hegemonic discourses. I also focus on exploring connections between women's marginal standing and the overall sense of displacement and uneasiness that trickled into the Spanish Transition period as seen in the novels *Cielo nocturno*, *La plaza del diamante* and the film *Las trece rosas*.

Ultimately, the texts and films I have chosen formulate evocations of this relationship in order to explore factual/fiction dividends of the novel of self-discovery. All works have a common divergent interest in the interplay between the attainment of the self that is aided through political or social conflict, while the others deal tangentially with relationships involving gender based perspectives in conjunction with desire and intimacy.

## Introduction

It is in the nature of literature to bear witness to the passing of time and events, weaving memories to reveal intricate patterns of those recollections previously hidden among its strands. If it is our intention to give life to those memoirs, then we must call for an active reading in the present; allowing formative processes within a specific present to complete this progression in hopes of finding connections between a generation or time period. Raymond Williams, in *Marxism and Literature* declares:

At different moments in history, and in significantly different ways, the reality and even the primacy of such presences and such processes, such diverse and yet specific actualities, have been powerfully asserted and reclaimed, as in practice of course they are all the time lived. But they are then often asserted as forms themselves, in contention with other known forms: the subjective as distinct from the objective; experience from belief; feeling from thought; the immediate from the general; the personal from the social. (129)

The central contention of this study is to expose the silenced voice in women's narrative fiction characterized by modules of the *Bildungsroman* and aided through cinematic representations. I have chosen interdisciplinary approaches that engage with and establish the context for the novels and films proper of this module. My study provides an investigation of women's narrative trajectory revolving around configurations of the novel of formation. My intention is to examine the manifestation of this notion under a contemporary context linked with history of postwar Spain and fiction to adumbrate the parameters of this genre. I am inspired by women's narrative voice in fiction in conjunction with socio-historical factors of the twentieth century with the hopes of encouraging a revalorization of it.

There is no question that the essence of life involves growth, which means change. The crystallization of the *Bildungsroman* and its trajectory have been widely acknowledged and accepted as an experience that is at its peak during adolescence. The *Bildungsroman* describes a genre of novels depicting the process of coming of age of a male protagonist in German literature of the eighteenth centuries; one that Leasa Lutes describes as being present:

En la infancia y la niñez el ser concibe del mundo completamente como una extensión de su propia existencia, ésta siendo informada de un conjunto de ideas nacidas de lo real tanto como de lo ilusorio. El adolescente toma conciencia de las diferencias entre sí mismo y el Otro, entre la realidad y la ilusión, entre lo masculino y lo femenino. (1)<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the *Bildungsroman* continues to be redefined and reexamined highlights its pertinence to contemporary literary practice. In this study, I explore the transformation of that genre during its alteration by Spanish women authors in the second half of the twentieth century. I particularly treat novels that reflect the experiences of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and its subsequent Franco regime (1939-1975). Aiding this study are cinematic representations that validate and fill in any gaps not having previously been exposed in the novel of formation.

*Bildungsroman* is originally a German concept, derived from the term *Bildung* (development) and Roman (novel). Todd Kontje notes in *The German Bildungsroman* that “the German word *Bildung* originally referred to both the external form or appearance of an individual (*Gestalt*, Latin *forma*) and to the process of giving form (*Gestaltung*, *formatio*)” (1). A century after the term’s original German introduction, the name continues to be broadly used, adapting into the specificities of the time, country and gender in which the novel was produced.

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<sup>1</sup> Lutes, Leasa Y. Allende, Buitrago, Luiselli: aproximaciones teóricas al concepto del “Bildungsroman” femenino. Vol 87. New York: Peter Lang, 2000.

In the years following the Civil War, Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, Mercè Rodoreda, Ana María Moix, Esther Tusquets and others, published novels of female development that enriched the canon of Spanish literature. The recent decades have witnessed the publication of a growing number of female formation novels by Lucía Exteberría, Almudena Grandes, Rosa Montero, as well as many other leading female writers in Spain. As Olga Bezhanova asserts in *Growing Up in an Inhospitable World*:

Through creating *Bildungsromane*, female writers who were separated by exile or geographical and generational differences could establish a productive creative and intellectual dialogue. This opportunity was otherwise denied to them by the oppressive regime that did not encourage attempts by women to address the causes of female infantilization. (7)<sup>2</sup>

The early 1980s experienced a radical renovation in the critical approach to the genre. The term *Bildungsroman* gained a wider approval as a description for those narratives that outlined the process of individual self-formation within society. Critics began accepting and expanding the boundaries of the original genre previously embedded in German traditions. The most urgent re-evaluations of this notion, however, came from feminist critics, who began to question and challenge the phallogentric presumptions at the core of traditional novels of self-development as well as the criticism that engaged with those works. These critics attempted to re-order the structure of gender difference, and concur that this concept had not yet been incorporated into the idea of the growth of the history of the *Bildungsroman*. The editors of *The Voyage In*, Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland put in a significant contribution to the study of

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<sup>2</sup> Bezhanova, Olga. *Growing up in an Inhospitable World: Female Bildungsroman in Spain*. US: Tempe, 2013.

female-development narratives.<sup>3</sup> This work is the first collection of essays to illuminate some of the formal characteristics of female-centered fictions during the nineteenth century such as Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. They show that women develop later, after finding that marriage is initially fulfilling but insufficient for the realization of the self. The editors emphasize that the novel of development has become, "in Ellen Morgan's words, "the most salient form of literature" for contemporary women written about women" (quoted in Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 13). However, they do point out that the heroines in these novels hardly ever receive an opportunity of a formal education, hindering their ability to abandon their home in hopes of reaching an independent life in the city resulting in confinement. I elucidate this notion in further detail throughout the study, showing that the confinement of a private domestic domain shifts to a public active one.

Rita Felski, adds to this notion in her essay "The Novel of Self-Discovery," who explains that the heroines in eighteenth century novels were given a choice of either marriage or death. She asserts that the twentieth century offered a fresher type of developmental narrative for the female protagonist, which led to a breaking of that dichotomy. Felski's reformulation of the female novels of self-discovery argues that the genre can be exemplified under two textual forms:

The first of these can be seen as a feminist appropriation of the *Bildungsroman*; self-discovery is portrayed as a historically determined process occurring through dialectical interaction between self and society... the second category emphasizes spatial and symbolic patterns rather than the temporal and open-ended dimension of narrative; it is mythical rather than historical. (137)

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<sup>3</sup> See Abel, Elizabeth, Marianne Hirsh and Elizabeth Langland. *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983.

Felski views the female novel of self-formation as a promising genre because it can presume a new function and adapt to new meanings in the enunciation of women's identities, which can lead to a higher interest and increase of participation in the public domain:

Women's increased sense of freedom in this century, when women's experience has begun to approach that of the traditional male *Bildungsheld*, finds expression in a variety of fictions. Although the primary assumption underlying the *Bildungsroman*—the evolution of a coherent self—has come under attack in modernist and avant-garde fiction, this assumption remains cogent for women writers who now for the first time find themselves in a world increasingly responsive to their needs. (Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 13)

*The Gender of Modernity* (1995) by Felski is one of her most influential work. In it, she dismisses the prominent notion of the opposition between feminized mass culture and high-culture masculine modernism. Although she does not specifically deal with the *Bildungsroman*, she does suggest that when dealing with fictions of individual development, historical and evolutionary factors should be addressed and assures that “if our sense of the past is inevitably shaped by the explanatory logic of narrative, then the stories that we create in turn reveal the inescapable presence and power of gender symbolism” (1). Mikhail Bakhtin had already noted the urgency of merging the individual with the historical arguing that the hero develops in unison with his surroundings in his essay “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism” while assuring that:

The actual content of this constant (the ready-made and unchanging hero) and the actual signs of his unity, permanence, and self-identity can vary immensely, beginning with the identity provided by the empty name of the hero (in certain

subcategories of the adventure novel) and ending with a complex character, whose individual aspects are disclosed only gradually, throughout the course of the entire novel. (21)

Thus, any changes that occur in a hero or heroine are in direct conjunction with his or her surrounding setting triggering transformation. Franco Moretti picked up Bakhtin's thread on history and individuality in *The Way of the World*, where he emphasizes that the factor in the *Bildungsroman* lies in youth, and not in the organic development of the individual. He proposes that the central key to the culture of modernity resides in youth because "it is, so to speak, modernity's 'essence', the sign of a world that seeks its meaning in the future rather than in the past" (Moretti 5). He continues by assuring that youth stands as a symbolic form because it does not last forever: "Youth is brief, or at any rate circumscribed, and this enables, or rather forces the a priori establishment of a formal constraint on the portrayal of modernity" (6). Although Moretti does not draw upon areas of female development, he contends that a historical approach resides in the genre.

The first chapter of this study provides a precursory inquiry into the general trends governing the category of the 'Bildung;' types and categories. The primary concern in this chapter is to explore the emergence and subsequent development of the novel of formation in relation to identity based perspectives. My aim is to analyze approaches towards identity in conjunction with its function in the development of self-attainment. I propose that crisis and conflict work simultaneously to set the dynamic nature of the interactions between an individual and his or her social and physical environment, as with the novel *Nada*, by Carmen Laforet and *El cuarto de atrás* by Carmen Martín Gaité. I consider the nature of self as a social phenomenon

both personally and socially. I discuss the different aspects and constituents of selfhood, as well as the role of childhood experience created by the social contexts in which we live.

The chapter also extends itself into the dynamics between mother and daughter and its affectivity on constructions and complexities of the self, as seen in Ana María Moix's novel *Julia*. I examine how we can understand other individuals simply based on having a sense of self and maintaining agency towards one's thoughts and emotions. Having a conscious awareness of who we are in relation to our surrounding world provides the medium for our existence as individuals. The following extract titled "Borges and I" from the Argentinean writer Jorge Luis Borges challenges this module where the writer experiences his public image (himself as seen by others) as almost another self, a stranger to the Borges he feels himself to be:

The other one, the one called Borges, is the one things happen to. ... I know of Borges from the mail and see his name on a list of professors or in a biographical dictionary. I like hourglasses, maps, eighteenth-century typography, the taste of coffee and the prose of Stevenson; he shares these preferences, but in a vain way that turns them into the attributes of an actor. It would be an exaggeration to say that ours is a hostile relationship; I live, let myself go on living, so that Borges may contrive his literature, and this literature justifies me. It is no effort for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me, perhaps because what is good belongs to no one, not even to him, but rather to the language and to tradition. Besides, I am destined to perish, definitively, and only some instant of myself can survive in him. Little by little, I am giving over everything to him, though I am quite aware of his perverse custom of falsifying and magnifying things ... I shall remain in Borges, not in myself (if it is true that I



am someone), but I recognize myself less in his books than in many others or in the laborious strumming of a guitar. ... I do not know which of us has written this page. (246)

The interrelationship between individuality and a psychological awareness of the self is addressed in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* and *El amor es un juego solitario*, novels written by Esther Tusquets.<sup>4</sup> Although the main character in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* is not under the expected adolescent category, the author provides a work fixated on the anxieties of growth and aging, which make it relevant to the genre of female development and giving the middle-age female the opportunity to re-consider her *Bildung*.

Framing these properties is the notion of one's own reflexive awareness of acts and experiences, where the angst of possessing takes over to dominate the *other* as analyzed in the film *Carmen* by Vicente Aranda.<sup>5</sup> Don José, the male protagonist becomes physically and emotionally fixated on Carmen, the main protagonist of the film. His attempt to possess her leads to her perdition, as she rejects his humble pleadings of leaving her promiscuous ways and offering her a happy and prosperous life. Both protagonists initially feel strongly towards each other and then shift into a wrecked state. Carmen is initially absorbed into seducing this young soldier, who initially appears oblivious to her sensual ways, but later becomes sickened by his overly raging desire towards her. As an icon projecting the envy of feminine attributes, Carmen finds herself grappling among toxic lover relationships yet resists withdrawing from that addictive pattern. It is only when she challenges don José to kill her that she is consumed by his everlasting need for her.

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<sup>4</sup> These novels form part of a trilogy.

<sup>5</sup> This other may be a person, concept or object needed to be consumed or validated to attain self discovery.

Chapter 2, entitled ‘Treating the Erotic under Feminist, Language, and Sexuality Discourses,’ examines women’s effort to achieve individuation aiming to create a more inclusive and pluralistic representation of womanhood. Moreover, it details theoretical perspectives of love and eroticism in an effort to identify and compare the elements that affect the physical and emotional needs of individuals as treated in Almudena Grandes’ *Las edades de Lulú*, and *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* by Lucía Etxebarria. I explore the nature of desire and the relation of sexual desire to the idealized aspect of love. I argue that this desire demands reciprocity under the phenomenological structure of being in love. The film *Elegy* by Isabel Coixet takes it a step further presenting the permanent passage of time in combination with disease, contradicting the presence of love. In *The Nature of Sexual Desire*, James Giles agrees that the following elements work together to aid the premise of being in love and what one hopes for:

(1) (a) the person I love be vulnerable before me in order that I may care for her and also that (b) I may be vulnerable before me in order that she may similarly care for me. Further, since to love is to want to be loved, then another component of my being in love is my desire that (2) (a) the person I love desires to be vulnerable before me in order that I may care for her and also that (b) she desires me to be vulnerable before her in order that she may care for me. (143)

Therefore, the structure of being in love contains distinct elements that generate mutual vulnerability in hopes of acquiring validation of the other; be it through, care, affection, love, or intimacy.

My attempts to demystify the feminine myths that have dominated literary and cinematic genres serve as a purpose to challenge patriarchal mythology. If, as Mary Doane proposes in *The Desire to Desire*, “the objectlessness of the advertising discourse frequently prompts a return to

the female body as the prototypical object of commodity fetishism,” I propose that constructions of this manner are aided through desire; one that has been repressed and feared. I continue with exploring aspects of femininity, challenging the expected roles and behaviors of females in relation to the body as evident in the film *Lucía y el sexo* by Julio Medem. I question the architecture of spectatorship through the concept of impasse, which I propose, is formed by the intimacy of the cinematic experience and representation of Medem’s film protagonists. As Chris Weedon explains in *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*:

The nature of femininity and masculinity is one of the key sites of discursive struggle for the individual and we need only look at a few examples of forms of subjectivity widely on offer to realize the importance of this battle. It is a struggle which begins at birth and which is central to upbringing and education. At the centre of the struggle is the common-sense assumption that there is a natural way for girls, boys, women, and men to be. (94)

I then question the interchangeability and reversibility of masculine and feminine traits proposing that these notions manifest a discord that subverts the hierarchy of hegemonic discourses in both sexes as seen in Rosa Montero’s novel *Te trataré como a una reina*. The central focus shifts from analyses of identity based perspectives to ones concerned with the feminine condition categorized under paradigms of language, love, and sexuality. Richard Stevens, in *Understanding the Self* elucidates the use of a metaphor to make sense of what love is such that it:

Deepen one’s understanding to make sense of love:

Love is a physical force (electromagnetic, gravitational, etc.)

I could feel the *electricity* between us. There were *sparks*. I was *magnetically drawn* to her. They are uncontrollably *attracted* to each other. They *gravitated* to each other immediately. His whole life *revolves* around her. The *atmosphere* around them is always *charged*. There is incredible *energy* in their relationship. They lost their *momentum*.

Love is patient:

This is a sick relationship. They have a *strong, healthy* marriage. The marriage is *dead* – it can't be *revived*. Their marriage is on *the mend*. We're getting *back on our feet*. Their relationship is in *really good shape*. They've got a *listless* marriage. Their marriage is *on its last legs*. It's a *tired* affair.

Love is madness:

I'm *crazy* about her. She *drives me out of my mind*. He constantly *raves* about her. He's gone *mad* over her. I'm just *wild* about Harry. I'm *insane* about her.

Love is magic:

She cast *her spell* over me. The *magic* is gone. I was *spellbound*. She had me *hypnotized*. He has me *in a trance*. I was *entranced* by him. I'm *charmed* by her. She is *bewitching*.

Love is war:

He is known for his many rapid *conquests*. She *fought* for him, but his mistress *won out*. He *fled from* her *advances*. She *pursued* him relentlessly. He is slowly *gaining ground* with her. He *won* her hand in marriage. He *overpowered* her. She is *besieged* by suitors. He has to *fend* them *off*. He *enlisted the aid* of her friends.

He *made an ally* of her mother. Theirs is a *misalliance* if I've ever seen one.

(Lakoff and Johnson 49)

Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to shed light on the binary logics propagated by patriarchal society and question the discrepancies in gender ideologies in an effort to reconsider its power structures.

The third chapter, 'Recuperating the Past: Women's condition in Post-Franco Spain' opens with a brief context on the promotion of females specifically with regards to education. The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate the condition of women and show how the lives of women were altered due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the years of the Franco dictatorship as examined in *Primera memoria* by Ana María Matute and *La plaza del diamante* by Mercè Rodoreda. The central premise revolves around females' quest for literal and metaphorical recognition of a postwar generation. The film *Las trece rosas* directed by Emilio Martínez-Lázaro explores connections between women's marginal standing and the overall sense of displacement and uneasiness that trickled into the Spanish Transition period. I concur with critics' agreement that this behavior stems from a silencing of the past under the so-called 'pacto del olvido.' I argue that the nature of the *Bildungsroman* can be placed under a socio-historical context aided through rebellion and memory. I allude to the recurrent and irresolvable tensions embedded in all attempts to expose the past into the present. I then resort to an (auto) biographical account, *Cielo nocturno* by Soledad Puértolas, in an attempt to extract the burden that past memories have on the present, also promoted through rebellion. As David Herzberger explains in *Narrating the Past*:

Writing the past thus becomes a twofold endeavor: it is a way to write and to act against the grain, as well as a means to develop narrations that allow (and even

compel) the opening of history to divergence. Matters of truth, meaning, and time ... are of course implicitly held up to scrutiny in all narrations. In Francoist Spain, however, they stand resolutely at the core of discourse as crucial determinants of authority over the past. (2)

In an interview given to Puértolas, the author describes the attainment of freedom in regards to writing and literature:

--“Yo al mirar imagino... Yo creo que mis personajes observan por mí. Y se inventan por mí y observan y exploran en un mundo en el que yo no entro... Es verdad que en lo que escribo, escribo cosas de mi vida, pero como si fuera otra persona. Y eso es maravilloso. Eso es como el gran placer de la creación. Es que tu vida no es lo que estás contando sino tu vida de por otros. Eso para mí es cuando verdaderamente eres libre.” (Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española)<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, the texts and films I have chosen formulate evocations of this relationship in order to explore factual/fiction dividends of the novel of self-discovery. All works have a common convergent interest in the interplay between the attainment of self-formation that is aided through political or social conflict, while the others deal tangentially with the relationships between gender based perspectives in conjunction with love, intimacy and sexuality. The novels serve as exemplars of the interconnection between gender and identity based perspectives, and their thematic range is sufficiently expansive so as to allow an examination of multiple inflective factors.

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<sup>6</sup> “Pienso, luego existo” Interview with Soledad Puértolas. A la carta: Televisión y Radio. Corporación de Radio y Televisión Española 2015. <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/pienso-luego-existo/pienso-luego-existo-soledad-puertolas/1974788/>. Accessed on May 22, 2015.

## Chapter 1: Configurations, Causes, and Modes of the *Bildungsroman*

*This is what I am: watching the spider rebuild—  
patiently they say...  
~Adrienne Rich<sup>7</sup>*

To understand the history of the *Bildungsroman* is to understand the history of the genre that has had increasing popularity, particularly among female authors. Arising in Germany, the *Bildungsroman* or coming-of-age story is a genre of the novel which focuses on the psychological and moral growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. Change is thus extremely important.<sup>8</sup> Since its origin with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, the *Bildungsroman* has examined the interaction of psychological and social strengths via literary works. Essential to the novel of formation is the protagonist, either male or female, who is subject to marginality and shifts towards independence and emancipation from his or her surrounding environment. With their fiction, Spanish women novelists have successfully challenged patriarchal society to voice their experiences and address the undercurrent of the Franco era. They have expressed women's issues that have deconstructed and demystified patriarchal restrictions and have achieved progress and shifts in these cultural expectations. The female protagonist strives to grow emotionally and intellectually through her experience in the world. What then, is the individual's relation to society and what determines the social and psychological conventions that would, at some point, impede the female's attainment towards independence and self-emancipation? In his essay titled "The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)," Mikhail Bakhtin asserts "The need for a historical investigation in the novel genre (one that would not be

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<sup>7</sup> From "Natural Resources" *The Dream of a Common Language*.

<sup>8</sup> See Laura Sue Fuderer's *The Female Bildungsroman in English: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1990.

statically formal or normative)” (10).<sup>9</sup> What are the elements that constitute this genre? How are the subgenres, if any, applicable to the developing plot of a novel? Bakhtin emphasizes the following as a “classification of how the main image of the main hero is constructed: the travel novel, the novel of ordeal, the biographical (autobiographical) novel, the *Bildungsroman*” (10). Thus, the coming-of-age novel or story exhibits a search for the individual’s meaningful existence within society in conjunction with the attainment of one’s true self. The hero or heroine may be inflicted with a feeling of loss or unhappiness in life with a need to escape from the family setting. There is doubt with the individual’s own needs and desires against those imposed on by a social order or patriarchal system. This crisis leads to the formation of the new person, a mature individual who feels ready to be integrated into society. In accordance with Laura Sue Fuderer, “because much of the critical literature attempts to redefine an existing literature, the question of definition arises” (1).

Authors such as Carmen Laforet, Ana María Matute, and Carmen Martín Gaité, among others, are a generation of writers, whose literary contributions currently constitute an important body of work, serving as an archetype of both literary and feminist values. This generation of writers is one whose figures were born within a decade of each other, experienced adolescence during the Civil War, and began to write fiction during the forties and fifties when social realism was evolving into a dominant literary form. The early novels of these writers express shared concerns with narratives that transformed autobiographical material into a novelistic experience.<sup>10</sup> The autobiographical-novelistic voyage accounts that characterize these writers’ narratives respond to issues of women’s self-emancipation and rebellion against social and

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<sup>9</sup> See M.M. Bakhtin *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret E.W. Jones expands on this in her work *The Contemporary Spanish Novel, 1939-1975*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985.



familial limitations. Their literary contributions have resulted in repeated winnings of prestigious national prizes such as the Premio Nadal.<sup>11</sup> The 1940's and 1950's offered narrative fiction from Spanish women novelists whose female protagonists moved away from the nineteenth century's thematic of "la novela rosa"<sup>12</sup> (or what we call romance novels) towards a "new coming of age novel." The Second Republic constitutes this pre-Franco era where the female heroine of this new narrative is what Carmen Martín Gaité describes as "la chica rara." The female protagonist no longer sees the domestic sphere as a comfort zone, but prefers public spaces. This "odd girl" trope ever so present in the works of Carmen Laforet and Ana María Matute compromise a structure that blossoms and expands even more so with the transition into the Franco era and its ultimate evolution into democracy.

Bakhtin's breakdown of the *Bildungsroman* emphasizes the biographical novel as a subcategory that may take the form of success, failure, confessional form, or family-biographical.<sup>13</sup> He states:

No specific historical subcategory upholds any given principle in pure form; rather, each is characterized by the prevalence of one or another principle for formulating the figure of the hero. Since all elements are mutually determined, the principle for formulating the hero figure is related to the particular type of plot, to the particular conception of the world, and to a particular composition of a given novel. (10)

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<sup>11</sup> The Premio Nadal is Spain's most prestigious annual literary prize whose female recipients include: Ana María Matute, Carmen Laforet, Carmen Martín Gaité, Elena Quiroga, Dolores Medio, Lucía Etxebarria, to name a few.

<sup>12</sup> Popular romance novel genre during the 40's and 50's where a male and female meet, have complications in their relationship that are eventually resolved, and end up marrying each other.

<sup>13</sup> Refer to Mikhail Bakhtin's essay "The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)" in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University Press, 1986.

The cause of a figure's formation then resides in a significant experience; a crisis is needed to start the formation. The protagonist may feel a need to escape this crisis without realizing that it will lead to regeneration. In *The German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance*, Michael Minden claims that:

It is not surprising that the desire of the masculine protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* should be embodied in women figures, who often have a structural function as well as a thematic one. The most obvious example of this sort of structural function is the ending in marriage, a motif from which the *Bildungsroman* has deviated in a rich variety of ways, ever since its inception with Weiland's *Die Geschichte des Agathon* in 1767. (1-2)

In novels of formation, a protagonist may consider marriage as a means of escape from his or her family, securing a sense of maturity and identity. Marriage may also trigger entrapment, thus leading to a crisis and struggle for individuality. In her article, "The Feminine *Bildungsroman*: Education Through Marriage," Elaine Hoffman Baruch evaluates novels of education, and notes that the most striking characteristic of the feminine *bildungsroman* is that it "takes place in or on the periphery of marriage" (335). Thus, the development of the *Bildungsroman* is best understood under categories of historical explanation and in the context of its subgenres concerning the role in education. Instead of proposing a general pattern of the genre, Baruch considers a contradiction in terms and suggests that "The authentic feminine *bildungsroman* remains to be written," and since the heroines development is linked to marriage (one that restricts women), she calls the novels "*Bildungsroman* manqués" (357). Some critics contend that, if individual development and assimilation appear difficult for a female protagonist, the obstacles increase when the protagonist faces injustice or restrictions. As established in the work of Concepción

Arenal and María (Condesa) Campo de Alange, work and education play a crucial role in the formation and establishment of a woman. Arenal proposes that in order for a woman to count as an individual and have personality, she must have an education; one that directly contributes to an achievement of self acknowledgment and one that surpasses the limits of the domestic sphere. In her work *La emancipación de la mujer en España*, Arenal questions and explores the role of women in society as well as those in marginalized conditions and states:

La mujer, para ser persona, ha menester hoy y probablemente siempre (porque hay condiciones naturales que no pueden cambiarse), para tener personalidad, decimos, necesita ser *más persona* que el hombre y una educación que contribuya a que conozca y cumpla su deber, a que conozca y reclame su derecho, a dignificar su existencia y dilatar sus afectos para que traspasen los límites del hogar doméstico, y llame suyos a todos los débiles que piden justicia o imploran consuelo. (63)

Despite emphasis on work and education, some critics also propose a link between gender and genre in analyses of canonical works. “Whatever its origins or the sex of its hero, the novel of education emerges at the time that the individual is no longer conceived of as static, a time when process and the inner life become valued over prescribed social roles” (338). The critical work of the early 1970s bloomed with discussions of the female *Bildungsroman* when researchers acknowledged it as a genre that paralleled with the contemporary feminist movement.

The modern feminist bildungsroman usually depicts adolescent development to one extent or another but it focuses primarily upon the crisis occasioned by a woman’s awakening, in her late twenties or early thirties, to the stultification and fragmentation of a personality devoted not to self-fulfillment and awareness, but

to a culturally determined, self sacrificing, and self-effacing existence. This crisis and the resultant struggle for individuality and integration continue to occupy the central thematic position of the feminist Bildungsroman in the mid-seventies.

(quoted in Fuderer 3)

Is there an attempt, then, to redefine the term *Bildungsroman* by singling out novels that portray either a “modernist feminist bildungsroman,” as Fuderer points out? Do critics focus on understanding the *Bildung* of the protagonist? Julia A. Kushigian proposes that the term ‘Bildung’ be approached in a chemical, physical, cultural, social, historical, and philosophical perspective.<sup>14</sup> She considers that these aspects of the term make it whole, and places special emphasis on culture and the individual’s progression to *develop* and *become* in his or her surrounding environment.<sup>15</sup>

In theory, Bildung affects the entire human being—mind, body, and spirit—to “become” what he/she will be. Bildung moves from the outward self to interiority, and from the inward self out to the public sphere. It connotes a shaping and molding of the self, both of the body, as the individual passes through adolescence, reaches adulthood and ages, and of the mind, as ideas are explored, modified, and adopted. The complexity of Bildung is that it can be conceived of as being both static and fluid at the same time.” (Kushigian 23)

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<sup>14</sup> Refer to Julia A. Kushigian’s work *Reconstructing Childhood: Strategies of Reading for Culture and Gender in the Spanish American Bildungsroman*. New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> Kushigian’s emphasis on culture asserts: “Culture, if examined for its values, virtues, or truths, reveals an emancipatory potential not unlike that of the Bildung process. [...] Culture grounds the Bildung process in a humanistic concept of development and becoming, the latter being as Nietzsche interpreted it, ultimate and inexplicable, incorporating what has been achieved and those levels or stages that are only striving for realization in the making and molding of the self” (23).

The process of the *Bildungsroman* is significant in that it provides a solid foundation for individual change. This change involves self-realization, self-development, and self-identity. Change may be encouraged by a self-reflection amidst a crisis that is triggered by unavoidable circumstances. The individual may undergo specific rites of passage such as obtaining an education, or experiencing love, death, or marriage as part of his or her own growth and maturity process. These may also be seen as a series of tests as part of the individual's progression towards self-cultivation and personhood. A change in atmosphere, discovering a hidden truth, or reaching a specific age is also an indication of change or spiritual growth in an individual.

It is important to note that the *Bildungsroman* is written for the sake of the process, the *Bildung* process, which illuminates the hero's all-around self-development. Self-development may lead to or include uncertainties, inconclusive endings, or possibly the death of the hero. (Kushigian 77)

Thus, the process may begin in childhood and end in adulthood, or continue with no conclusion if commenced in adulthood. It may be a linear progression or a circular one, with the possibility of tragedy or crisis that truncates the developmental stages or psyche of the individual. If the 'Bildung' process is one of inner self-realization, should there be a strengthening of the outer-self; one that separates the psychological, spiritual, and emotional development of the inner-self? The path towards an individual's self-realization ultimately includes a rejection or acceptance of a specific longing usually evident at the beginning of a novel; one that progresses as the plot develops and comes to an end. Kushigian observes that:

By charting developments from past actions to future potentialities, *Bildung*

affirms life and celebrates human values. It inscribes the whole of reality—life and death, memory and dreams, success and failure, rebellion and acceptance—exploring the intervening stages as markers for personal growth. (14)

The individual's quest for individualization develops through direct relationship with others, or may be embedded in isolation. The cultural formation of the male and female individual will also directly affect his or her own form of 'growing up.' Kushigian reinforces the fact that 'Bildung' represents a reconstruction of childhood "grounded in hope, potentiality, access to life, and victory over death" (25). An individual's quest for self-search can begin with seclusion and end with the integration into a community where he or she can develop more fully. A form of rebirth takes place that results in a renovation of the individual and an engagement with his or her personal surroundings.

An individual's coming-of-age may generate questions and/or expectations that may highlight areas of gender, sexuality, and love. In *The Voyage In* the editors present concerns of society, genre theory, and theories of female identity linked to the female novel of development. "Women's developmental task and goals, which must be realized in a culture pervaded by male norms, generate distinctive narrative tensions—between autonomy and relationship, separation and community, loyalty to women and attraction to men" (Abel, Hirsh and Langland 12). Novels of development involve narratives that often bring the individual from childhood to maturity. These novels may highlight the life of a child or adolescent who embarks into the world of adulthood. Pratt emphasizes that because "adolescence, as a period of education, was a late development in concepts of womanhood, many early "coming-of-age" novels were structured around childhood initiation" (13). Authors such as Ana María Matute, Lola Beccaria, Almudena Grandes, and Josefina Aldecoa present young female protagonists engulfed into the world of

adulthood challenged by deceit and courtship. Novels of development tend to inculcate the norms of womanhood or feminine conduct into female protagonists, which can alter or stabilize the outcome of events in a story. They portray a world in which the young woman hero is destined for happiness or disappointment. Nature is often side used as a refuge for female heroines and sometimes it encircles the protagonist's entire world. Heroines will either find comfort, independence, or companionship in nature, achieving a sense of oneness and spiritual individualization. Pratt examines Simone de Beauvoir's position on the effect of nature on adolescent girls and concludes that by "Taking possession of nature, she possesses herself. De Beauvoir's analysis of nature worship in the adolescent is worded in such a way as to suggest that the world of nature is uniquely the girl's world but one that she will no longer need when she comes into her "own" (17). A number of heroes desire emotional independence, while others long to find a suitable mate.<sup>16</sup> Often times, female protagonists achieve self-realization and emotional stability after becoming a mother.<sup>17</sup> This is evident in novels where heroines feel alienated due to a lack of affection or companionship in life.

In the woman's novel of development (exclusive of the science fiction genre), however, the hero does not *choose* a life to one side of society after conscious deliberation on the subject; rather, she is radically alienated by gender-role norms *from the very outset*. Thus, although the authors attempt to accommodate their heroes' *Bildung*, or development, to the general pattern of the genre, the disjunctions that we have noted inevitably make the woman's initiation less a self-

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<sup>16</sup> Here I am using "hero" to refer to both male and female individuals.

<sup>17</sup> Exemplary of this is *La sed* (1965) by Mercedes Ballesteros among others. This novel depicts the issue of sterility and the longing of becoming a mother.

determined progression towards maturity than a regression from full participation in adult life. (Pratt 36)

It follows quite naturally, then, that many of the characteristics in a “coming-of-age” novel deal with a sense of “suffocation” on the hero’s behalf. A protagonist may feel the need to move away from an enclosure towards a free space, such as nature, or the city and may feel excitement as he or she ventures out on a new beginning. In *Memory and Spatiality in Post-Millennial Spanish Narrative*, Lorraine Ryan emphasizes that space may have varying amounts of reactions in individuals under the following construction:

- 1) Hegemonic: individuals construe the space in the manner envisaged by its producer.
- 2) Negotiated: individuals accept the general message encoded in the space, but deem it irrelevant to their particular circumstances, and then proceed to integrate it with their own oppositional view.
- 3) Oppositional: individuals identify the interpretive code being used by the dominant, and reject it in favor of an alternative one. (quoted in Ryan 30)

In this genre, authors produce narrative patterns where a hero’s quest for adventure or romance is depicted early on into the plot. It may be a sudden or gradual development as the protagonist comes to recognize his or her own wishes and needs. They may become increasingly conscious of their potential independence and may feel dissatisfied with their social environment, thus leading to departure from their current environment. Felski comments the following on the act of separation:

A shift in physical space can be central to the process of self-discovery; the heroine moves outward, from the oppressive environment of the city to the empty



spaces of the wilderness...or inward, from a hostile world to a secluded and sheltering room...The act of leaving a husband, lover or family, is worthless accompanied by a changed perspective, an awareness of the falsity of existing gender stereotypes; in turn this psychological shift requires a physical departure, given that autonomy cannot be asserted in a repressive environment. What is important however, and the central characteristic of this kind of novel, is that the impulse comes from within; identity is perceived as internal rather than socially produced. (134)<sup>18</sup>

This “impulse” is evident in novels of formation where the heroine undergoes an epiphanic vision that alters her quest in life. It is perhaps for this reason that Annis Pratt considers that “the bildungsroman is essentially a novel of selfhood rather than of social conformity” (37). Instead of adhering to societal expectations, an individual may have firm intentions to change his or her purpose in life. Consequently, the individual may experience a collision between an evolving self and the regulations imposed on by society. Thus, the individual’s attempt to develop independence may shorten or weaken if conflicts arise. These conflicts may involve conforming to or rebelling against gender, marriage, or courtship norms obliged on the individual. The hero may even choose to embrace religion in order to flee from his or her respective environment.

Women novelists often make use of adolescent female protagonists whom, upon escaping their surrounding environment, condition themselves to “grow up” and become independent. As analyzed by Anniken Telnes Iversen, “The main theme of the bildungsroman, and the one most frequently discussed in relation to the classic bildungsroman, is the development of the protagonist: The hero’s search for identity and a working philosophy of life, for love and

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<sup>18</sup> Refer to: Felski, Rita. “The Novel of Self-Discovery: A Necessary Fiction?” *Southern Review* 19.2 (1986): 131-48.

connections, and the question of finding a place in society” (69).<sup>19</sup> The sense that the hero or heroine can envision themselves as independent working individuals, allows them to step away from any normative restrictions and embrace their liberty. The task of the hero becomes difficult by the fact that he or she may be easily encouraged to accept the standards of society and disregard their innermost desire of defying that norm. The model of “adolescence” has become a highly popular way of portraying the norms of adulthood in novels, providing prescribed forms of conduct and expectations as appropriate ways to prepare a young boy or girl for life. As outlined by Patricia M. Spacks in her work *The Adolescent Idea: Myths of Youth and the Adult Imagination*, adolescence is directly connected to transition and complexities of love and hate: “The battle of the generations, with its loves and hates, plays a comparably crucial role, determining structure as well as content not only in the Bildungsroman but often in the novel of initiation ...” (17). Although the adolescent individual may not have wholly acquired the necessary tools for direct immersion into an independent state of mind or environment, he or she will undergo a moment of realization and achieve a sense of direction after facing a moment of crisis. The hero may be inflicted with the need to reject any notion or environment that may be of threat, towards one that is less hazardous to his or her sense of selfhood. The mature individual may later choose to return to his or her primitive environment to fully achieve personal fulfillment.

The disjunction between the novel of development and the woman’s bildungsroman generates the textual ambivalences that characterize the genre when it falls into the hands of more rebellious woman authors. If the author wants to inject some form of protest but nonetheless must conform to her own and her

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<sup>19</sup> Refer to: Iversen, Anniken Telnes. *Change and Continuity: The Bildungsroman in English*. University of Tromsø. September 2009. Dissertation.

society's concepts of womanhood, she has in prose fiction a number of techniques for voicing her objections while she drowns out their effect. (Pratt 15)

Young heroes may be portrayed by their authors as individuals breaking through patterns that may be perceived as archetypes, particularly in women's literature. These representations may either be rooted in the text by creating false images, by way of actions, symbols, or speech that would either aid or hinder the individual's ability to grow and develop. Following Carl's Jung approach on transformation or "individuation," both are helpful in understanding the process through which an individual is "reborn," and the hero is more likely to break with the day-to-day behavior of his or her environmental or familial expectations. "Jung defines *Wiedergeburt* as involving either renovation or transformation of an individual so that all of his or her faculties are brought into conscious play" (Pratt 136). This change may involve a renewal of the self, marked by characteristics of strength and effort. If the hero is aware of specific areas in his/her life that require attention, he or she may consciously choose to change their way of living. "Through breaking with day-to-day behavior, paradoxically, the "reborn" hero can battle those forces likely to disrupt society. The rebirth journey takes the hero beyond social boundaries and back again, its goal the renewal of society" (Pratt 137). A hero may have a false representation of life due to his or her surrounding environment and the upbringing in the household. The quest for interior independence may temporarily be blocked by these depictions, impeding the individual's ability to move forth in their life. The individual may unintentionally experience guilt, feeling trapped and consumed by society's norms and expectations: "If the purpose of the novel of development is to integrate the individual into her society, its generic function is frequently aborted by society's unwillingness to assimilate her" (Pratt 136). The individual may

subconsciously envision an ideal “paradise” centered on personal, rather than social, fulfillment. The protagonist, then, becomes both recipient and actor of his or her own experience.

Novels of formation, then, are ones that are open; ones that seek an ending that goes beyond itself and its protagonists. “La ficción, más que la autobiografía --que implica la posibilidad de una continuación, en cuanto que el autobiógrafo que la escribe no ha muerto--, ofrece la ilusión de un final” (47). Is the *Bildungsroman*, then, a genre that demands permanence? Does a protagonist feel complete after overcoming the deficiencies and mishaps of life? In effect, the irony may lie in the literary mechanism that the author attempts to achieve via the reader’s perspective. The reader may attempt to identify with a novel’s hero, stimulated by the protagonist’s own interior wishes and desires. “Este carácter reflexivo hace de cualquier *Bildungsroman* un proceso de autoformación no sólo para el héroe sino también para el autor-narrador y para el lector” (Rodríguez Fontela 39). This reflexive state of mind, then, posits the condition of the *Bildungsroman* as a process of self-formation not only for the hero, but for the author-narrator and its reader. The narrative subjects undergo a sense of self-discovery framed by his or her fundamental experiences. The reader, will, in his or her own construction of the subject’s formation, set a specific image of the protagonist’s outcome and immediately enter the consciousness of the protagonist. It may be that during the course of such a reflexive reading that the reader may develop his or her own self-formation set forth by their own already predisposed expectations. As suggested by Rodríguez Fontela, “aprendemos más los lectores que el protagonista novelesco” (43). These narrative entities: author / narrator / protagonist / reader, can be classified as individual literary and cultural working forms.

It is from this undertaking that the *Bildungsroman* emerges as a tradition which engages its reader in a narratively mediated debate about sentiments and ideas, a

debate in which the conflicting positions are not only stated but also reflected upon. (Rodríguez Fontela 39)

The reader's initial reception of the text can remain stable; yet, it will not be permanent if the hero or heroine undergoes change or instability due to his or her surrounding environment. Thus, by necessity, the reader will expect a specific outcome based on the sequence of events of a novel. It is unlikely that he or she will accept the given outcome at the end, without considering other conclusions to the narrative. "Los lectores percibimos, en efecto la ironía de ese "final abrupto", inesperado, dadas las expectativas creadas por la trayectoria del héroe;..." (Rodríguez Fontela 40). The reader may or may not be aware of the author's initial intention, and may show excitement or have mixed feelings about how the author chooses to represent the main protagonist. As proposed by Rodríguez Fontela, when dealing with novels of the *Bildungsroman*:

El método más simple y más patente que podemos encontrar en estas novelas, para impulsar al lector a la reflexión y al distanciamiento trascendentalizado de las experiencias vitales del protagonista novelesco, es el debate ideológico encarnado en personajes de la novela. (44)

The plot of the novel, as well as the main protagonist, may represent an expression of the self; the reader's self, because the characters behave in such a way as to covet the reader's attention.

El héroe de la novela, como el héroe del *Bildungsroman*, está poseído por el demonio de sus propios estímulos interiores que le empujan a la consecución de sus fines, a la búsqueda de la plenitud. Y, en esa búsqueda, queda atrapado nuestro héroe y se choca contra la realidad "como la abeja en el vidrio sin conseguir pasarlo, pero sin advertir que ese no es el camino". (Rodríguez Fontela 43)

The dimension to which the reader can identify with the main hero, specifically when dealing with novels of formation can strengthen or weaken the reader's own self character. "Sabemos que la autoformación de nuestra vida no acaba nunca pero exigimos que se cumpla la ilusión creada por el *Bildungsroman*: la ilusión de considerar concluida la constitución de la personalidad heroica" (Rodríguez Fontela 48). The formation process for the hero or heroine may trigger a positive or negative disposition of a reader's reception to a novel.

Los procesos pueden ser formativos o deformativos a juicio de las expectativas lectoriales y los finales, siempre que descubran el yo resultante del proceso, felices, trágicos o irónicos, pues, al fin, estas son apreciaciones del lector. En cualquier caso, la creación literaria, más fiel al principio de la mimesis que a presupuestos extraliterarios, desmiente el ideal final armónico y positivo.

(Rodríguez Fontela 49)

The reader may feel unsatisfied with a novel's result and desire a continuation of the main hero's formation. Hence, it can be argued that the formation or growth of a protagonist does not end as the novel comes to an end. On the contrary, the protagonist may be at the peak of his or her formation as the novel concludes, and the evolving hero or heroine is ready to enter the transition of change. Bakhtin sums up this transition as follows:

He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself. He is no longer within an epoch, but on the border between two epochs, at the transition point from one to the other. This transition is accomplished in him and through him ... It is as though the very *foundations* of the world are changing, and man must change with them. Understandably, in such a novel of emergence, problems of reality and man's potential, problems of

freedom and necessity, and the problem of creative initiative rise to their full height. The image of the emerging man begins to surmount its private nature (within certain limits, of course) and enters into a completely new, *spatial* sphere of historical existence. (23-24)

Is the hero or heroine, then, forced to become a new individual? In most cases, the author intentionally includes specific manifestations in the protagonist's path such as initiation rites, or physical and emotional changes to affirm his or her coming-of-age. Rodríguez Fontela expands on this concept:

El eje estructural de la novela de formación es la construcción de una personalidad que ha de superar, en el transcurso de la narración, un proceso iniciático -- denominado aquí autoformativo-- en aras de una nueva fase vital: el renacimiento del *yo* experimentado. Este renacimiento es el equivalente narrativo del ingreso en el mundo adulto de las ceremonias rituales de pubertad. (63)

At the brink of the main protagonist's transition, the reader may draw from previous moments of the plot to arrive at a specific conclusion for the story. The reader's initial premise may modify in order to meet the demands of his or her own purpose. But how, exactly, are these changes made? How does the reader get from here to there, from the purpose and premise with which he or she begins to arrive at the mark of events that unfold at the end? 'Pleasure' can play a vital role in determining the essence of a text, specifically to a reader's reception of it. In his work "The Pleasure of the Text," Roland Barthes considers the following:

The *brio* of the text (without which, after all, there is no text) is its *will to bliss*: just where it exceeds demand, transcends prattle, and whereby it attempts to overflow, to break through the constraint of adjectives—which are those doors of

language through which the ideological and the imaginary come flowing in. (13-14)

Language in a text may be classified into a specific genre by the reader and he or she may visualize the performance of specific acts in the text in order to define a critical problem. The reader may be forced to move away from a general supposition in order to arrive at a solution.

Critics have classified the work of Carmen Laforet under proper modules of female adolescent development. As a Spanish author who wrote in the period after the Spanish Civil War, Laforet earned the Nadal Prize with her first novel, *Nada*, in its first year of publication in 1945. Her novels reflect the concept of the female having a strong personality, having the capacity to develop it, and recognizing the importance of work and solitude.<sup>20</sup> The thread that Carmen Laforet begins with *Nada* is picked up with writers in the Franco era such as Mercè Rodoreda, Ana María Matute, and Carmen Martín Gaité, among others. *Nada* is a semiautobiographical novel of an orphaned adolescent, Andrea, who leaves her small town to attend the university in Barcelona. The novel is situated in post Civil War Spain where the narrator-protagonist arrives, full of hope and excitement. “Era la primera vez que viajaba sola, pero no estaba asustada; por el contrario, me parecía una aventura agradable y excitante aquella profunda libertad en la noche” (Laforet 13). She arrives in the middle of the night with a heavy suitcase (mainly filled with books), to find that no one is waiting for her, and yet, she is filled with a “gran encanto, ya que envolvía todas mis impresiones en la maravilla de haber llegado por fin a una ciudad grande” (Laforet 13). The narrator-protagonist in this case could be exemplary of a travel novel, with Andrea leaving her former environment and traveling to the city. Bakhtin states that in the travel novel, “the hero is a point in moving space” (10). As we will see at the

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<sup>20</sup> These characteristics can also be seen in some of her other works such as *La mujer nueva* for example.



end of the novel, Andrea eventually leaves Barcelona behind to travel to Madrid where she will be able to work and continue her studies. This classification under Bakhtin's subgenre is logical, and the duration of Andrea's stay in Barcelona is essential and proper in her development towards maturity.<sup>21</sup> Upon arrival to her family's house, Laforet sets the tone of an already present oppressive and anguished environment. "En toda aquella escena había algo angustioso, y en el piso un calor sofocante como si el aire estuviera estancado y podrido" (Laforet 16). This atmosphere becomes even more prominent with the authority figure of her Aunt Angustias who symbolically represents anguish and distress due to the meaning of her name.<sup>22</sup>

As the novel develops, Andrea is enclosed by filth, poverty, solitude, hunger, fear, and frustration. She is constantly reprimanded by her aunt due to her outings and whereabouts outside of home. Her developing character undergoes tests and she is influenced by her surrounding environment and dysfunctional family. These circumstances are proper of Bakhtin's novel of ordeal, "a type of novel constructed as a series of tests of the main heroes, tests of their fidelity, valor, bravery, virtue, nobility, sanctity, and so on" (11). Andrea compares her bed to a coffin and is told by her aunt that she is not very bright. Her aunt feels ashamed of her rebellious attitude and will not allow her to ruin both of their honorable reputations by being out and about on the streets like a "perro vagabundo" (Laforet 56).

--"Te lo diré de otra forma: eres mi sobrina; por lo tanto, una niña de buena familia, modosa, cristiana e inocente. Si yo no me ocupara de ti para todo, tú en

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<sup>21</sup> As described by Bakhtin, "Another quality of the travel novel is that the hero has no essential distinguishing characteristics and that he himself is not at the center of the novelistic's artistic attention" (10). These qualities are present in Andrea's character and are developed further towards the end of the novel.

<sup>22</sup> The term 'Angustia' is defined by the Real Academia Española as follows: 1) Aflicción, congoja, ansiedad 2) Temor opresivo sin causa precisa 3) Aprieto, situación apurada 4) Sofoco. These are all characteristics that enclose Andrea's familial surrounding. <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=angustia>. March 21, 2013.

Barcelona encontrarías multitud de peligros. Por lo tanto, quiero decirte que no te dejaré dar un paso sin mi permiso. ¿Entiendes ahora?” (26)

In accordance with Carol Gilligan, the stages of moral development for women are ever so present in the works of female authors and their heroines. Issues of infantile dependence shift to adolescent independence, although there may still remain bonds of maternal or paternal attachment. Gilligan proposes:

Girls' initiation or passage into adulthood in a world psychologically rooted and historically anchored in the experience of powerful men marks the beginning of self-doubt and the dawning of the realization, no matter how fleeting, that womanhood will require a dissociative split between experience and what is generally taken to be reality. (xxi)

Andrea's encounters of controlled relationships soon become encounters based on love. Her integration at the university is unstable, and Laforet clearly distinguishes the difference of classes; the rich and the poor. Andrea's friendship with Ena will eventually be the peak of her formation towards adulthood upon receiving news that there is work for her in Madrid.

Scholarly critics have asserted that fairy tales give shape to lives, and it is not rare to see references of these stories integrated in women's fiction. “[...] what can a woman learn about her own socialization if she rewrites a fairy tale “so as to clarify its meaning? And what might she discover about her natural, innate pattern of development when she rewrites a fairy tale “so as to make it a more accurate mirror of female experience?” (quoted in Abel, Hirsh and Langland 211-212). Laforet positions Andrea in a ‘bewitched castle,’ and her first real feeling of escape is her attendance to an important and luxurious social dance, where she hopes to feel like Cinderella. Upon arrival, her hope is shattered again, and she feels lost and humiliated and states: “Unos

seres nacen para vivir, otros para trabajar, otros para mirar la vida. Yo tenía un pequeño ruin papel de espectadora. Imposible salirme de él. Imposible libertarme” (Laforet 208). The final moment of Andrea’s formation is the letter she receives from Ena.

...Hay trabajo para ti en el despacho de mi padre, Andrea. Te permitirá vivir independiente y además asistir a las clases de la Universidad. Por el momento vivirás en casa, pero luego podrás escoger a tu gusto tu domicilio, ya que no se trata de secuestrarte. Mamá está muy animada preparando tu habitación. Yo no duermo de alegría. (Laforet 274-275)<sup>23</sup>

Andrea achieves freedom from the manipulative and dysfunctional family and feels a sense of change and liberation. She recalls her shattered hopes and feels that she has not gained anything from her stay in the house on the street of Aribau, when, in fact, she has achieved the necessary elements that elicit her formation.

Bajé las escaleras, despacio. Sentía una viva emoción. Recordaba la terrible esperanza, el anhelo de vida con que las había subido por primera vez. Me marchaba sin haber conocido nada de lo que confusamente esperaba: la vida en su plenitud, la alegría, el interés profundo, el amor. De la casa de la calle de Aribau no me llevaba nada. Al menos así creía yo entonces. (Laforet 275)<sup>24</sup>

Laforet’s protagonist establishes emancipative qualities via her surroundings and interaction among others. The stages present in Andrea’s experience of attaining maturity and social status are reinforced by her visions of morale and reasoning. Strategic emphasis is placed on patterns of

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<sup>23</sup> Andrea is invited to work and attend classes at the university in Madrid. This is the peak of her formation and coming-of-age.

<sup>24</sup> Laforet uses the word ‘nada’ (nothing) throughout the novel, and at the end of the novel, Andrea feels that she has not acquired anything from her stay in Barcelona, when in reality she has.

pain in order to satisfy the essential needs of physical comfort, safety and love. The *Bildungsroman* encourages self-reflection and it manifests itself in such a way as to reach full potentiality. Iversen proposes that, “If the main theme of the bildungsroman is the fashioning of modern identity, that is, an identity that is not dictated by birth and inheritance but the result of choice and experience, then the orphan is a perfect incarnation of the modern individual” (141). Andrea departs from Barcelona in search of a hopeful arrival towards a more independent life in Madrid and gradually acquires selfhood despite the harsh socioeconomic reality and repressive governmental policies of the epoch. The novel opens and ends with a trip, symbolically representing the dynamic changes in the protagonist’s life. One can then ask if all endings to patterns of the *Bildungsroman* promote security and bliss upon a character’s acquisition of maturity and independence. Kushigan suggests:

But we should not assume that harmony or a “happy ending” is the end product of the process. Bildung cannot be “achieved” as one would acquire practical knowledge through lessons in a process of lifelong learning. Self-cultivation leads to further cultivation or to cultural maturity, not to a goal outside of itself. By cultural maturity I mean the recognition and the allowing of what is different from oneself. This recognition is stressed to the point where one leaves the familiar and secure, opens oneself up to the Other, and returns with a greater understanding of the self and the Other without feeling threatened by contact with the unknown.

(23)

By emphasizing the hero’s connectedness and relation within the stages of his or her own development, the author allows the reader to consider specific patterns that will determine the outcome of the narration. Can the shaping and molding of the *Bildungsroman* be charted in a

specific sequence? Does it follow a harmonious linear state or is it one that advances, retreats, and takes various turns? In reality, the act of self formation is one of aspiration; one that is open to intellectual curiosity, pain, and crisis. Kushigian stresses that unlike a simple rite of passage to maturity, the *Bildung* process does not end with recognition of adulthood or independence.

As human development cannot be ordered uniformly, *Bildung* may begin in adolescence or well into adulthood. Moreover, it may end with the passage into adulthood, or it may not end at all. Significantly, because full potential in some may not be reached until death, *Bildung* remaps childhood as a metaphor for development throughout life. (26)

A strategic approach for reading the *Bildungsroman* would take into consideration the culture and gender complexities present in a narration in addition to political, social, and economic factors involved. As Leasa Lutes asserts in her work, *Allende, Buitrago, Luiselli*:

*Aproximaciones teóricas al concepto del “Bildungsroman” femenino*, “El eje central del *Bildungsroman* trata el conflicto nuclear entre el derecho básico del individuo a la auto-determinación por un lado y la exigencia social de complicidad por parte de cada miembro de una comunidad por otro lado” (67). In essence, the *Bildungsroman* provides a platform for the developing character that gradually moves forward despite any gender-role norms that may be set from the very outset. Authors may also accommodate this platform by providing moments of epiphany that will affirm the character’s progression towards participation into the adult life with a renewed feeling of liberation and optimism. As noted by Rodríguez Fontela, “Los *Bildungsromane* son novelas de principio, novelas abiertas que buscan, en último extremo, un final que está, en su realización, más allá de ellas mismas” (48). It becomes evident, then that the

process of the *Bildungsroman* does not come to an end as a character obtains self-realization. It remains open, allowing the main protagonist's journey to follow the same path.

## Women and Identity

The process of selfhood involves specific codes of conduct that allow one to seek, explore, and master a sense of wholeness for oneself. Essentially, the quest of the formed person does not end upon reaching a sense of completeness. “Through language, customs, and institutions one is able to seek one’s own in the alien, return to oneself, and gain a sense of the self, a working [cultivated] consciousness” (Kushigian 94). The power of the *Bildungsroman* strengthens a developmental process that is guided through personal codes of value. As Lutes proposes:

Para poder realizar cualquier tipo de transformación tiene que haber algún tipo de iluminación sobre las debilidades de la sociedad. Tal iluminación, el inverso de la desilusión personal de la protagonista, resulta primero en la deconstrucción de la sociedad con la posibilidad de una reconstrucción después. (67)

Thus, as the hero or heroine begins to recognize his or her authenticity in the world, the value of his or her struggle increases, activating this ‘sense of wholeness’ in his or her formation. One of a narrative’s principle components for a protagonist’s aid in the formation process is the presence of survival amongst confusion or chaos. Narratives of identity tend to reduce notions of bliss in order to achieve proper survival mechanisms in the hero or heroine. As explained in Thomas P. Saine’s essay, “Was *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* Really Supposed to Be a *Bildungsroman*? there are two aspects to a subject’s formation: “One can strive to achieve *Bildung*, but one can also receive it at the hands of others and undergo it under the influence of external forces (120). Hence, an individual’s survival mechanism may directly lead towards a specific developmental process triggering personhood and promoting higher resistance to any challenge. However, it is necessary to understand how self and selfhood are central to each protagonist’s experience. As

stated by Sheila Greene in her work *The Psychological Development of Girls and Women*, the concept of ‘self’ is still a central issue to postmodernist writers inside and outside psychology specifically because:

We need to understand how people come to see themselves and are seen by others as persons, and how their self-conscious sense of themselves and their relationship to the world is shaped and changed as they travel through the life course. (97)

Self and identity may overlap but branch out into various points throughout a hero or heroine’s journey. The individual’s experiences are directly involved in the self’s construction of a personal identity. “El protagonista que carezca de identidad personal o del deseo de hallarlo no puede presentar ningún tipo de desequilibrio en busca de resolución, no puede apoyar un argumento formativo digno de leerse” (Lutes 68). Thus, is one prone to becoming a “resisting reader” if there is no effort on the protagonist’s behalf to promote self change? Perhaps it seems appropriate to recognize the act of bonding that takes place through reading, turning it into an act of empowerment. Such empowerment can become collective once one bears witness not to the expectation, but to the literary process in itself. More demandingly and more attentively, it is a question of engaging with the text, allowing a more conscious experience.

Following the death of Franco in 1975, an immediate increase in literature written by women in Spain succeeded. Issues of women’s sexuality, identity, oppression, and stereotypes all form part of what would no longer be classified as “taboo” for women. The *transición* of the seventies with the *movida* movement, as well as with the cinematographic phenomenon of “El destape,” reinforces this notion, where Franco’s censorship disappears and shots of women’s full frontal nudity became integrated in films. This democratic era follows through with an expansion



of both literary and cinematic representation free of restrictions and censorship. Thus, Spanish women novelists emphasize the formation of the self in their fiction focusing on two main areas: female's solitude and work. The female must now become stronger within and "aguantarse a palo seco," as portrayed in the works of Carmen Martín Gaité.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the literary themes and motifs that emerge in the new paradigm of the Spanish novel after 1975, present female protagonists that achieve a sense of identity via the effects of the Spanish Civil War, solitude, loss of innocence, and disillusion.

It is essential to consider the role women novelists have assumed with their female protagonists, whether through a surrounding public or private space. As with novels classified under the *Bildungsroman* such as Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), the current century currently constitutes an era where Spanish women writers are able to voice their feelings and opinions on sexuality, feminine concerns, love, family, and self-consciousness. Authors such as Almudena Grandes, Lola Becarria, and Luis Castro, among others, are exemplary of this current literary canon. Issues on marriage, lesbianism, maternity, conflicts between mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, and friendship, constitute notions typical of the genre chosen by these authors. There is now a direct acknowledgement of frustration in the female protagonists, and they are presented with clear standards of femininity and issues or concerns of the feminine condition. These authors are not afraid to give testimony to areas or concerns of female formation. In her work *Mujeres y narrativa: otra historia de la literatura*, Alicia Redondo Goicoechea states:

Un elemento común de casi todos estos modelos de mujeres es que son niñas o mujeres consideradas malas (raras, dice Gaité) desde una perspectiva tradicional.

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<sup>25</sup> Good examples are Martín Gaité's novels: *Retahílas* (1974) and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978).

En las décadas de los cincuenta y sesenta, a pesar de estar llena de culpa, ven de forma crítica su situación y no quieren seguir el modelo de obedientes hijas, esposas y madres, es decir, meros objetos, como lo demuestran las protagonistas de Matute, Rodoreda, Gaité, o Moix, aunque sea más joven, pues comparte con esta generación el desamor materno, la concepción del amor como una trampa, y la búsqueda del paraíso perdido localizado en la infancia. (Goicoechea 109)

Carmen Martín Gaité provides a foundational novel for the late 1970's period until the present time, with *El cuarto de atrás* (1978)<sup>26</sup>. The “odd girl” disappears and is replaced by the “odd woman,” the mature woman who lives alone and has her own profession.<sup>27</sup> In this novel, the author (protagonist-narrator) centers on a specific narrative strategy based on a reflection of historical memory, literature, and autobiographical testimony that ultimately leads towards an attainment of self identity.<sup>28</sup> The author presents an innovative textual perspective, blurring the perspective between reality, dreams, and memory. The novel ends with ambiguous and fantastic characteristics leaving the reader doubtful of what has happened throughout the plot. Martín Gaité introduces a new textual perspective in her novel with the presentation of historical autobiography combined with elements of mystery, fantasy, and literature (as well as texts within a text). Her narration employs diverse textual aspects, interlacing with the fantastic, allowing the reader to be a participant in the novel. The narrator-protagonist explores her identity as a woman

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<sup>26</sup> Carmen Martín Gaité received the Premio Nacional de Literatura with this novel in 1978.

<sup>27</sup> The 1970's democratic era alters the “odd girl” literary notion and is replaced by the mature “odd” woman. Refer to Carmen Martín Gaité's essay on “La chica rara” from her work *Desde la ventana* (1987). This literary notion emphasizes the female protagonist who no longer sees the domestic sphere as a comfort zone, but prefers public spaces. Exemplary of this concept is Carmen Laforet's novel *Nada* (1945).

<sup>28</sup> “Novela en la que la autora vitaliza la memoria histórica y el testimonio autobiográfico mediante el empleo de ciertas técnicas próximas al género fantástico, en la línea del modelo teórico de Todorov” (qtd. in Bergmann and Herr 130). See Bergmann, Emilie L. & Richard Herr. *Mirrors and Echoes: Women's Writing in Twentieth-Century Spain*. Berkeley: Global, Area and International Archive, University of California Press, 2007.

and writer and the author invites the reader to explore that identity, allowing room for endless possibilities.

It is essential to question if the self acquires an identity or if an identity acquires the self? Richard Stevens describes essential features between personal and social identity in his work *Understanding the Self*. He suggests that personal identity:

arises from experiences specific to us and our private reflection on these’, whereas social identity constitutes ‘the characteristics and roles which tend to be attributed to us by others’. Personal identity is a function of self-awareness or the capacity for reflexiveness. Social identity does not depend on or require the existence of personal identity. (98)

Describing the ‘self’ is a concept with multiple connotations that will vary depending on who is viewing the self; that is, whether the viewpoint is internal or external. The self may participate in experiences that form an individual’s personal identity, and yet, some of these experiences may be extremely vexing in that they generate confusion and troubling questions for the individual. Greene mentions that “...although the key element of personal identity is self-reflection, social identity precedes and is centrally involved in the construction and maintenance of personal identity” (99). Thus, identity is not a possession associated solely with people; one may discover identity between separate matters, beliefs and persons. “Identity is about continuity and distinctiveness, recognizable by self and others” (Greene 98). One may invest in the self and possibly be criticized by others as being “selfish” or self-centered. An individual may need to experience such criticism in order to grow and mature. In her work *Woman Unliberated: Difficulties and Limitations in Changing Self*, C. Margaret Hall proposes that:

Investment in self is not an automatic pattern of behavior. I must consciously and consistently direct my actions toward increasing my responsibility for self if I am to be successful in my efforts to invest in self. Although this process is inevitably painful or provokes anxiety, the ultimate rewards and dividends of meeting the difficulties of such a challenge are considerable. (81)

An individual may suffer because of his or her position in society and/or due to a lack of maternal love.<sup>29</sup> One may ask, then, what the specific elements are when dealing with novels of formation. Model figures or guides should be examined, not only for the psychological role that they play in the individual's life, but also because of their societal representation. "Se dedica atención primero a las guías maternas por la importancia tanto teórica como práctica del papel correspondiente" (Lutes 16). There is, however, the idea of the self as a mere construction of the *other*.<sup>30</sup> This may take place via public or domestic spaces where the individual confronts society's expectations and attempts to move towards maturity. Carol Gilligan further explores conflicts of self in females in her book *In a Different Voice* claiming that:

The conflict between self and other thus constitutes the central moral problem for women, posing a dilemma whose resolution requires a reconciliation between femininity and adulthood. In the absence of such a reconciliation, the moral problem cannot be resolved. The "good woman" masks assertion in evasion, denying responsibility by claiming only to meet the needs of others, while the

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<sup>29</sup> This theme is one that is present in various novels of personal development as in authors such as Julia Moix and Esther Tusquets among others.

<sup>30</sup> This *Other* or *other* is linked to the views of Sigmund Freud or Jacques Lacan who explore this notion in conjunction with psychoanalysis.

“bad woman” forgoes or renounces the commitments that bind her in self-deception and betrayal. (71)

Such a manifestation on the fiction of identity is one that can be accessed through cultural logics of heteronormativity, male and female power dynamics, as well as social relations among individuals. Authors such as Carmen Martín Gaité, Ana María Moix and Esther Tusquets are a few Spanish authors whose work has set the foundation for this continuing category postulated with narratives of identity. Their work has contributed to the evolving forms of the feminine self that have emerged in the new paradigm of the Spanish novel.

Time and memory contribute highly to novels of formation where the narrator-protagonist may explore his or her identity via flashbacks or reenactments of the past to reach the personal reconstruction of the self. Acknowledging the need for emotional relatedness may be a key component of an individual’s formation. “A crisis or turning point in my life is a propitious time to initiate or continue efforts to change self” (Hall 37). Achieving self-awareness and not drifting out of it reconfirms that self even if circumstances or individuals attempt to change that. The self may be resistant to change, although it presents itself in contrasting forms.

“Contemporary literature on women suggests that behavior oriented away from family responsibilities is more “enlightened” or more liberated than behavior that is oriented toward family interaction” (Hall 61). The surrounding settings present in women’s narratives of identity are ones that either promote or hinder the protagonist’s capacity to grow and strengthen the self. Thus, a novel is subject to transition and progress if the protagonist’s journey is in conjunction with the novel’s occurrences.

In *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, Esther Tusquets presents a woman in plain crisis of her maturity that narrates stories of her life and family who constantly refers to her student

Clara, with whom she has an open relationship and ultimately is the key for defining her identity. This anonymous protagonist<sup>31</sup> questions her present life incorporating fragments of fairy tales, myths and symbolic metaphors aiming towards self formation and individuality. Tusquets states that in reality, the main theme of the novel is actually love: one heterosexual and the other homosexual. Thus, a reader may question areas of sex and sexuality through Tusquets' female protagonists, and the author is careful to present an open or ambiguous ending, where the female achieves freedom and liberation despite a lover's abandonment. In her work *Palabras de mujeres: Escritoras españolas contemporáneas*, María del Mar López-Cabrales comments that Esther Tusquets is one of the few writers whom she has conversed with who is not afraid of the term "feminine literature" (152). As examined in her works, Tusquets is aware of her form of writing, particularly with her emphasis on issues of sexuality, eroticism, and lesbianism. She openly treats the topic of eroticism in her novels *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978) and *El amor es un juego solitario* (1979).<sup>32</sup> Simultaneously, the sea serves as a symbolic metaphor and as an answer to all her fears and doubts. Hence, solitude, love, and betrayal are direct components of the protagonist's growth cycle.

Solitude and the absence of maternal love are emphasized in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*. The protagonist is consumed by frustration and dissatisfaction "de una madre empeñada en moldear casa e hija de acuerdo con unos principios estéticos burgueses y egocéntricos..." (Estrella Cebreiro 585).<sup>33</sup> She describes her mother as "reina" and "diosa rubia de manos blancas" who is concerned with molding her daughter from "patito feo" to "cisne blanco." The

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<sup>31</sup> Critics have identified her as Elia as seen in her trilogies.

<sup>32</sup> Also present in *Varada tras el último naufragio* (1980). These three works together complete her trilogy.

<sup>33</sup> "El mismo mar de todos los veranos y Nubosidad variable: Hacia la consolidación de una identidad femenina propia y discursiva." *Letras Peninsulares*. 13. 2-3 (2000-20001): 581-607.

protagonist is in a constant state of angst and solitude. She questions her existence that is stifled by a lack of emotional support and states, "...son tantos los yos que en mí murieron [...] tengo, por primera vez en muchos muchísimos años, tal vez por primera vez en mi vida toda la soledad" (Tusquets 28). It is through her relationship with Clara that the protagonist begins to question her individuality "porque únicamente ella, a lo largo y a lo ancho de mil años de soledad, ha querido y ha podido romper el aislamiento, adentrarse en mis laberintos oscuros, y merece que yo le entregue...este yo más profundo..." (Tusquets 188). Professor of literature and a member of the Catalan bourgeoisie, the protagonist has returned to her childhood surroundings to escape her marital crisis and regain a sense of self. She questions a past that continues to haunt her present and feels as if she has not lived the life she longed for and states:

Porque ahora por primera vez desde hace muchos, muchísimos años, tengo todo el tiempo. (También tengo, por primera vez en muchos, muchísimos años toda la soledad)... Y no hay, de esto estoy segura, otra cosa mejor de hacer, nada más importante, más urgente, que tomar posesión sin prisas de la casa de mis padres [...] (Tusquets 28)

As part of this self search, the protagonist undergoes heartache with her first husband Jorge, who commits suicide; she then remarries Julio with whom she has a daughter, but has no feelings for. Julio is unfaithful and considers his wife simply as an "object of pleasure." It is only when he learns that his wife is attracted to and is maintaining relations with a member of the same sex, that he returns to her and demands for her to return to her duties as wife so she does not stop "being a woman." "Feminist theorist Julia Kristeva "se niega rotundamente a definir a la 'mujer' and proposes that "el creer que 'se es mujer' es casi tan absurdo y siniestro como creer que 'se es hombre'" (qtd. in Moi 170). According to Barbara F. Ichiishi, "the protagonist's life story is not

reenacted alone, but rather, through her love relation with a young Colombian student named Clara (51). It is through Clara that the protagonist attempts to find herself amid the kisses, caresses and love that fill her body and soul.

Although both the protagonist and her lover recognize their need for each other, the author does not allow their love to triumph at the end of the novel. This is unique in that the protagonists are not labeled under a lesbian category, which would possibly defeat the patriarchal and heterosexual structure that the main protagonist feels trapped in. “Like the married heroine of the novel of awakening, the lesbian frees herself from prescribed female roles (often, in the pre-feminist literature, by identifying her authentic self with innately masculine traits), but she must also free herself from loneliness and isolation” (quoted in Abel, Hirsh and Langland 246). One interesting aspect of the novel is that the narrator avoids using the word “lesbiana” and simply defines herself as “algo rara” y “excéntrica” in her relationship with Clara. Also, when acts of love take place, it is as if they occur in a space outside of time in a dream full of surreal objects and descriptions.

Internal conflicts resonate in the narrator-protagonist throughout the novel. The return to her parent’s house allows her to recuperate her childhood memories when she would take refuge in the world of fairytales and fantasy. She states that it is in, “este mundo mágico del cuento donde aprendí a elegir palabras y a enamorarme de los sueños” (Tusquets 68). The protagonist relates to fairy tale characters who suffer heart aches and dreams with a “happily ever after” ending because in those fairy tales, “Blanca Nieve” finds her prince, and “los patitos feos” become beautiful “cisnes blancos.” The protagonist mentions tales such as Beauty and Beast, Rapunzel, Peter Pan, Wendy and NeverLand allowing her to return to her childhood memories. She even communicates to Jorge about her relationship with Clara as if it too were a fairy tale,



“Eranse una vez un rey y una reina...La reina era blanca y rubia, con unos ojos azules...”

(Tusquets 189). The novel also begins and ends with the figure of Wendy, which according to Clayton Houchen’s work “Love and Loss: The Quest for female individuation in Three Novels by Esther Tusquets” represents “both women having undergone the transformation from mermaids/ondines to Mélusines” (95). Their mutual parting confirms their individual quest towards their own future.

Besides mentioning fairy tales, the narrator also constantly refers to the world of legends and myths. Robert C. Manteiga mentions that this world of legends and myths “sirve para presentar alegóricamente el conflicto interno de la protagonista” (23). When referring to Clara, the narrator identifies Clara with diverse fictional attributes and defines her as “la Bella, la Bestia, diosa, princesa azteca, ninfa, ondina, sirena, princesa, Rapunzel...” (Cibreiro 596). Perhaps, it’s as Inmaculada Pertusa describes as the narrator doing this “para enmascarar su verdadera identidad y así evitar enfrentarse a las consecuencias de su discurso” (138). Since the protagonist has failed at molding her own identity, she has allowed others to shape it for her and uses Clara in ways that will best cater to her own needs. This is her way of recreating someone else. The protagonist constantly makes doll or child like references of Clara using phrases such as: “muñeca zanquilarga que paseo morosamente por los laberintos de mi tiempo inencontrable” (88); “una muñeca grande y zancuda,” “mi muñeca flaca,” “muñeca de interior” (88); “muñeca única de mis escenografías” (93); “muñeca grande...muñeca vestida de azul” (88). She manipulates Clara without taking into consideration that Clara herself is an opinionated intelligent woman with a clear vision of what she wants. Clara’s “passivity” allows the protagonist to be in control and she slowly begins to imagine a possible future with her when she states:

[Clara] va construyendo entre tanto a base de palabras otra realidad distinta... va erigiendo--al otro lado del capullo de seda en que me envuelve: porque esto es lo que está haciendo Clara, tejer en torno a mí un capullo de seda--, va construyendo un futuro imposible para nosotras dos [...]" (184)

The narrator-protagonist's first husband's suicide is symbolic of abandonment.<sup>34</sup> Her daughter Guiomar has also abandoned her after having "heredado los mismo rasgos y actitudes que caracterizaban a la madre de la narradora" (Manteiga 27). Jorge's suicide "es percibido como una condena a la vez que una traición para la protagonista (Cibreiro 592). Jorge represented her salvation, and his unexplicable suicide causes such profound pain in her "al dejarme de aquel modo tan cruel e incomprensible, sin un adiós, sin una nota, abandonada la princesa tonta en la isla de cristal..." (Tusquets 212). Without him she does not know who or why she exists. It is perhaps at the moment of parting ways with Clara that the protagonist attempts to arrive at an acceptance of an identity she has been forced to conceal during the last thirty years of her life. The last part of the novel involves the protagonist's parting with Clara and she accepts it because "las dos sabemos que la situación no tiene salida...que no tiene otra salida que su marcha...porque yo volvería a traicionarla para traicionarme, volvería a herirla para herirme..." (Tusquets 227). Upon departing, Clara states, "...Y Wendy creció" (Tusquets 227).<sup>35</sup> Although the author does not allow for Clara and the protagonist to live "happily ever after," the protagonist is able to reconnect with her consciousness and obtain a slightly higher level of maturity. Valbuena-Briones suggests that upon parting ways, "mentora y pupila han logrado un conocimiento más profundo de la realidad y están ahora más alertas para desempeñar sus papeles

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<sup>34</sup>Jorge's suicide is also symbolic of her mother's emotional abandonment from her.

<sup>35</sup> This phrase is also present in the inscription at the beginning of the novel.

en las respectivas sociedades a las que pertenecen” (384). At the end of the protagonist’s journey for self exploration, she feels as helpless and entrapped as she did at the beginning of the novel.

In her work *Growing Up in an Inhospitable World*, Olga Bezhanova observes that:

*El mismo mar de todos los veranos* is the very first Spanish female *Bildungsroman* whose female protagonist chooses to infantilize herself without being in any way driven to do so by external circumstances. E. prefers never to grow and the entire narrative is her way of justifying that decision by using her considerable intelligence and erudition. (104)

The circularity present in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* contributes to the protagonist’s constant battle with letting go of a past that hinders her formation while attempting to reconstruct a future that is reminiscent of that past. The protagonist sought to validate herself by looking into her past in order to better understand her present. In “Ethnic Selves/Ethnic Signs: Invention of Self, Space and Genealogy in Immigrant Writing,” Azade Seyhan proposes that “a past time cannot be restored except in image, that image is interlinked with the present” (187).

Tusquets continues her theme of love, eroticism, and sex with her novel *El amor es un juego solitario*, narrated in the third-person. The novel presents the relationship between Elia and Clara, as well as with a teenage boy, Ricardo. Elia (who is thirty years old) lives a triangular love with both, and begins an open relationship with this young, sexually inexperienced boy.<sup>36</sup> Elia likes the fact that she can manipulate this “juego” or game throughout the novel and describes, “...imposible casi siempre con hombres más maduros, hombres que saben lo que quieren y por qué caminos, con ellos por tanto Elia no domina el juego, no puede imponerles sus reglas ni su

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<sup>36</sup> Ricardo is constantly described as “un joven con un cuerpo casi sin vello” [a young boy with almost no hair.]

tiempo, pero ahora sí puede, con Ricardo sí puede...” (Tusquets 74). The author continues with metaphoric and erotic descriptions:

Y ahora el dolor de los dos se torna intolerable, y Elia deja de acariciarle con sus manos suaves, se desliza sobre el cuerpo de Ricardo, y el pájaro llega por fin a su destino y ha encontrado su nido, y ya no existe el miedo quizá, ni la angustia ante lo ajeno y desconocido, porque no es una boca voraz de dientes afiladas ni una caverna pavorosa poblada de vampiros lo que le aguarda, sino una guarida tibia y acolchada a la que ha estado desde siempre destinado, [...] y casi no comprende ya el pájaro loco como ha podido subsistir durante tantísimos años en el terrible exilio de su único nido. (Tusquets 75)<sup>37</sup>

As with *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, the absence of maternal love is emphasized once again in Clara’s figure, and it is no doubt that her attempt to conquer that love is through Elia because “La madre—piensa Clara—no la ha querido nunca—quizás a sus hermanos sí, pero en ningún caso a Clara—del modo en que ella necesitaba ser querida y le ha dejado como una marca indeleble esta carencia de amor, este déficit insalvable, este lastre que arrastrará consigo toda la vida” (Tusquets 84). Elia represents the typical woman educated for marriage and maternity, and yet, she is unable to overcome her determined surrounding. Elia does not fit the module of a woman ready to become a wife and can only find herself lost in this “juego” of subversion and power among Clara and Ricardo.<sup>38</sup> The novel ends with Ricardo’s possession of the two women and reproduces the mating scene from the adventure story: “Aquí no manda

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<sup>37</sup> Act of love-making between Elia and Ricardo using metaphoric and symbolic descriptions of a bird finding its nest.

<sup>38</sup> Tusquets constantly make reference to the word “juego” or game throughout the novel; hence the title *El amor es un juego solitario* / *Love is a solitary game*.

nadie más que él ahora, ni hay otra voluntad ni otra palabra que la del macho enfurecido en la selva encelada” (Tusquets 141).<sup>39</sup> According to Nina L. Molinaro’s work *Foucault, Feminism, and Power: Reading Esther Tusquets*, the author concludes that “the concept of *love* has become another loss in the ongoing game of the novel [...] The characters dissolve into their roles and it no longer matters who dominates and who submits” (54). Elia’s character achieves a sense of self formation through this triangular love affair and failed, unstable, game of love. Unlike Tusquets’ first two novels, the final novel of the trilogy, *Varada tras el último naufragio* attempts to break the cycle of force relations and power, concluding in a happy ending. Gonzalo Navajas also concludes that:

Tusquets delinea también un modelo preferente de la conclusión de los textos presentados desde la mirada femenina. Sus novelas concluyen en la irresolución o incluso en el restablecimiento del *statu quo ante*, a través del cual las relaciones lesbianas, en principio exentas de los mecanismos de dominación heterosexuales, reproducen la dominación y pueden incluso magnificarla de modo extremo (38).<sup>40</sup>

Following Betty Friedan’s chapter titled “The Crisis in Woman’s Identity” from her work *The Feminine Mystique*, she assures that “the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity—a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique” (132). Whether it is individual or collective, there continues to be a need for intellectual and emotional self attainment. While, as seen thus far, Tusquets’ novels are less

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<sup>39</sup> “Possession of the beloved object does not imply death, but the idea of death is linked with the urge to possess. If the lover cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her; often he would rather kill her than lose her. Or else he may wish to die himself” (Bataille 20). See Bataille, George. *Eroticism: Death & Sensuality*. Translated by Mary Dalwood. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986. [Originally published as *L’Erotisme* in 1957]. [First edition in English published in 1962].

<sup>40</sup> See Navajas, Gonzalo. “Narrativa y género: la ficción actual desde la mujer.” *Ínsula* 589-590 (Jan 1996): 37-39.

concentrated on the characters' attainment of a formal education, there is a vision of female development possible through a circular structure of the *Bildungsroman*. In an interview she gave Catherine Ross in 2003, Tusquets talked about work as the most crucial condition of a woman's freedom:

“--Lo único que a mi hija le he dicho siempre es que haga lo que quiera, pero que lo único que no haga nunca es dejar de trabajar. En el momento que una mujer deja de trabajar está perdida. Me considero, aunque la palabra está desprestigiada, feminista, yo pienso que es básico que la mujer trabaje, tenga una profesión.”

(quoted in Bezhanova 109)

The *Bildungsroman* presented by Tusquets explores the inner life of characters that becomes more intimate as time progresses. There is a significant change in the formation analyzed in this novel versus earlier novels due to the focus on sexuality as a key feature for female development. Given that the protagonist is neither a child nor adolescent helps aid the central conflict of the novel: the protagonist who is torn between memories of infancy and letting them go in order to embrace adulthood.

Middle-age can offer a woman unparalleled opportunities to reevaluate her *Bildung*: “The experience of the middle-aged woman parallels that of the adolescent in her intense desire for personal fulfillment... Middle age thus provides a second opportunity for self-actualization, for a rebirth of the faculties stifled by a lifelong adherence to patriarchal dictates” (Lee-Bonanno 134). Protagonists of the *Bildungsroman* may oftentimes be seen as victims of their own circumstances, as depicted in the Ana María Moix's novel *Julia* (1970). Moix first novel represents an autobiographical account that touches on issues of hope, death, political repression, and the struggle for independence via modes of homosexual desire. The author presents

Julia/Little Julia<sup>41</sup> as a woman who tries to commit suicide and a child who is sexually abused. Moix is one of the few novelists who introduce, from a feminist perspective, the theme of childhood rape and the need to escape the confining bourgeois Barcelona. The latter theme is one that is also present in Esther Tusquets' novels, particularly with the lack of maternal love. Following Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex*, "En la sociedad burguesa, uno de los papeles asignados a la mujer es el de representar: su belleza, su encanto, su inteligencia, su elegancia, son los signos exteriores de la fortuna del marido, con el mismo título que la carrocería de su automóvil" (Beauvoir 214). Moix emphasizes the lack of maternal love, triggering Julia/Little Julia's angst and need for her mother's love and affection, which is perceived by her as emotional orphanhood.

However, hearing Mama's footsteps fade into the silence of the night, Julia felt a profound sadness, pain in her throat and chest, the urge to cry for something that had been lost, irretrievably, forever. It wasn't something she wanted to recover-- just thinking about its possible existence distressed her--, but its loss caused her immense sadness. (Moix 35)

Julia sees her father as weak and incapable of offering her any support; at times she fantasizes about killing him. Julia's mother, who is unfaithful to her husband, welcomes a young man by the name of Victor into her country house and she pays little attention to his keen interest in Julia, who is six years old at the time. The now twenty-year-old Julia recollects her memory of being raped at the beach by Victor, and finds herself time and again, haunted by the image of Julita who was a victim of sexual violence. Her violent initiation into sexual victimhood by an older man triggers a dislike of her gender, stumping her maturity and psychological

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<sup>41</sup> In the Spanish version: Julia/Julita

development. Julia identifies with her mother; yet she is rejected by her because her mother prefers her son's company and is annoyed by Julia's need for her attention. She greets her with remarks that are critical of her appearance: "Qué facha, con esos pelos. No me digas que has salido así a la calle" (Moix 35). Both Julia's mother and her brother Ernesto condemn her for not being womanly or feminine enough when it comes to her appearance:

Mamá, esta mañana he visto a Julia por la calle. Casi no me he atrevido a saludarla. Parece un espantapájaros; deberías vestirla mejor. Mamá se enfurecía: ¿Y qué quieres que haga? Aunque me gaste un dineral en ella parece que va de prestado... Conozco montones de chicas de su misma edad, que siendo más feas que ella dan otra impresión, se pintan, se arreglan. (173)

Julia shows a pattern of attaching herself to every grown-up she admires and seeks affection from. Her sense of self is tied to recognizing a need for connection for a more stable mode of life. She chooses to become a mirror image of these adults since she dislikes her own. Julia's childhood adoration for her mother transitions into indifference and resentment. She is easily bored and views herself as different from other students in college who perceive her as mute since she hardly ever says anything. Julia relieves her boredom by imagining pain she can impose on them: "Ella imaginaba una lluvia de piedras sobre los centenares de estudiantes que deambulaban de un lado a otro, o lo divertido que resultaría clavarle un pie en el suelo y desde el último piso del edificio rociarles con un buen chaparrón de petróleo" (Moix 31). Upon entering the university, Julia becomes so obsessed with her professor Eva, that at one point, she attempts to kill herself after not being able to talk with her on the phone.

The novel's third-person narration, shifts back and forth from the memories of Little Julia to Julia's present young adult life, and emphasizes the lack of maternal love that weakens her



identity and formation towards freedom and formation. Nevertheless, in the novel *Julia/Little Julia* does not develop her own separate identity from the mother since she chooses to remain in the imaginary realm. “A thousand things were left behind, in time, and she, little Julia, lived there, also forgotten, drowning, struggling among the shadows, waiting for them to open the road so she could reach the real time where another Julia, grown-up, unknown lived” (Moix 37). Julia suffers because of her position in society with issues of child abuse, insanity and female homosexuality-- and yet, she still waits for an adult to appear and make everything right in her life. Julia perceives her relationship with Julita as one of enslavement, and her six-year-old self invades her memory, specifically with this image that haunts the adult Julia:

Julita, sentada en el portal de la casa, pequeña y delgada, los pies descalzos, las trenzas medio deshechas, el pantalón corto y el jersey azul marino con un ancla dibujada en el pecho, la mirada baja, fija en dos piedras que machucaba una con otra, la obligaba a recordar cosas así, confusas, inconexas. (Moix 68)

Bezhanova notes that “the reason why Julita is stuck on the threshold between infancy and adulthood is that Julia does not let her go” (91). Julia is incapable of embracing adulthood because she constantly seeks an adult’s approval. She lives in misery and chooses to invoke memories of her past that keep her stuck on the brink of being a child and becoming an adult. Upon acknowledging her place in society Julia states: “She didn’t exist, she had suffered a great defeat, and they had exiled her to a place with no name, unknown, outside of everyone else’s time and space” (161). At the end of the novel, Julia rejects her existence and chooses to believe that everything that took place in her life did not actually occur: “No habían transcurrido quince años, nada había sucedido... Julia--lo sabía ahora--jamás existió... Sólo Julita había existido durante aquellos quince años, de los que nada, absolutamente nada, quedaba” (Moix 234). Some

may argue, then, that her coming-of-age failed, but according to Bezhanova, “it simply never took place” (91). Some critics even stipulate that Julia undergoes a psychotic and almost progressive schizophrenic development. Lacan’s formulation of the subject formation, stipulates that the negation of the father’s name precipitates a person into the psychotic realm, an area devoid of language. However, some of the novels that trail after Moix’s *Julia* argue that the inability to enter society as a fully cognizant being can be also seen as an act of defiance against the patriarchal and authoritarian system. Thus, the novel is a transitional and progressive one, providing a basis for more explicit treatments of these themes in later novels by women.

## **Patriarchal and Cultural Shifts**

The female *Bildungsroman* genre of the post-Franco era has not been strictly limited to novels. The cinematic genre has also strengthened and redefined the conventional view of social and cultural issues, particularly with Spanish women film directors via collective memory, the assertion of gender in a restrictive environment, and/or via inevitable situations such as torture, abuse, death, or disease. Both male and female directors have also re-adopted various forms of social and cultural issues by placing emphasis on narrative and technical procedures to present dichotomies of female spectatorship, love, and the objectifying masculine gaze. It has been quite a battle for the so-called “new woman,” and yet the image of women and marriage in novels of development continue to be clouded by areas of sociopolitical protests, misogyny, and patriarchal warfare. As most scholars have pointed out, World War I brought the issue of gender to the foreground when women left home to replace men in the workplace. The fact that women were now visible in the public sector created a buzz on patriarchy, particularly with women in the novel. Philosophers such as José Ortega y Gasset contributed to this conception as seen in his work *El hombre y la gente*, by demonstrating women’s inferiority:

En el mismo instante en que vemos una mujer nos parece tener delante un ser cuya humanidad íntima se caracteriza, en contraste con la nuestra varonil y la de los otros varones, por ser esencialmente confusa... pero no tiene sentido desear que la mujer deje de ser “sustancialmente” confusa. Equivaldría a aniquilar la delicia que para el varón es la mujer gracias a su ser confuso... En la presencia de la Mujer presentimos los varones inmediatamente una criatura que, sobre el nivel perteneciente a la humanidad, es de un rango vital algo inferior al nuestro. No existe ningún otro ser que posea esta doble contradicción: ser humano y serlo

menos que el varón. En esa dualidad estriba la sin par delicia que es para el hombre masculino la mujer. (167-168)

The strong fixation on sexual reform was linked to areas of women's bodies, which has been portrayed in both film and the novel. In her essay "The Female as Battleground: Carmen de Burgos's "Quiero vivir mi vida," Shirley Mangini mentions:

While women like Burgos fought to bring the dialogue on the urgent need for women's education and civil rights to the foreground, patriarchal chatter about sexual reform and maternity kept the dialogue in the murky terrain of the feminine mystique; the patriarchy wanted to politicize the female body in order to conquer it, not to educate women or to advance their innate rights. (22)

Some of the central themes and narrative techniques of novels of development written between the forties and sixties have paved the way for more indicative coming-of-age types in the late twentieth-century particularly with female characters and the recognition of their bodies. This new approach towards an increased sense of freedom has created organic modes of interpreting the *Bildungsroman*. Although the traditional construction of this trend can be said to follow a linear structure, it has also adopted circular and collective formats, where protagonists use their past to achieve self growth or choose to self-infantilize themselves in order to survive.

Exemplary of this are novels such as *Mujeres de negro* by Josefina Aldecoa and *Las edades de Lulú* by Almudena Grandes among others. Abel observes that protagonists of the contemporary female *Bildungsroman* are more dynamic than those of female novels of formation, "We see, in fictions of female development, a movement from the world within to the world without, from introspection to activity" (13). Among the contemporary Spanish female novel of formation, however, there is still more of a tendency towards a reminiscent *Bildungsroman* where

protagonists are faced with confronting their past experiences in order to embrace their journey into adulthood.

Themes of love, betrayal, and death are ones that never cease to represent the hierarchical order of relationships. Novels of formation evidently portray issues of love and disillusionment that create conflicts of authority for both genders. Gilligan suggests that:

The conflict between self and other thus constitutes the central moral problem for women, posing a dilemma whose resolution requires a reconciliation between femininity and adulthood. In the absence of such a reconciliation, the moral problem cannot be resolved. The “good woman” masks assertion in evasion, denying responsibility by claiming only to meet the needs of others, while the “bad woman” forgoes or renounces the commitments that bind her in self-deception and betrayal. (71)

When a hero or heroine in a novel or film acts on his or her own beliefs rather than from particular ideologies, he or she develops self. The challenges that are then faced by that character do not change their capacity as a person, but simply provide shifts in their ability to adapt. Heroes and heroines facing obstacles experience constant crisis with identifying ‘selfhood’ and ‘personhood’ due to social settings and expectations, or personal goals and beliefs. Hall states that selfhood and personhood are not restricted to specific behaviors or expectations and usually “transcend political definitions of individual rights and responsibilities” (30). There may be conventional models of behavior that may or may not be compatible with the protagonist’s demands and modes of survival, causing resistance and rebellion on his or her behalf. Pratt further explores this idea by suggesting that “the conflict between conformity to and rebellion against gender norms that characterizes women’s novels of marriage reflects a fluctuation in

courtship standards during the past several centuries of the patriarchy” (41). Thus, power, status, and money have generally contributed to the tension in novels of marriage especially with the author’s depiction of matrimony. The desire for equity has also long been campaigned for through acts of protest to gender and sexuality movements, promoting the aspiration for equality in love and matrimonial relationships. Pratt states that although “women have achieved a measure of marital and reproductive freedom in the twentieth century, the clash between social norms and individual desires persistently underlies archetypal narrative patterns and images in women’s fiction” (42). One of the many archetypal images and patterns characteristic of the novel of development consists of either a romantic or tarnished love between two people. At times, love may be seen under the corruption of harsh marital politics causing negative relations between both partners. Such affairs may even provoke concern on heteronormative standards of society’s expectations. Pratt asserts that:

Women authors tenaciously portray matrimony as a negative institution, utilizing archetypal patterns of trauma and enclosure analogous to those found in the novel of development. Such representations lead one to wonder whether there is anything worth salvaging of the institution of matrimony; this perspective question is seldom addressed in women’s fiction. Although few in number, there do exist novels in which men and women seek, and sometimes achieve, authenticity and equity within marriage. (54)

Mary Daly, in *Gyn/Ecology* assures that patriarchy perpetuates its deception through myth and language, and “in order to reverse the reversals completely we must deal with the fact that patriarchal mythos contain stolen mythic power” (47). If, as Daly argues, patriarchy appears to

be “everywhere,” then it would seem appropriate to believe that it too is in our perception of everyday language, media, and memories and when manipulated:

women become eager for acceptance as docile tokens mouthing male texts, employing technology for male ends, accepting male fabrications as the true texture of reality. Patriarchy has stolen our cosmos and returned it in the form of Cosmopolitan magazines and cosmetics. They have made up our cosmos, our Selves. (5-6)

Daly argues that “Hag-ocracy”<sup>42</sup> is the background into which feminist journeying is fueled by, and anything or anyone that instills fear must be thrown into isolation where:

the sacrificing of women requires the silencing of women, which takes place in myriad ways, in a maze of ways. A basic pattern of these ways is Self-splitting, which is initiated by the patriarchally powerful and which the victims internalize and continue to practice within the caste of women. Women are silenced/split by the babble of grammatical usage. Subliminal and subtle Self-splitting is achieved by the very pronouns we are trained to use to designate our Selves. (18)

If, as Daly argues, fear is to blame for women’s silencing, I propose that the notions of desire and curiosity can counter-attack this fear. Daly observes that:

women are silenced / split by the embedding of fears. These contrived and injected fears function in a manner analogous to electrodes implanted in the brain of a victim (“patient”) who can be managed by remote control. This is a kind of “silent” control (as silent as the pushing of a button). Women may feel that they are free from certain fears (“liberated”) and then bend to the unacknowledged

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<sup>42</sup> “The Background into which feminist journeying spins is the wild realm of Hags and Crones. It is Hag-ocracy” (3).

power of these fears with mental knee-jerk responses. A brief analysis of responses to a few of these instilled fears should unmask the methods of “silent” control which silence the voices of women’s deep Selves, while allowing the “liberated” false selves to babble freely. (19)

In *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Chris Weedon explains that the concept of “positioning” has aided recent re-examinations of identity modes and approaches to rescue pasts that have been “silenced.” He explains that thinking allows an individual to place himself or herself in an infinite number of possible historically created discourses. In addition, he claims that language can be used as a political weapon under sexual politics, but needs to be theorized in order to adhere to political change.

This idea that it is possible to achieve self-expression of oneself as a woman, man or ‘ungendered’ individual in language assumes an already existing individual subjectivity which awaits expression. It also assumes that language is a transparent medium which expresses pre-given meaning. (79)

Terry Leahy expands on issues of gendered subjectivity and emphasized femininity in “Taking up a Position: Discourses of Femininity and Adolescence in the Context of Man/Girl Relationships.” Leahy’s approach charts the relationship between conventional femininity and its resistance to the patriarchal positions aided through the social construction of gender. The conflict between adolescence and emphasized femininity may disrupt the mainstream ideological pattern of social and gendered binaries. Leahy assures that relationships may be considered a threat to the structure of male authority over female sexuality if an individual, specifically an “adolescent girl takes it upon herself to initiate a relationship with an adult” because it challenges the right to control her sexuality” (53). The hegemonic and prescribed areas of what is deemed



“appropriate behavior” during adolescence, may present signs of variance if either sex shifts from what is expected. If there is a compliance with the gender power differential, is it possible to depart from R.W. Connell’s analysis of “emphasized femininity?” (183)<sup>43</sup>. Hegemonic heterosexual masculinity as a system has become so successful that it has naturally been accepted as the “status quo.” For example, in an essay by Barbara Hudson “Femininity and Adolescence,”<sup>44</sup> the author offers insights on conflicts between adolescence and emphasized femininity and informs on disparities between young adult girls and their boyfriends.

In matters of sexuality the discourse of adolescence is clearly at variance with the discourse of femininity: according to the terms of the adolescence discourse, adolescence is a time of shifting allegiances, rapidly changing friendships; whereas femininity involves the skill to make lasting relationships, with the ability to care very deeply for very few people. Thus, the teenage girl has to tread a narrow line between “getting too serious too soon,” and being regarded as promiscuous by her elders and as a “slag” by her peers.” (Hudson 47)

One of the main criticisms in girls’ preference with an older male is that such relationship proves to be problematic due to age difference and because females are still in a transitional state of development.

Having an older boyfriend is considered a danger signal by most adults; yet since the expectations of adolescence would lead a boy ... to change girlfriends frequently, having a boyfriend of her own age would, presumably, therefore, not

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<sup>43</sup> See Connell, R.W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity press, 1987. p183.

<sup>44</sup> In *Gender and Generation*. edited by Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava. London: Macmillan, 1984.

afford the girl the opportunity of demonstrating her developing feminine skills of making deep and lasting relationships. (Hudson 47)

In an interview that Leahy conducted, Wendy, one of the girls, explains her development of her own femininity through experience of what she considered caring and deep feelings. Wendy met Paul when she was 12 years of age and he was in his mid-20s. It ended because she partly wanted it to, but also because her father forbade it.

--“I just think he wanted something more than I had to offer at the time and I think that was really unfair of me but I just didn’t know, you know. I just didn’t have enough experience to realize that that’s what he wanted ... In fact I used to flirt with him all the time sort of giving him the come on but stopping when it got a little bit too passionate but that was all part of the game too. I could get very poetic and say he was showing me my blossoming womanhood or something. Just the fact that I could attract somebody and how to actually do it and have someone respond without them just diving on me which is what would happen if it was somebody my own age if I did some of the things I did to Paul. But in fact, I don’t know, perhaps they just wouldn’t have even noticed because the communication was much more subtle. He was much more responsive and much more concerned about me than the boys of my own age.” (Leahy 57)

Although exposing issues relating to expected domains in relationships is vital, it is also important to note the counterdiscourses with regards to resisting femininity, where an individual chooses to depart from the “status quo.” With this I am implying a deviation from romanticism into a realm characterized by conveniences or where an individual chooses to have a relationship

with a younger person.<sup>45</sup> Leahy interviewed Denise with regards to her rejection of romanticism and instead opted for relationships with older men based on mutual convenience, which, according to her, is a lot healthier than “relationships based on incredible romanticism where romanticism can overshadow all else and you can hang around and get abused:”

--“I always hated romanticism. I have never been a romantic. I’m not one now. I can’t gear myself up to be. So if you take away that air of true love and romanticism then what are you left with? You are left with something mutually pleasant and convenient to both people involved and something that’s working.”  
(63)

When asked how she felt about the mutual exchanges that were involved, Denise states:

--“I often look back and think about that. I think I was maybe prostituting myself. And I think well OK. That’s fair enough. It was my choice to do that really. Hmm I mean in some respects you could say that. They tended to be sort of I-used-them, they used-me type of relationships. It was kind of a mutual, whatever, and all parties were involved in this.” (63)

Denise indicates that she used her awareness of getting what she wanted in exchange for sex:

--“I’ve always been a fairly assertive woman and I was an assertive teenage girl as well. I always used to get my own way, what movies we saw, whether we went dancing or went to someone’s place and played cards or I’d get my own way if I was tired and wanted to go home at 10 instead of when I normally got taken home at 12. I’d say I want to go home and they’d take me home. If they didn’t take me home at 10 I’d piss them off. Simple as that. In those days when I was young and

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<sup>45</sup> This notion is applicable to any individual, yet I am emphasizing that of females being interested in a relationship with a younger man.

straight and playing games “Oh, there are plenty more fish in the sea!” so they shaped up or shipped out. And they shaped up. They thought it was good—they were getting sex. I thought it was good. I was getting what I wanted.” (65)

At times, both male and female genders can be subject to marital politics and marginality where both represent an almost utopian-like trope that must result in the consumption and death of the other. I propose that this module is present in the female character of Carmen in the film *Carmen* (2003), directed by Vicente Aranda. This female figure promotes a shift in gender, cultural and sexual codes of conduct that prevail over patriarchal societal expectations. The publication of Prosper Mérimée’s novella *Carmen* (1845), particularly with the myth of Carmen herself, inspired the making of Georges Bizet’s opera (1875) and the production of numerous cinematic films thereafter. The female character of *Carmen* was created by nineteenth century French author Prosper Mérimée. His novella, published in 1845<sup>46</sup>, portrays a tragic love story between a fugitive Basque aristocrat and a gypsy, whose beauty and sensual attraction lead men to desire her, and ultimately, to their perdition. The action takes place in Spain, in 1830, during the first visit of the author to that country; hence he tells and writes the story as if it actually happened to him. He narrates the story, until the third and fourth chapters, where don José (a bandit he meets during his journey), recounts the adventurous life with Carmen to him. “Dicen que las mujeres y los gatos nunca vienen cuando se les llama. Y acuden sin falta en cuanto no les haces caso” (Don José in *Carmen*). [It is said that women and cats will not come when they are called, but will come without hesitation when they are not called.]<sup>47</sup> This is the first description of the female character, Carmen (portrayed by Paz Vega), whose first appearance in Vicente

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<sup>46</sup> There was an additional chapter added in 1847.

<sup>47</sup> My translations from Vicente Aranda’s film, *Carmen*. At times, Don José Lizarrabengoa is also referred to as “El Navarro.”

Aranda's film evokes sexual desire and threat to the townspeople. Carmen's first appearance is vital to the development of her character. Her body, eyes, and demeanor provoke a hypnotic enchantment to all who see her, and she is praised with flirtatious remarks such as "¡qué culo gitanilla!," "¡chula!," and "¡guapa!"<sup>48</sup> This vulgar jargon is not at all condescending to Carmen. On the contrary, she is proud and accepts it with praise and a roguish attitude. Her first encounter with don José, (portrayed by Leonardo Sbaraglia), is tactful, yet hypnotic. She asks for his chain and seductively asks if he knows how many moles she has on her body. Carmen's physical appearance causes questions and doubts about her origin and race. The narrator is captivated by Carmen's savage beauty, and she is captivated by his gold, musical watch. In the film, the narrator states:

Dicen que la andaluza para ser bella debe tener tres cosas negras: las pestañas, las cejas y el cabello. Y tres cosas blancas: el cutis, los dientes y las manos. Y tres cosas que son rosadas: los pezones, los labios y las uñas. Mi seductora no podía aspirar a tanta perfección física... era la sierva de Satanás. (Prospero in *Carmen*)

Following Saidiya Hartman's premise in her book *Scenes of Subjection* towards the construction of a woman, one can't help but wonder if Carmen fits into a specific categorization simply based on her well-endowed physical attributes. Throughout the development of both story and film, Carmen is mistaken to be from the "Holy Land" or Andalusía because of her appearance and soft accent. "At issue here is the construction of "woman" not as a foundational category with given characteristics, attributes, or circumstances but within a particular racial economy of property that intensified its control over the object of property through the deployment of sexuality" (Hartman 101). Carmen's physical attributes challenge the patriarchal system. She is exoticised

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<sup>48</sup> These remarks are yelled to Carmen in Vicente Aranda's film, *Carmen*. They translate to "what an ass gypsy!," "foxy!," and "good-looking!" They are vulgar remarks that Carmen accepts as praise.

as a dark gypsy woman and recognizes that she evokes both desire and fear to the male gender. In his article, “Exorcising Exoticism: *Carmen* and the Construction of Oriental Spain,” José F. Colmeiro observes:

Carmen tries to pass off as Basque to don José, replaying the old myth of the child stolen by the Gypsies and speaking to don José in Basque. Don José, in turn, trades his military uniform for a gypsy costume and becomes an acculturated Gypsy, to the extent that he is mistaken for one by the Gypsies in Gibraltar; this transformation is reflected in his name change from Don José Lizarrabengoa to José Navarro. (137)

This name change reflects marginality because later on in the plot, he will dedicate his life to smuggling after killing two of Carmen’s lovers. His social status will no longer be praised, as he will become marginalized and his status will be tarnished.

After being taken in by the soldiers (Don José is one of them) because she slashed a woman’s cheek in the cigar factory, she uses her tactics to convince him to let her escape.<sup>49</sup> I propose that in order to be free, Carmen must embody the ‘femme fatale’ figure.<sup>50</sup> Carmen refuses to be possessed and she allows her body to be used for the purpose of gaining fame, luxuries, and envy. Don José cannot fathom the idea of another male possessing Carmen’s body, and declares: “Yo quiero a Carmen. La quiero a ella y la quiero para mí; para mí y para nadie

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<sup>49</sup> While working in the cigar factory, Carmen is insulted because she is a gypsy and a witch. She takes the knife she uses for cutting cigars to slash a cross on the woman’s cheek.

<sup>50</sup> “The femme fatale emerges as a central figure in the nineteenth century, in the texts of writers such as Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire and painters such as Gustave Moreau and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She is associated with the styles of Decadence, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau as well as with the attention to decoration and excessive detail linked to a persistent and popular Orientalism (in the constant return, for instance, to the figures of Salome and Cleopatra)” (Doane 1) Doane, Mary Anne. *Femme Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. New York, Routledge, 1991.

más” and later when he kills Carmen’s husband: “¿Vas a ser mi mujer y de nadie más, para toda la vida?” (Don José in *Carmen*). Colmeiro observes that Carmen’s body is a constant reminder of her resistance to domination:

Gender: she resists male domination; sexuality (her desires are free and uninhibited, and create fears of emasculation); race (as a Gypsy, she illicit fears of miscegenation); religion (she practices occult magic and is repeatedly seen as a devil and a threat to Christian faith); and politics (Carmen not only continually resists both civil and military authority; she also obliterates geo-political borders [...]) (140).

In the film, Carmen becomes interested in a bullfighter by the name of Lucas García. Through him, she feels she can become rich, protected and “loved.” Don José, jealous and infuriated, shoots him and takes Carmen on his horse to a church. He humbly pleads her to change her way of life and that he forgets everything she has done. Carmen spits in his face and throws back the ring he had given her. Don José implores to Carmen to listen and let her soul be saved by him. Carmen tells him that she hates herself for having loved him and states: “¡Atrévete a matarme!, ¡Mátame o deja que me vaya!, Mata a Carmen, mátala!” (Carmen in *Carmen*). This is such a powerful ending scene because the audience is expecting a death, but simultaneously hopes that the main protagonist might repent, in hopes of saving herself. Love is not a factor here for both genders. It is more a desire of possession and of consumption for one another. After the final kiss, he stabs her. According to Colmeiro, “Carmen must die, for she is unwilling to submit to master/slave relationship. Thus, Don José’s final embrace of Carmen, like the orientalist embrace of the exotic other, is the kiss of death” (139). Don José must put an end to her life

because she is not willing to conform to his standards and subjugate herself to him.

Following Luce Irigaray's premise on love, "The elevation of love to its human and divine identity is, from the point of view of the genesis of our culture, women's concern. And when women are banished from love or dispossessed of it, when their divinity as lovers is forgotten, love once more becomes a drive that verges on animality, disembodied sublimation of them, or death" (Irigaray 95). Carmen and don José's love-hate relationship, cause an obsession with one other, but also one of resistance towards ownership and consumption. One argument that coincides with the relationship between both characters is their actual interaction with one another. They seem close, yet far from each other because neither allows for an opportunity of agreement or subjugation. Both resist in conforming to and accepting the norms imposed on each other. The spatial atmosphere that surrounds the characters causes their perdition because they compete and risk losing one another. This loss is equivalent to death. Carmen's dead body allows don José to be free. He has now possessed and consumed her. In the film, he stabs her, she falls to the floor and he lays her on a pedestal, covered with her rose mantilla; he then licks her whole body. "Su cuerpo todavía estaba vivo para mí. Ahora por fin Carmen me pertenecía" (Don José in *Carmen*). In her work *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern*, Jayna Brown explains that we can think of the body as a "productive and creative body which cannot be definitely known since it is not identical with itself across time. The body does not have a 'truth' or a 'true nature' since it is a process and its meaning and capacities will vary according to its context" (60). Here, it appears that both genders embody similar dichotomies, but their attempt to cater to each other's needs result in the consumption of the other through death. According to Colmeiro:



Contemporary critical readings of the Carmen myth, particularly in cultural studies, follow two contradictory tendencies. Those informed by feminist theory see her as affirmation of free will, independence, and liberation; those informed by postcolonial theory seek to unmask the misogynist and racist undertones toward the other, which ultimately neutralize those emancipatory impulses. (128)

Although both characters seem conditioned to act impulsively towards each other, they are also strongly inclined towards performative acts of destruction. Neither allows an individuation of self to develop due to high levels of emotional dependence—particularly don José with Carmen. Hall proposes that self is more than a sum of roles and that “Role playing consists of behavior that is essentially automatic or conditioned. “When I am under pressure from others, role playing is one of my easiest and most practical resorts in the difficult situation” (Hall 89). Some would argue that Carmen deliberately “role plays” in order to gain admirers and feel desired, increasing the intensity of her character. Carmen appears automatically conditioned to avoid becoming anyone’s property, and yet, her character becomes more and more vulnerable with the act of resistance. She does not tolerate the demanding behavior of others while she herself reflects that same characteristic. In the eyes of don José, Carmen encapsulates Hegel’s logic of the “Beautiful Soul” from his work *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Carmen’s character echoes the following statement:

The ‘beautiful soul,’ then, has no concrete reality; it subsists in the contradiction between its pure self and the necessity felt by this self to externalize and turn into something actual; it exists in the immediacy of this rooted and fixed opposition, an immediacy which alone is the middle term reconciling an opposition which has been intensified to its pure abstraction, and is pure being or empty

nothingness. Thus, the ‘beautiful soul,’ being conscious of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, is unhinged, disordered, and runs to madness, wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption. (392-293)

Don José’s longing for Carmen’s devotion towards him triggers disgust in her character. In his work *The Anatomy of Disgust*, William Ian Miller finds that one can feel disgust towards something but there always remains a special desire to want to know or see more. “Again we cannot avoid one of the most troubling aspects of so much of the disgusting: it attracts as well as repels” (Miller 22). Don José desires to consume all of Carmen; her body, mind, and soul. Carmen’s seductive ways lead to don José’s carnal and spiritual obsession with her. Both fall into a vicious love-hate cycle. In his work *De la seducción*, Jean Baudrillard offers insight on the act of seduction:

La seducción es una fuerza de atracción y de distracción, fuerza de absorción y de fascinación, fuerza de derrumbamiento no sólo del sexo, sino de todo lo real, fuerza de desafío – nunca una economía de sexo y de palabra, sino un derroche de gracia y de violencia, una pasión instantánea a la que el sexo puede llegar, pero que puede también agotarse en sí misma, en ese proceso de desafío y muerte [...].  
(79)

It can be concluded that the figure of Carmen follows a construction and deconstruction of the feminine myth. It is through both male and female protagonists that issues of patriarchal politics unfold to arrive at a state of reconfiguration through the *other*,<sup>51</sup> possession and consumption. In *Carmen*, it is through the death of the *other* that the male gender can arrive to a sane state of mind because he is able to possess the highest of his ideals. As Zygmunt Bauman

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<sup>51</sup> This *other* I am referring to is Carmen.

states in his work *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, “If desire wants to consume, love wants to possess” (10). In order to free himself, as well as Carmen, Don José must end her life.

## Chapter 2: Treating the Erotic: Feminism, Language, and Sexuality Discourses

Tuve un amante que ensalzó mis caderas y mi  
forma de amar tan intensa y silenciosa...

~Clara Janés

The current century constitutes an era where Spanish women writers are able to voice their feelings and opinions on sexuality, feminine concerns, love, and family. Authors such as Almudena Grandes, Elvira Lindo, Lola Becarría, and Luisa Castro, among others, are exemplary of this current literary canon. Issues on marriage, lesbianism, maternity, conflicts between mothers and daughters, husband and wife, as well as friendship, constitute notions proper in the genre of these authors who are not afraid to give testimony to time periods pertinent to areas of female formation. Exemplary of the aforementioned issues are seen in novels where female protagonists are embodied as marginalized subjects leading to a stumping of their selfhood and psychological development. Following Barthes' premises on the writing guaranteeing a reader's pleasure, a text must prove to the reader that it is desired. Roland Barthes states "The text you write must prove to me that *it desires me*. This proof exists: it is writing. Writing is: the science of the various blisses of language, its Kama Sutra (this science has but one treatise: writing itself" (6). Similar to Bakhtin's theory of novelistic discourse, theories of feminine language have evolved into new forms questionable to its genre. In her work, *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic*, Dale M. Bauer proposes that novelistic and feminine discourses support each other using similar language. However, Bauer questions its classification: "Is the novel a feminine genre, or is a woman's language novelized? Does the novel use a feminine language, or is the feminine a novelized language?" (8). Nietzsche alters the state of woman in his work *Beyond Good and Evil*:

Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert

about women? that the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? (2)

Feminine values and behavior have been seen as a major aspect of oppression particularly during the 1960s and 1970s. First-wave feminism of the early nineteenth and twentieth-centuries provided more of a legal foundation with giving women the right to vote, and this period of struggle trickled into its second-wave movement affecting all areas of women: sexuality, work, and family. Lissette Rolón-Collazo observes this perspective in her work *Figuraciones: Mujeres en Carmen Martín Gaité, revistas feministas y ¡Hola!*:

a la sexualidad como fuente de opresión de la mujer y la subordinación de otros factores tales como raza y clase (...) Adoptando un enfoque derivado del marxismo, arguye que las mujeres son una clase oprimida por la clase dominante – los hombres—y, tal y como la clase obrera tiene que tomar control de los medios de producción, las mujeres tienen que tomar control de los medios de reproducción (...) El análisis del feminismo radical que arguye que el patriarcado es una fuente de opresión más importante que el capitalismo resulta en una estrategia de separatismo: no se puede aceptar al hombre como aliado porque es el enemigo y no abandonará voluntariamente su poder. (quoted in Rolón-Collazo 24)

Joanne Hollows in *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* proposes that “it is generally accepted that feminism is a form of politics which aims to intervene in, and transform, the unequal power relations between men and women” (3). Much to its popularity, the politics on feminism have aimed to debunk its false views and use the explanations of power relation

inequalities as a basis for change. Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* argues that “through divorce, through abortion, through contraception, the sexual revolution had undermined marriage” (208). Millett proposes an abolition of gender and criticizes femininity and masculinity, opting for androgyny. Daly, urges women not to deny the ‘Wild Woman within’ and free ‘the Hag within’ (15). Daly claims that these wild women are challenged:

to the degree that the Female Self has been possessed by the spirit of patriarchy, she has been slowly expiring. She has become dispirited, that is, depressed, downcast, lacking independent vigor and forcefulness. As she becomes dispossessed, despirited, she moves out of range of the passive voices and begins to hear her own Active Voice, speaking her Self in successive acts of creation. As she creates her Self she creates new space: semantic, cognitive, symbolic, psychic, physical spaces. She moves into these spaces and finds room to breathe, to breathe forth further space. (340)

Daly proposes that the self must ‘wild-ize’ itself in order to be free (343). She claims that women in particular are transforming language through tactful new meanings of old or weird words. She also postulates that “we must learn to dis-spell the language of phallocracy” in order to challenge the patriarchal language (4). Thus, ‘wild’ women have the capacity to dismantle patriarchal language and claim it as their own because for Daly, the language changes its meaning when it is pronounced by them. Daly believes that by changing words, we can change reality because words structure reality. Therefore, can one change ‘false’ words with ‘true’ words to subvert patriarchal language? She also argues that men and women are *naturally* different and so:

women’s minds have been mutilated and muted to such a state that “Free Spirit” has been branded into them as a brand name for girdles and bras rather than as the

name of our verb-ing, be-ing Selves. Such brands names brand women “Morons.” Moronized, women believe that male-written texts (biblical, literary, medical, legal, scientific) are “true.” (Daly 5)

Daly proposes that there is a manifestation of the silencing of woman due to the *she* and *he* pronouns. *The Lesbian Body*, by Monique Wittig expands on issues of grammatical silencing techniques such as *people*, *person*, and the use of the pronoun *I*. Wittig asserts that using *I* conceals the sexual identity of the speaker/writer (10-11). Daly asserts that the transition from the history of the pronoun he was hardly insignificant because:

Since the female pronoun always designates females—while the male pronoun designates all humans as well as all males, patriarchal language, as manifested in the pronominal system of English, extended the scope of maleness to *include* humanity, while restricting femaleness to “the Other,” who is by implication nonhuman. Any speaker internalizing such a language unconsciously internalizes the values underlying such a system, thus perpetuating the cultural and social assumptions necessary to maintain the patriarchal power structure. (quoted in Daly 18)

Ortega y Gasset assures that women’s life involves more use of the body than that of man’s. He reinforces woman’s natural habit of adorning and paying attention to her body such that:

Woman, on the contrary is constantly having her attention claimed by the liveliness of her intracorporeal sensations; she is always aware of her body as interposed between the world and her I, she always carries it before her, at once as a shield of defense and a vulnerable hostage. (136-137)

“In short, the erotic attraction that woman produces in man is not—as the ascetics have always told us in their blindness on these matters—aroused as the feminine body as body; rather, we desire woman because Her body *is* a soul” (Ortega y Gasset 138).

Recent years have paved the way for the body to be a point of reference of literary and cultural criticism. More directly or explicitly, the modern woman’s novel tends to question the evolution of women’s social situation, particularity with demands on gender and feminine concerns.<sup>52</sup> Pratt observes that “One of the most striking aspects of the fiction in which women authors deal with heterosexual passion is that the fates of the heroes depend upon patriarchal norms forbidding passion for women” (73). Romantic and sexual attachments are primal forces leading a hero or heroin’s personality from growth towards maturity. In her work *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi examines the methodological and theoretical approaches of feminists such as Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva, whose work is engaged between feminism and literature. In a description of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*, Moi argues that Beauvoir’s main thesis sums up such that, “throughout history, women have been reduced to objects for men: ‘woman’ has been constructed as man’s Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions. Or, in more existentialist terms: patriarchal ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence” (92). Thus, the erotic narrative emerges under social expectations of a desire for an ideal woman. In her work, “Rereading Femininity,” Shoshana Felman asserts:

Masculinity is not a substance, nor is femininity its empty complement, a *heimlich* womb. Femininity is neither a metonymy, a snug container of masculinity, nor is it a metaphor—its spectacular reflection. Femininity *inhabits*

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<sup>52</sup> Refer to *La emancipación de la mujer en España* by Concepción Arenal or Emilia Pardo Bazán’s *La mujer española y otros artículos feministas*.



masculinity, inhabits is as otherness, as its own *disruption*. Femininity, in other words, is a pure difference, a signifier, and so is masculinity; as signifiers, masculinity and femininity are both defined by the way they differentially relate to other differences. (42)

The interplay of love and desire has been a strong medium on both on film and narrative texts. More primal is the element of eroticism in relation to the body as a medium of desire. A true love, for example, may become one that is thwarted by death, poverty, or disease.<sup>53</sup> Thus, I contend that in general, love may act on impulse or desire, but is aided through eroticism. Critics have explored eroticism as a contributing factor to women's greater freedom of sexual choice and find it "paradoxical that the drive towards acceptance of woman's eroticism should lead to effects that were the opposite of its intentions" (78). In fact:

By the 1920s women who did not participate in sexuality were warned that they might become riddled with complexes; men cited popularized Freudianism to aid sexual conquests, and women found that the sexual emancipation they thought that they had won was likely to mean sexual availability. (78)

Although the element of romance never fails to be present in modern present day fiction, typical conclusions are likely to be tragic or with an open finality clouded by ambivalence. Pratt observes sexual norms as an "exchange of selves" and notes that woman is in a pressured state of finding a satisfying love (78). However, Ti-Grace Atkinson proposes that:

[...] the phenomenon of love is the psychological pivot in the persecution of women.... it is not difficult to conclude that women by definition must exist in a special psycho-pathological state of fantasy both in reference to themselves and to

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<sup>53</sup> This tends to be popular on screen or literary texts, usually through death, and the audience or reader is taken by surprise.

their manner of relating to their counterclass. This pathological condition, considered to be the most desirable state for any woman to find herself in, is what we know as the phenomenon of love. (43)

The various codes of conduct that have traditionally been applied to Woman have been culturally constructed as such to avoid surrendering to the erotic impulse<sup>54</sup>. I propose that this is a dangerous cultural and political force due to fear. In his work *The Erotic Impulse*, David Steinberg (et.al) questions the various cycles of eroticism, one's stimulation of it, and the consequences of wanting to keep it under control. "We are told that if we surrender to the erotic impulse, if we indulge our erotic desires, if we engage the erotic world in any but the most carefully controlled and perfunctory ways, terrible things will happen to us" (Steinberg xv). And yet, there remains a cultural infatuation with maintaining control over desire and sexuality. What is applicable to the self is applicable to the body; the body being the domain of sexuality. What explains our distinctive concerns with bodily appearance and our desire to understand our so-called 'erotic conflict?'<sup>55</sup> The body is constantly adorned, idealized, mutilated, or even starved to achieve perfection and convey order. Is there a price for erotic denial? If so, critics argue that it may threaten the political forces and cultural values of what they call the 'cyclical process': "the more we assert the hegemony of reason, the more we dissociate from and fear the erotic life. The more we become divorced from eros, the more ferociously we turn to reason for meaning and stability" (Steinberg xvii). In the *History of Sexuality*, Foucault sets out to attack what he calls 'the repressive hypothesis' where he presents discourses on sex and sexuality based on doubt.

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<sup>54</sup> This notion is applicable to any individual, but I am emphasizing woman as representative of the novels presented.

<sup>55</sup> Steinberg proposes that one's erotic conflict stumps his or her desire towards sexual attainment (xxi).

For Foucault, power has a constraining force, but it can also be an instrument for the production of pleasure. He states:

First doubt: Is sexual repression truly an established historical fact? Is what first comes into view-and consequently permits one to advance an initial hypothesis-really the accentuation or even the establishment of a regime of sexual repression beginning in the seventeenth century? This is a properly historical question.

Second doubt: Do the workings of power, and in particular those mechanisms that are brought into play in societies such as ours, really belong primarily to the category of repression? Are prohibition, censorship, and denial truly the forms through which power is exercised in a general way, if not in every society, most certainly in our own? This is a historico-theoretical question. A third and final doubt: Did the critical discourse that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it "repression"? Was there really a historical rupture between the age of repression and the critical analysis of repression? (10)

Anaïs Nin, in her essay "Eroticism in Women,"<sup>56</sup> asserts that women have yet to make the separation between love and sensuality, which "may or may not disappear in modern woman, intent on denying all of her past selves, and she may achieve this separation of sex and love which, to my belief, diminishes pleasure and reduces the heightened quality of lovemaking" (117). By linking eroticism to emotion, and emotion to love, the stance of writers promote a

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<sup>56</sup> Essay in David Steinberg's *The Erotic Impulse*.

more personal and individualized work. Does women's writing on sexuality equate to liberation? Nin rejects this notion because she observes the same vulgarization in it as that of males' writing. She claims that "the true liberation of eroticism lies in accepting the fact that there are a million facets to it, a million forms of eroticism, a million objects of it, situations, atmospheres, and variations" (Nin 123). Those individuals who remain restive with the passive role may fantasize about possessing and consuming until reaching a satisfying liberating force of his or her sensual awareness. A substantial amount of female characters in Spanish literature, particularly medieval literature fall into the category of passivity. These characters are usually secluded away in convents, or guarded in their homes by male relatives fearing for the loss of their honor.<sup>57</sup> The image of woman has either been praised or criticized for her moral values and admired for her physical beauty. Women's contribution to erotic objectification may slowly be shifting from an ambivalent rebellious mode of conduct to one of desperately breaking free from sexual repression. Nin agrees that those "who are publishing women's erotic writing are pioneers not only in putting women's sexuality into overt public consciousness, but also in giving respect and diversity to erotic literacy" (128).

With the publication of Almudena Grandes' *Las edades de Lulú* (1989),<sup>58</sup> the female protagonist is embodied as a fixed sexual and possessed subject. In Jill Robbins' article, "The Discipline of the Spanish Subject: "Las edades de Lulú," the author emphasizes that "the desires and behaviors of the female characters in novels by female authors seem to represent female equality in narrations (women can write pornography, too) and in society at large (sexual

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<sup>57</sup> For example, *La Celestina* (1499) by Fernando de Rojas serves as textual representation, or the oil painting *Venus of Urbino* (1538) by Titian.

<sup>58</sup> Almudena Grandes received the Premio La Sonrisa Vertical in 1989 with this novel. The novel was also produced as a film by Juan José Bigas Luna in 1990.

liberation = social liberation) (163)<sup>59</sup> Grandes presents a coming-of-age narrative where the female protagonist, Lulú<sup>60</sup> resists self development and embraces transgression as a defense mechanism. Lulú is personified as a female adolescent who becomes a desired object. The novel situates the story of the protagonist's coming-of-age within a pornographic framework because the reader is constantly absorbed within textual and fictional arousals and desires. "The question that has produced the greatest debates is whether the novel promotes women's liberation, or, on the contrary, reinforces the patriarchal understanding of a woman's place in society" (Bezhanova 114). One perspective that has been contemplated by critics is that *Las edades de Lulú* is a feminist work of fiction based on the premise that the protagonist seeks sexual pleasure and practices it. I argue that although erotic aspects of the novel are highly present, the work successfully addresses a circular, yet conventional perspective of the *Bildungsroman* through the employment of paradoxical and contradictory language.

The fragmented narration reflects Lulú's own personal fragmentation, which does not follow a specific chronological time. Akiko Tsuchiya proposes that the novel "commodifies gender and sexuality in a way that would be threatening to the fundamentally conservative gender ideology of the average popular reader" (243). Grandes is able to explore Lulú's taboo-breaking sexual fantasies through her viewing of cinematic representations. Upon viewing her first pornographic film, her desire to be on the 'other side of the screen' emerges when she states:

Aquella era la primera vez en mi vida que veía un espectáculo semejante. Un hombre, un hombre grande y musculoso, un hombre hermoso, hincado a cuatro patas sobre una mesa, el culo erguido, los muslos separados, esperando [...] Fue

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<sup>59</sup> See Robbins, Jill. "The Discipline of the Spanish Subject: Las edades de Lulú." *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*. 28.1 (2003): 161-182.

<sup>60</sup> Lulú affectionately goes by this name, but her full name is María Luisa-Poveda y García de la Casa.

entonces cuando deseé por primera vez estar allí, al otro lado de la pantalla... para poder penetrarle con uno de ellos, herirle y hacerle gritar, y complacerme en ello... (Grandes 30)

The reader is invited to a pornographic video session by Lulú, seduced into watching her watch the film. Lulú encounters pleasure upon her observation of the pornographic film. Hence, her first sexual partner with future husband, Pablo, instills fear and dominance in her. Pablo tells Lulú to behave herself during their first sexual encounter and later expresses his approval of her conduct. He later sodomizes Lulú against her will and she eventually allows herself to be infantilized by him. Her behavior does not exhibit signs of wanting to grow up; on the contrary, she rejects the idea of progress towards adulthood in spite of being an adult woman in her thirties. The novel, as a whole, is saturated with references to childhood, misbehaving children, little boys and girls, and adults that scold: “Ella parloteaba y gesticulaba exageradamente, como una niña pequeña” (?); “eres un niño malo, Lester. No deberías haberlo hecho. Eres tan cruel. Has enfadado a papá y esta vez va en serio... que saboreaba de antemano cualquier travesura de nuestro pequeño” (?); “el hombre rubio entró... en el niño grande” (?). After a sex game organized by Pablo, she unintentionally has sexual relations with her brother Marcelo. Feeling betrayed she recognizes that behaving like a little girl while in her thirties is detrimental to her personal development and leaves Pablo. She states:

Entonces me convencí de que mientras siguiera a su lado nunca crecería, y cumpliría treinta y cinco, y luego cuarenta y cinco, y luego cincuenta... y no habría llegado a crecer jamás, sería una niña eternamente, pero no una hermosa Nina de doce años, como cuando vivíamos en aquella casa falsa, enorme y vacía,

en la que no pasaba el tiempo, sino un pobre monstruo de sesenta y seis años sumido en la maldición de una infancia infinita. (Grandes 248)

Towards the end of the novel, Lulú is able to achieve a sense of sexual liberation through her refusal to conform to the oppressive patriarchal standards of her male surroundings. It is precisely during Lulú's moment of 'erotic contemplation' when she realizes that she misses her relationship with Pablo because it allowed her to practice unconditional obedience towards him and assume the role of a submissive little girl. The protagonist's search for protection and security ultimately leads her to realize the miserable reality that surrounds her. According to Goicoechea, "No olvidemos que esta novela se llama *Las edades de Lulú* y que podría subtitularse *La niña abandonada por su madre que al llegar a la adolescencia y por amor a un hombre se negó a crecer*. También Lulú es un nombre que designa ciertos objetos eróticos, como se ve al dar nombre a un perfume con propaganda claramente sexi" (248). The novel's title does make references to the different ages that Lulú undergoes. Thus, one can propose that Lulú's development is a circular one because she deliberately chooses to search for an "age" that she feels the most comfortable with, which in her case, is infancy. Pratt's observation supports this aspect of the novel when she states that the female *Bildungsroman* can often be characterized as "the novel of mere growth, mere physical passage from one age to the other without psychological development" (36). Critics have interpreted the closing scene of the novel as confirmation that Lulú's relationship with Pablo has progressed beyond her submissiveness towards him and his desire to exert dominance over her. Gonzalo Navajas observes that "se revela de manera implícita que esa unión no se centra ya en el mecanismo de la dominación y violencia, como en el pasado, sino en la experiencia de la afinidad afectiva" (391).

Novels and cinematic genres' portrayal of courtship have moved forward supporting the idea of free will and moving beyond heterosexual relationships. The desire for equity in relationships has been explored by authors who have been troubled by the dichotomy between love and marriage. The quest for mutuality in traditional patriarchal marriages is especially highlighted in environments that are out of a hero or heroine's control. Much of the social insistence on categorizing sexuality or heteronormative behavior in relationships continues to thwart protagonist's roles in films and novels. In novels of development or marriage, patriarchal expectations may frustrate the heroes' or heroines' quest towards obtainment of the self "to the extent that they become alienated not only from the enclosures of society and marriage but also from their bodies and minds" (Pratt 73). This notion, according to Pratt may stem from a "fear of feminine sexuality" (73). This conception is reinforced through the use of language, hindering a woman's ability to exhibit passion or sexual desire. Thus, I propose that although frustrating one's womanhood may be done by choice or by chance, it continues to affect the desire for sexual fulfillment in both male and female genders. This may cause further problems when separation occurs where an attachment has already been established or where determined roles or types have been imposed on the male or female sex. Rolón-Collazo distinguishes three typologies that have hovered over females: "la tradicional esposa, madre y ama de casa, la mujer objeto (deseo, belleza y fascinación del hombre) y la *superwoman*, reciente creación de las revistas femeninas y la publicidad de los ochenta" (36). Over the past years, critics have aimed to re-evaluate these categories, opting instead for less subordinated modules both in film and narrative fiction. In an article on women and publicity, Rolón-Collazo emphasizes:

Cuando el receptor es una mujer, se le exige sentirse identificada con el medio social en que se mueve y se le oblige a escoger su tipo modélico. Así, una mujer



programada de ama de casa verá su imagen reflejada en la reina del hogar consumidora de productos de limpieza. Una mujer programada para ser bella y objeto de deseo deseará ser igual que las mujeres sofisticadas y hermosas que la publicidad le presenta. El sueño, el reclamo, pasa por la necesidad de ocupar el lugar, de ser aceptadas o mejor elegidas. (37)<sup>61</sup>

Pratt notes that there has been high interest emphasizing the prohibitions and limitations of sexuality such as, “the limitations on sexuality placed upon adolescents, the monogamous strictures for married women, and the degradation accorded both married and unmarried women who make love out of wedlock” (74). More so, there continues to be a re-evaluation of these representations that counteract present day dealings of these genres.

In her work “The Laugh of the Medusa,” Hélène Cixous states: “I shall speak of women’s writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies--for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text--as into the world and into history--by her own movement” (875). Authors whose work focuses on the exploration of adolescence or areas of formations may be classified under genres of autobiography. Although an autobiographical account may not be completely accurate because it may not contain the writer’s complete life, it does emphasize a particular time period of that person. Thus, the stronger the protagonist’s capacity to carry out the formation process, the greater the protagonist’s desire to achieve his or her goal will be.

Like Esther Tusquets, Lucía Etxebarria’s work explores issues of love, sexuality and eroticism with an emphasis on self formation. Her work, *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* (1998),

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Rolón-Collazo from *Las mujeres y la publicidad*. *Tribuna feminista*. 7 (febrero 1987): 4.

which obtained the Premio Nadal in 1998, is a circular love story centered on the narrator-protagonist Beatriz, who recalls her childhood and teenage years, and her relationship with Caitlin (Cat) and Monica. Upon her departure to Scotland from Spain, she states: “Yo no sabía qué quería hacer con mi vida, pero me apetecía hacer algo grande: viajar, conocer gente, escribir, qué se yo” (Extebarría 49).<sup>62</sup> The novel begins with an already established description of what has already occurred to Bea<sup>63</sup> (after her four years of college, Bea returns to Madrid, Spain with the hopes of seeing Monica again, after an unruly summer life of sex, drinking, drugs, and violence). Bea has an open relationship with Cat, whom she voluntarily abandons. Bea undergoes a crisis identity, and feels a sense of pain and anxiety everywhere she goes. It is only through sex that she is able to identify a clear understanding of herself. “El sexo me ofrecía una clara conciencia de mí misma, desde la distancia, como si fuera otra” (221). Throughout the novel, Bea is in constant search of a proper self and Extebarría emphasizes this point, particularly with the protagonist’s ability to communicate with others and her placement among a “cosmic space” that she metaphorically refers to. Bea also seeks a definition of her unstable identity through Monica, whereas Monica manipulates Bea’s desires: to be the spectator of all her faults.<sup>64</sup> Bea’s relationship with Cat turns into one of fear: fear of expecting her to love.

Entonces, cuando sentí dentro de mí cómo ella también me quería, me asusté.

Tuve miedo al advertir que, al contrario que Mónica en su día, Cat esperaba algo de mí. Y me aterró, porque no quería perderme a mí misma. Consideraba nuestra intimidad un tesoro, pero empecé a pensar lo que estaba pagando demasiado caro.

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<sup>62</sup> Beatriz’s initial excitement and hope to see the world is reminiscent of Andrea in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*.

<sup>63</sup> In the novel, Beatriz will also go by the name of Bea.

<sup>64</sup> Mónica is Bea’s opposite. She steals, sells and consumes drugs, and participates in violent and life threatening situations and asks Bea to actively participate, or witness these accounts as a test of their friendship.

Supongo que Cat me recordaba demasiado a mi madre, así que en seguida empecé a distanciarme e hice todo lo posible por no quererla, y a veces me pregunto si de verdad la quise mientras viví con ella. (Etxebarría 40)

Bea eventually arrives at the conclusion that although an individual is dependent on others, to achieve a form of self-reflection, “quizá nada importaba nada, si al fin y al cabo, todos venimos de los mismo y acabaremos en lo mismo” (Etxebarría 233). She learns to understand that it is an individual’s choice to accept or reject who we are:

Es el ansia de perfección la que asesina los afectos, la sed de absoluto, el miedo a la costumbre, la perenne nostalgia de imposibles, la negativa constante a aceptarnos como somos y a aceptar a los demás por lo que son. Cuando uno no se entiende a sí mismo es imposible que entienda que otros le amen, y es imposible por tanto que respete a aquellos que le quieren. Pero el tiempo nos ofrece sólo dos opciones: o asumir lo que somos, o abandonar; y si no abandonamos, si decidimos quedarnos en este planeta minúsculo y pactar con nuestra aún más minúscula vida, podemos interpretar esta resignación como una derrota, o como un triunfo. (Etxeberría 265)

Bea is able to acquire an effective self because she is able to take responsibility of her actions.

She learns to value herself and honor her ability to act decisively.

Relationships focused on traditional norms often dictate specific behaviors and expectations in female sexuality. “A mature relationship must be sufficiently flexible to cope with and benefit from deviations from traditionally prescribed behavior” (Hall 30). This choice may involve discarding others’ expectations in an effort to act on one’s own beliefs, which may,

at times, involve a woman's body and her ability to adapt to different situations. Luce Irigaray expands on the issue of the feminine language:

a feminine language would undo the unique meaning, the proper meaning of words, of nouns: which still regulates all discourse. In order for there to be a proper meaning, there must indeed be a unity somewhere. But if feminine language cannot be brought back to any unity, it cannot be simply described or defined: there is no feminine meta-language. The masculine can partly look at itself, speculate about itself, represent itself and describe itself for what it is, whilst the feminine can try to speak to itself through a new language, but cannot describe itself from outside or in formal terms, except by identifying itself with the masculine, and thus by losing itself. (quoted in Grosz 178)

Feminine concerns in literature and cinema stem from the demands and needs concerning a woman's body: "For it is too much overlooked that the feminine body is endowed with a more lively internal sensibility than man's; that is, our organic intracorporeal sensations are vague and as it were muffled in comparison with woman's" (Ortega y Gasset 136). The literary production of women from the seventies until now promotes high demands on gender and feminine concerns. Following Lidia Falcón's paradigm towards feminism, each time there is less talk about feminism and there are fewer women in the terminology: we are no longer women, we are a gender, and we are no longer a feminist movement but a social one, a political program, and a philosophical ideology and not a biological condition.<sup>65</sup> Falcón questions the possibility of this 'movement' being outdated and assures that in order to achieve balance and an ultimate state of

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<sup>65</sup> Refer to Falcón, Lidia. *La razón feminista. Tomo I*. Barcelona, Fontanella, 1981. Also see her presentation with CasAmérica titled "El feminismo en los medios de comunicación." Uploaded on March 9, 2011. [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nyy\\_q0CLU0A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nyy_q0CLU0A). Accessed on February 7, 2015.

equality, that one cannot simply state ‘power to woman,’ but ‘power to feminism.’ Crucial to this status was the development of the former magazine *Vindicación feminista*, which had its debut in 1976.<sup>66</sup> The former editorial provided a means of informing, disseminating the values and ideology of a feminist culture, as well as offering forum discussion in all areas of feminism concerns in Spain as well as throughout the rest of the world. This was available through essays, narratives, poetry, and theater covering on previously taboo areas of Spanish life such as pornography, prostitution, women’s prisons, rape, contraception and the role of women in the Spanish War. The majority of its publications had success and a considerable amount of social impact, focused on closing the gap between the silenced and the voiced in all literary production areas.

La revista abarca los diversos aspectos de la vida de las mujeres, desde el marco legal, histórico, cultural, la salud, la vida cotidiana, la reproducción, la política, el trabajo, y todo aquello que para aquellas “amazonas” –según las denominara Joan de Segarra–mereciera ser cuestionado. En la revista no hay ningún resquicio para la belleza o la moda y otros temas típicos de la prensa para mujeres, a no ser para lanzar una crítica más implacable. (quoted in Rolón-Collazo 30)<sup>67</sup>

Edited by the journalist Carmen Alcalde, this magazine has consistently provided an active and radical theoretical approach towards its public avoiding any topic with regards to fashion or beauty.

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<sup>66</sup> The website is no longer available, but a blog honoring the magazine has replaced it. <http://vindicacionfeminista.blogspot.com/>. Accessed on May 7, 2015.

<sup>67</sup> Juana Gallego (1990): *Mujeres de Papel. De !Hola! a Vogue: la prensa femenina en la actualidad*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, p.141.

En cuanto a la temática, por lo que hemos podido ver hasta ahora, todas coinciden en las grandes líneas que forman los “centros de interés” fundamentales para estas revistas: las agresiones, violaciones, el aborto, el trabajo (asalariado y el doméstico), la educación, la prostitución, la sexualidad y, en general, todas aquellas cuestiones que afectan a las mujeres como colectivo con una problemática específica. Muchas tratan de producir el esquema de la revista convencional, artículos informativos, textos de opinión y críticas culturales, pero ni los medios materiales con los que cuentan ni los humanos pueden compararse, ni por asomo, a la infraestructura que hace posible la salida de una revista comercial (quoted in Rolón-Collazo 31).

Although most Spanish women writers have been conscious of the disadvantaged positions from their respective societies, classifying their works as ‘feminist,’ many reject such label. The interviews collected in María del Mar López-Cabrales’s *Palabras de mujeres* illustrate her thesis that the reasons for women writers’ almost universal rejection of the term “feminist,” as well as their reluctance to be grouped together, “is related directly to their continuing experience of inequality, despite legal reforms that created new options for women in the 1970s and have improved conditions for women in general” (Bergmann and Herr 3). Thus, critics tend to emphasize ‘women’s literature’ and not ‘feminine literature’ or ‘feminist literature’ within modes of Spanish women’s narrative fiction. Additionally, this area is one that is continuously being revised due to inconsistencies and avant-garde notions of post-modern affairs:

Los postmodernos osan reconocer que lloran y se quejan de lo duro que es el mundo profesional. A la vez que se enorgullecen de ser femeninos, se niegan a hacer algo tan poco estético como limpiar el baño. Tampoco entra en sus cálculos

hacerse cargo de sus padres cuando se hagan mayores y no se puedan cuidar a sí mismos. Las postmodernas sustentan lugares de prestigio social y defienden el derecho a esos espacios, pero en su casa resuelven el conflicto de la diversión sexual del trabajo cargando a una mujer mal pagada el trabajo doméstico que no están dispuestos a realizar sus compañeros, y si viven solas resuelven el problema del mismo modo. ¡Es bello ser mujer! El problema es que una ya no sabe en qué consiste eso, qué es eso tan específico nuestro que va hacer del mundo un lugar sin opresión ni desigualdad. (quoted in Rolón-Collazo 37)<sup>68</sup>

The century marked by the movement for women's rights has spanned high debate in areas dealing with female development and its archetypes. The deviance of female development is particularly pressed in the adolescent years, "when girls appear to confuse identity with intimacy by defining themselves through relationships with others. The legacy left from this mode of identity definition is considered to be a self that is vulnerable to the issues of separation that arise at mid-life" (Gilligan 170). The active promotion of the happy housewife, mother and wife had already been a proposed set of ideals as seen in the Women's Section of the Falange beginning in 1934. Martín Gaité further confirms this:

Ni la familia ni las amigas, ni los consultorios sentimentales se dirigían a la chica 'que iba para soltera' con otro propósito que el de insuflarle, de mejor o peor fe, la ilusión de que algún día podía dejar de serlo, de estimularla en la competición con las demás aspirantes al rango de casadas. Vocación de soltera no se concebía que la pudiera tener nadie. Se trataba de animar a las que se creyeran en inferioridad de condiciones para que no perdieran la esperanza en la victoria, de alistarlas, en

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<sup>68</sup> Refer to Maria Jesús Izquierdo. (1988): "20 años después de las *Women Lib*" en *Actas del simposio: "20 años después del 'Women's Lib.'*" 13 de octubre de 1988, p19.

fin, para una causa que se consideraba de interés general. En la lucha por alcanzar un puesto ventajoso en el mercado matrimonial, una fea no tenía por qué quedarse a la zaga. Se las espoleaba para que dedicasen un cuidado especial a su arreglo, para que sacasen partido de su fealdad adquiriendo un ‘estilo’ que podía brindarles las mismas oportunidades que a sus contrincantes más guapas. (42)

The various forms of the identity of the feminine self that emerge in the new paradigm of the Spanish novel after 1975, continue to be present within dichotomies of textual and theoretical frameworks. The female as an icon of desire and seduction is a popular thread that has proven to be a constructive influence on both literary and cinematic genres.

For girls and women, issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on the achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation. Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus males tend to have difficulty with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation. (8)

Such views also correlate with ideas in relation to gender socialization and performance both in literary and cinematic domains. Both areas have fostered a series of roles for women and their development both in and outside of social conditioning expectations. Frustrated expectations perpetuate powerlessness—particularly in females. Thus, any rupture between an individual and his or her pre-determined or role expectations supplements his or her isolation. In “Femininity as Performance,” Valeria Walkerdine observes that individuals are used to:



dramaturgical metaphors which tell us that life is a performance in which we do nothing but act out a series of roles or indeed that these roles can be peeled away like layers of an onion to reveal a repressed core, a true self, which has been inhibited, clouded by the layers of social conditioning which obscure it. (267)

This phenomenon has shaped and confirmed conditioned positions placed on females such as being conducive to passivity and avoid desire and sexuality. The silence of desire or sexuality opens up a space which articulates the question of femininity. Thus, sexuality is irreversibly linked to intimacy, shaped by theories—especially psychoanalytic ones. If, as Berlant proposes, “whether viewed psychoanalytically, institutionally, or ideologically, love is always deemed an outcome of fantasy,” where does desire stand? Berlant assures that “desire visits you as an impact from the outside, and yet, inducing an encounter with your affects, makes you feel as though it comes from within you” (6). For Pierre Bourdieu,

las mismas mujeres aplican a cualquier realidad y, en especial, a las relaciones de poder en las que están atrapadas, unos esquemas mentales que son el producto de la asimilación de estas relaciones de poder y que se explican en las oposiciones fundadoras del orden simbólico. Se deduce de ahí que sus actos de conocimiento son, por la misma razón, unos actos de reconocimiento práctico, de adhesión dóxica, creencia que no tiene que pensarse ni afirmarse como tal, y que ‘crea’ de algún modo la violencia simbólica que ella misma sufre. (quoted in 543)

The multifaceted aspects of sexual desire have been challenged by studies whose aim is to only see it from one angle. Masked by shadows of taboo, this desire makes up and has effects in powerful ways. The problem of sexuality and sexual awareness simply subsists as a central feature of human existence. It is common to want to deny or avoid notions of sexual matter,

fueled by social and moral restrictions. Yet, there continues to be an infiltration and easy access of these meanings through daily interactions and everyday life. Paula Webster's essay "Eroticism and Taboo" claims that women's relationship to erotic taboo is complex due to the nature of simply being forbidden. Fear and guilt may take over and divert an individual's attention from curiosity. At a conference workshop on this topic, Webster comments on what women spoke of as being taboo for them:

--"I want to have sex without love."

--"Patriarchal men turn me on."

--"I want to be able to say what I want."

--"I want to get married and have children."

--"I want more than one lover."

--"I want to discover what I want."

--"I want to really like my body." (135-136)<sup>69</sup>

If and when it is controlled, why does sexual awareness continue to have such high influence over individuals? What aids this motion? I propose that it simply lies in the desire itself; one that is ever so persistent and irreversibly fueled by attractions that pull us in distinctive ways towards the desired gender. Why? Indeed, because it leads to a fulfillment of that longing. This is not to claim, however, that an attempt to regulate these emotions is a difficult task for those who have been consciously trained to repress or feel guilt over having such thoughts. Philosophers and psychologists have given a fair amount of attention to the intrinsic facets of sexual desire. James Giles observes that much of the concentration has been on the function that desire plays in motivation rather than in its pragmatic attributes:

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<sup>69</sup> There are a total of twenty-six declarations, but I have only included those pertinent to the topic of desire and eroticism.

Thus, scholars working in this area will often point out that in order for desire to motivate a person to act, it must occur together with certain beliefs: beliefs about the way things are, about which actions are possible given the way things are, and about which actions are likely to bring about the desired change. (9)

Overall, although it is significant to understand the effects of the nature of desire, it is essential not to neglect its causes. One's thoughts, dreams and feelings may keep revisiting something that is so longed for, and yet be oblivious to the process of its obvious proximity. The desire of bringing two genders together, for example, involves awareness of allowing one's gender to fuse with that with which it is desired:

Yet to desire the bringing together of two genders, I must first be aware of the two genders as existing individually and separated from each other. Indeed, it is just this separation that sexual desire seeks to overcome. Consequently, the phenomenology of gender in sexual desire is such that it contains a tripartite structure, namely, an awareness of my own gender, an awareness of the other and an awareness of our genders brought together. (Giles 123)

The degree of intensity may be so high that reaching it may seem unreal. It can also be argued that desire ceases once it is fulfilled. Descartes, for example, argues that any mode of desire is always present in a future condition, and emotion or passion is biologically evident and present in that aspiration.<sup>70</sup> Thus, it can be confirmed that this aspiration provokes sexuality and is ultimately connected to issues of reflexivity and self-formation. If we are capable of surrendering to the erotic impulse, then by no means is it impossible for us to surrender to that of desire.

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<sup>70</sup> In Beavers, Anthony F. "Desire and Love in Descartes' Late Philosophy." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. Vol. 6 No. 3 (July., 1989): 279-295.

## The Quest for Love

Modern-day literature on women suggests that behavior deviating from the expected family oriented pattern projects a more liberal lifestyle that may impact the position of women in society: “The greatest problem facing the woman writer of love fiction is not so much society’s resistance to her revolutionary subject matter as her own internalization of social norms” (Pratt 75). As mentioned earlier, there has been high concern in feminist film theory with the female subject and representation of the female body as its main topic. We have seen that in novels of development, young heroes or heroines experience crisis as a result of situations out of their control such as love or death. “As in the case of the novel of equal marriage, the novel of true love is rare in women’s fiction. What is more common is a continuum, whether in an individual novel or in an author’s total works, from punishment through puzzlement to a consciousness of repression” (Pratt 86). It is worth noting that a vast amount of what has been written about love in various epochs and cultures suggests that the experience of love is one that is common to the human existence. One can easily recur to the phrase, “S/he loves me, S/he loves me not” to validate or reaffirm this belief.<sup>71</sup> The idea that love is a state of longing to become one with the loved person has continued to be stressed upon by various modern thinkers. Hatfield and Walster define passionate love, or infatuation as “a state of intense longing for union with another. Reciprocated love (union with the other) is associated with fulfillment and ecstasy. Unrequited love (separation) with emptiness, anxiety, or despair. A state of profound physiological arousal” (quoted in Hatfield 268). This craving for unification with another person reverts back to the idea of fulfillment of sexual desire. Thus, it can easily be the case that when

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<sup>71</sup> In this game, an individual speaks the phrase “He (or she) loves me,” and “He (or she) loves me not,” while picking the petals off of a flower. The flower is usually a daisy. The phrase he or she speaks when picking off the last petal is supposed to represent the truth between the object of his or her affection loving then or not.

someone in love states, “I am in love,” he or she may do so without necessarily emphasizing if it is an object or person. Normally, it would be understood that what I am in love with is a person. Why, then, must the assumption follow that it be a person, with whom I am in love with after declaring “I am in love?” If, as Sartre proposes, that in love, the “Lover wants to be ‘the whole World’ for the beloved, where does equity stand?<sup>72</sup> Giles postulates that love wants love in return and should be reciprocated on an equal level. Sartre emphasizes that a lover, “puts himself on the side of the world; he is the one who assumes and symbolizes the world; he is a *this* which includes all other *thises*. He is and consents to be an *object*” (367). The early stages of love may be fragile and unstable due to the newness of the other’s presence and companionship. Hence, adjustment and learning about the other person initially allows both persons to develop and transition into a more comfortable anticipated togetherness:

It is well known, for instance, that the person in love is continually contemplating the next meeting with the loved person: when they will see each other again, where they will go, and what they will do. A person in love will spend much time imagining what it will be like to see the beloved again, what it will be like to kiss her lips, smell her hair, and hear her laughter again. Even once the lover is in the arms of the beloved, there is still frequently a sense of expectancy and excitement about what is to come. This projection to the future directs the gaze of love forever forward, trying it precariously to imagined possibilities. (Giles 143)

Is love an emotion or a mere element that accompanies and combines, which then leads to a branching out of this *amour passion*? Sternberg offers a theory in which romantic love is

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<sup>72</sup> Refer to Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated and with an intro. By Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.

presented in terms of a “triangle” constituted under the basic components of intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment:

(a) *intimacy*, which encompasses the feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness one experiences in loving relationships; (b) *passion*, which encompasses the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, and sexual consummation; and (c) *decision/commitment*, which encompasses, in the short term, the decision that one loves another, and in the long term, the commitment to maintain that love. (119)<sup>73</sup>

Sternberg does present romantic love as being high in passion and intimacy with interactive elements. Yet another theoretical approach to love is Hazan and Shaver’s attachment theory of love.<sup>74</sup> They reference the work of John Bowlby, whose studies include the process of attachment as an integral and innate part of infancy activated by any conditions that threaten stable proximity such as fear or separation. Bowlby assures that these attachment bonds trickle into adult romantic love, “The attachment-theory approach to romantic love suggests that love is a biological as well as a social process, based in the nervous system and serving one or more important functions” (523). Giles assures that love functions as the desire for vulnerability and care, aided through the need for psychological fulfillment. Thus, it is appropriate to recognize that in order to achieve a deep sort of intimacy required in love, one must be willing to disclose and render oneself in order to obtain complete psychological vulnerability. “Once we allow that

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<sup>73</sup> Refer to Sternberg, R.J. “A Triangular Theory of Love.” *Psychological Review* (1986): 93.2 119-135.

<sup>74</sup> Refer to Hazan, C., and Shaver, P. “Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 52.3 (1987): 511-524.

the desire for care is basic to the experience of love, then it seems we must also allow that the desire for vulnerability is likewise basic to the experience of love” (Giles 151).

By recognizing the appealing and destructive aspects of romantic love, authors and film directors are able to prepare their readers or audiences for either blissful or troubled aspects of that love. Berlant assures that unlike desire:

love is the embracing dream in which desire is reciprocated: rather than being isolated, love provides an image of an expanded self, the normative of the couple form. In the idealized of their relation, desire will lead to love, which will make a world for desire’s endurance. (7)

Berlant also proposes that love may simply be “as passing fancy or a trick” as to steer away from fantasy and that expressions in love are usually too *conventional*, tied in to generated notions of questioning its authenticity (7). It has come to light that the ideologies of love have been marketed as utopian in both literary and cinematic fields. The clearest indications of them have been present as early as medieval literature, stressing a woman’s value vis-à-vis her chastity and social and family honor. Despite the body being a current indicator of woman’s erotic attraction and fertility, love continues to be an ever so present life force, healing through words and actions. One cannot deny love’s power because one thinks consciously about it and it is inherent in one’s heart. Irwin Allen Ginsberg’s poem “Song” fits this description:

The weight of the world  
is love.  
Under the burden  
Of solitude,  
Under the burden

of dissatisfaction  
the weight,  
the weight we carry  
is love. (quoted in Steinberg 36)<sup>75</sup>

The interest in the quest for both passionate and romantic love has been quite radical—particularly increasing in the cinematic domain. *The Transformation of Intimacy* by Anthony Giddens assures that although romantic love incorporates elements of *amour passion*, passionate love sets itself apart because of sexual/erotic compulsions.<sup>76</sup> Romantic love:

introduced the idea of a narrative into an individual's life – a formula which radically extended the reflexivity of sublime love. The telling of a story is one of the meanings of 'romance', but this story now became individualized, inserting itself and other into a personal narrative which had no particular reference to wider social processes. (39-40)

Romantic love may initially be thought of as 'love at first sight.'<sup>77</sup> "The quest is an odyssey, in which self-identity awaits its validation from the discovery of the other" (Giddens 45). The need to authenticate one's emotions in *others'* love validates the desired reciprocity that confirms self-formation.

The film *Elegy* (2008) by Isabel Coixet challenges the quest of love by juxtaposing time and the effect of mourning. In her article, "Lateness, Timeliness, and *Elegy*: Philip Roth's *Dying*

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<sup>75</sup> Taken from Joan Nelson's article "Lighting Candles" from David Steinberg's *The Erotic Impulse: Honoring the Sensual Self*. Jeremy P. Tarcher/Perigee Books: New York, 1992. I have only included the first verses.

<sup>76</sup> Two pieces of artwork that that can be referred to that contrast romantic love and passionate love are Alfred Bierstadt's *Looking up the Yosemite Valley* (1865-67) and Joseph Mallord William Turner's *Snow Storm: Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842).

<sup>77</sup> In the Film *Sex and Lucía* by Julio Medem, Lucía becomes infatuated with passion/love towards Lorenzo after reading his novel and following his whereabouts.



*Animal on Film*” Debra Shostak emphasizes that the film and concept of *Elegy*, “deflects the trauma of mortality and the death of desire by contemplating the permanent principle not of absence itself or of Yeatsian art but of compassionate human love” (81). Based on Phillip Roth’s *The Dying Animal* (2008), Ben Kingsley plays the role of David Kepesh (62 years old) while Penélope Cruz plays the role of Consuela Castillo (27 years old). I propose that the heroine’s role serves as an agent of compassion enabled by the power of the masculine gaze. I base my approach on the work of Jean Baudrillard whose themes comprise techniques of power and seduction, as well as on the readings of Zygmunt Bauman whose studies include analysis of love and desire.

As a professor at a university, David is solitary and independent until he meets his student Consuela, whom he immediately finds himself seduced by. David has spent his life going from relationship to relationship, without expecting to commit or settle down any time soon. “I spent my whole life jumping from one relationship to another because this made me believe that I was never alone” (David in *Elegy*). He sees himself confronted with decisions that make him doubt himself and of his own capacity to believe in the ability of loving. David’s character is complex, and is not only filled with fear of being alone, but also with fear towards accepting love. He has not allowed a woman’s love to take over his heart and has lived independently with no commitment towards any female encounter: “My whole life was dedicated to independence” (David in *Elegy*). He views (re)marriage or living together with a woman as a state of imprisonment. He is not even capable of providing fatherly advice to his own son with respect to marriage because he does not understand what it means. The main action throughout the film concerns the relationship between David and Consuela. Consuela does not understand David’s negation of allowing himself to be loved, and learns to accept his decision to break off the affair

by not showing up to her graduation. Following Miguel de Unamuno's book, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, "El hombre ansia ser amado, o, lo que es igual, ansia ser compadecido. El hombre quiere que se sientan y se compartan sus penas y sus dolores" (152). David is captivated by Consuela's beauty and unique personality. At an end of the year reunion that he gives at his house, David shows Consuela an art book, opens it up, and compares her to Goya's painting *La maja desnuda*.<sup>78</sup> This is significant because it is David's first step in acknowledging that there is something beyond physical beauty. On one occasion, David's friend and confidant advises him about the relationship that has developed between David and Consuela and tells him: "Beautiful women are invisible, we're so dazzled by the outside that we never make it inside" (George in *Elegy*). Just as David struggles to see beyond Consuela's dazzling beauty, Coixet demands that her viewers see beyond what is presented on screen and experience the love, nostalgia, and melancholy that the character's undergo. In his book *Liquid Love*, Zygmunt Bauman comments, "To love is to desire 'to beget and procreate', and so the lover 'seeks and goes about to find the beautiful thing in which he can beget' (6).

Even though she has developed feelings for David, Consuela does not fear the difference of age. Following Unamuno's premise, "El amor de la mujer, sobre todo... es maternal. La mujer se rinde al amante porque le siente sufrir con el deseo... Y por eso es su amor más amoroso y más puro que el del hombre, y más valiente y más largo" (Unamuno 153). Consuela surrenders to David's love, yet keeps herself distant, not giving him her complete trust. She even recognizes that in the end, one is left alone and empty, after going from one relationship to the other. She tells David: "You spend your whole life going through relationships without ever really bonding with anyone" (Consuela in *Elegy*). At times, it seems as though David chooses to mask his

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<sup>78</sup> Francisco Goya's painting *The Naked (or Nude) Maja* from ca.1803.

feelings. He allows himself to love and be loved, yet still chooses to engulf himself with feelings of doubt and fear. Although he recognizes his attraction and longing towards Consuela, he refuses to accept it as the truth. It is as if he were consumed by both an interior and exterior power that does not allow any room for *his* happiness. During one scene, David and Consuela are at the beach and he begins taking photographs of her with his camera. Through the lens of the camera, David is able to recognize Consuela's value. She becomes transparent to him and this makes him vulnerable. The revelations of the actual photographs expose an even more captivating essence because of Consuela's gaze. Her gaze is exotic and luring. Her eyes portray genuineness and an almost nostalgic-like essence. David is consumed by this gaze and is seduced to a state of weakness. Consuela becomes an agent of seduction and attraction. As Baudrillard states:

La seducción es una fuerza de atracción y de distracción, fuerza de absorción y de fascinación, fuerza de derrumbamiento no sólo del sexo, sino de todo lo real, fuerza de desafío — nunca una economía de sexo y de palabra, sino de un derroche de gracia y de violencia, una pasión instantánea a la que el sexo puede llegar, pero que puede también agotarse en sí misma, en ese proceso de desafío y muerte [...]. (79)

Through the photographs, David becomes weak and that weakness allows him to let his guard down to reveal his feelings towards Consuela. It is as if his mind has traveled to a state of enchantment that no longer has him trapped with the fear of *love*. Following Bauman's analysis on love, he explains, "Love may be, and often is, as frightening as death; only death, it covers up that truth by the flurry of desire and excitement. It makes sense to think of the difference between love and death as one between attraction and repulsion" (8). Both Consuela and David

have now reached a state beyond mere attraction; a state of passion and desire that simultaneously allows them to reveal their most inner and true feelings towards one another. This is proven when Consuela is at a restaurant with David and the following conversation takes place:

“Have you ever imagined a future with me?” (Consuela in *Elegy*). “A future with you scares me... You have your whole life ahead of you” (George in *Elegy*). “I didn’t ask you what I was going to do. I asked you what you wanted to do with me.” (Consuela in *Elegy*)

Consuela’s role in *Elegy* exhibits direction and confidence towards life and towards David. She is confident about who she is as a woman, and never doubts her feelings towards David. Consuela is not expected to perform in any particular way, nor is she manipulated by any particular person. It is not until the very end of the film, upon her discovery of having breast cancer, and after two years of not having had any contact with David, that she herself becomes consumed by vulnerability and seeks David. Consuela’s imagined future with David shatters when he is not capable of confronting reality. She is faced with her own reality of knowing that David is not capable of allowing himself to commit to her.

In his book *Anatomy of Disgust*, William Miller studies the different stages of an individual’s innermost feelings and how they relate to one’s surrounding environment. These feelings can constitute love, fear, desire or guilt. Miller states, “we are guilty about our anger, embarrassed by our grief, disgusted by our fear. Hatred and disgust often assist indignation in doing the moral work of vengeance” (25). David feels guilty because he is not able to commit to Consuela even though he knows he feels more than just attraction towards her. He is afraid to love and chooses to take refuge in his apartment, isolated from everything and everyone. He

loses Consuela and immerses himself in a state of solitude and guilt. There is one moment in the film where David is able to express how he feels, and he does so in a conversation with his good friend George. “I ruined everything; I was in love with her George. I never felt anything like that in all my life” (David in *Elegy*). Following Unamuno’s ideas on existence, “El dolor nos dice que existimos; el dolor nos dice que existen aquellos que amamos; el dolor nos dice que existe el mundo en que vivimos...” (218).

Both Consuela and David are consumed by an incessant pain: Consuela suffers because of David’s inability to trust, love or confide his feelings towards her; David suffers because he wants to make Consuela happy, but isn’t capable of accepting that he loves her. He is in pain because he has lost what he most preciously owned and desired. David’s choice of vulnerability equates his decision to live in solitude, repressing his feelings and refusing to unveil them to anyone but himself. In her book *The Vulnerable Observer*, Ruth Behar states, “vulnerability doesn’t mean that anything personal goes. The exposure of the self who is also a spectator has to take us somewhere we couldn’t otherwise get to” (14). Consuela is set free when choosing to leave David, but she too becomes consumed by emotional distress. David’s character appears the most distraught, in that his soul seems to be destroyed when he no longer has Consuela. Living in solitude makes him believe that he is free, and not knowing of Consuela for two years allows him to reflect on the pros and cons of his actions. In his book, *Filosofía del futuro*, Eugenio Trías studies the various productions of ethics and aesthetics with a particular focus on *reason* and its attachment to the individual. On an individual’s capacity to feel liberated, he states, “la libertad es efecto del ejercicio del poder propio...Uno es libre consigo mismo si se ‘libera’ de su *estado*, si desfonda su estancamiento en un presente afirmado afuera del tiempo, abriéndose al circuito de la autodestrucción y de la autorreconstrucción” (83).

In *Elegy*, David is able to challenge himself by rescuing Consuela from her own fears and vulnerability. After two years, Consuela returns to David; the door opens, and she stands before him. Consuela confesses to him about her breast cancer, and asks that he photograph her before undergoing surgery. As David begins to photograph Consuela's breasts, she lies on a sofa, posing half nude, with tears running down her cheeks while she looks away from the camera. She then looks back at the camera aware of being self-conscious, mimicking the image of Goya's *The Naked (or Nude) Maja*. As David gazes through his camera, capturing every aspect of Consuela's hopes and fears, he too becomes transparent and comes to the realization that he no longer fears love. "Coixet encourages us to look at Consuela's eyes rather than her breasts to see the embodied subject holding our eyes and not the body as an object, the person and not the allusion to the history of art" (Shostak 99). This configuration of the body serving as a testimony instead of an object of desire emphasizes the film's capacity to convince its audience to do the same.<sup>79</sup>

In this branch of the 'woman's film', the erotic gaze becomes the medical gaze. The female body is located not so much as spectacle but as an element in the discourse of medicine, a manuscript to be read for the symptoms which betray her story, her identity. Hence the need, in these films, for the figure of the doctor as reader or interpreter, as the site of knowledge which dominates and controls female subjectivity. (Doane 43)

Thus, the audience transitions from viewing the body as an object, to feeling compassion and endearment towards the main character and her illness. We are persuaded to experience Consuela's pain while simultaneously hope for her salvation and possible reconciliation with

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<sup>79</sup> As discussed earlier with the film *Carmen*, the audience is forced to focus on Carmen's body as a symbol of desire and eroticism.

David. Although David undergoes denial and doubt, he obtains security by masking his ability to commit to love. It is only then that he is able to uncover his truth through his perplexed feelings towards Consuela. Gilligan proposes that since women “define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care, the moral problems that they encounter pertain to issues of a different sort. When relationships are secured by masking desire and conflict is avoided by equivocation, then confusion arises about the locus of responsibility and truth” (Gilligan 164). *Elegy* furnishes variations on the themes of love, desire, and seduction. Consuela is seduced by the idea of having David love her, while David is initially seduced by the idea of Consuela being his mere student that he simply plans to bed. It is not until the very end of the film that David chooses to accept happiness because he is finally able to accept his desire to love.

The film’s technical and visual aspect is not only in tune with securing a connection with the audience, but also with the intimacy among its actors. Kingsley and Cruz are particularly described as “faces that let you in.”<sup>80</sup> The film is also consistently very dark or with low light, from the opening scene, with shots of David’s apartment and the time spent with Consuela at the beach. The lighting suggests, perhaps feelings of melancholy and emptiness present in David’s solitary life. Coixet offers a clue to the shift in tone her film accomplishes when she explains that she is “obsessed with intimacy” (quoted in Garcia 2008) — the intimacy her camera demands from actors and creates with the viewers. Coixet is also tactful with the presentation of projecting the characters’ feelings towards each other. The film offers montage glimpses into David’s fantasy world where jealousy and anxiety take over. He imagines Consuela meeting and embracing a much younger man, and later, when she has gone dancing with her brother, he sits

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<sup>80</sup>In the DVD commentary Meyer (2008) points out this distinguishing feature of the cinema: “Movies are about faces . . . there are faces who let you in, and faces who don’t.” He numbers Kingsley and Cruz among those who “let you in” and goes on to generalize that good movies work with the mysteries of the physiognomy.”

in his apartment depressed and doubtful with a voice-over that says, “on the nights when she isn’t with me, I’m deformed.”<sup>81</sup>

Coixet exaggerates the “deformity” represented by the fantasy when she ends the sequence by holding a shot of Consuela in tight embrace, looking past the “lover” into the camera, which here stands for Kepesh’s eye. In his fantasy Consuela wears an unreadable expression on her face — an expression in fact recalling that of the Francisco de Goya odalisque Kepesh has earlier shown to her. (Shostak 95)

The film’s closing scenes positions David to confront reality by choosing to comfort and simply *be there* for Consuela. The scene shows David climbing into her hospital bed, embracing and kissing her while assuring his endearment towards her with an, “I’m here” (David in *Elegy*).

Coixet then “cuts to a final medium shot of the two silent in the hospital bed as the camera discreetly retreats and the screen fades to black” (Shostak 99). The final sequences of the film expose the reality of the passing of time, aging, and disease in conjunction with the irreversible fact of death. Ironically, one could situate David as one who should appropriately embrace death because of age, but the viewers are forced to lament with Consuela.

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<sup>81</sup> Dakota Shostak mentions that this voice-over line is taken directly from Philip Roth’s novel *Dying Animal*.



## Dichotomies of Spectatorship

And her eye has become accustomed to obvious  
'truths' that actually hide what she is seeking. It is  
the very shadow of her gaze that must be explored.  
~Luce Irigaray<sup>82</sup>

Woman's body has been a clear signifier of classic and current contemporary films. Exhibited as an object, "it is precisely the massive reading, writing, filming of the female body which constructs and maintains a hierarchy along the lines of a sexual difference assumed as natural (quoted in Jimenez 91). Critics have analyzed the stereotyped woman in social discourses as either good or bad. One question that often arises is whether woman's film is marked by a feminine gaze. Critic Giulia Colaizzi does not believe that women's films adhere to this notion and finds it conflicting that they would be categorized as such. Doane's interpretation of the female as a subject of performance and spectacle follows through such that:

confronted with the classical Hollywood text with a male address, the female spectator has basically two modes of entry: a narcissistic identification with the female figure as spectacle, and a 'transvestite' identification with the active male hero in his mastery. [...] Because the woman's film purportedly directs itself to a female audience, because it pretends to offer the female spectator an identity other than that of the active male hero, it deflects energy away from the second 'transvestite' option [...] and towards the more 'properly' female identification. But since the woman's film reduces the specularizable nature of the female body, this first option of a narcissistic identification is problematized as well. In a patriarchal society, to desexualize the female body is ultimately to deny the woman the space of reading. All this is certainly not to say that the woman's film

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<sup>82</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University press, 1985), p193.

is in any way radical or revolutionary. It functions quite precisely to immobilize  
[...]. (Doane 19)

Constructions and theorists of cinema (including Barthes) have written about the intimacy of the cinematic experience, where the notion of intimacy very often proceeds from the darkness of the theatre. Lauren Berlant has written about intimacy as an “aspiration for a narrative of something shared,” a notion of intimacy I contend must be centralized in theories of spectatorship. Julio Medem’s film *Sex and Lucía* (2001) interplays storytelling with visual, structural and narrative dimensions, combined to blur the intimacy of the real with the fictional. With this, I am not simply re-naming the desire for the screen, but I am asking how we can remake the architecture of that encounter—what intimacy, what narrative do we *share* with the screen (rather than derive from it)? How does the anticipation or aspiration for that intimacy structure the bounds of cinema and the norms of spectatorial attachment? In response to feminist theories of spectatorship derived from psychoanalysis (Mulvey et al.) and cinematic representation (Mira et al.) I propose a model that understands the architecture of spectatorship through the concept of impasse. This impasse, I argue, is shaped by the intimacy of the cinematic experience and aided through the spectatorial and gender representations of Medem’s film protagonists.

The privileged image of cinema spectatorship has long been that of the darkened theater, host to an enraptured audience.<sup>83</sup> In his 1975 essay, “Leaving the Movie Theatre,” Roland Barthes contributed formally to this narrative when he located cinema not in the film, but rather in the architecture of the darkened theatre, which he described as a “veritable cinematographic *cocoon* (346, my emphasis). For Barthes, the darkness of the theatre was responsible for “the very fascination of the film (any film),” the condition of its eroticism. The enveloping logic of

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<sup>83</sup> Readers might be familiar with the cover image of the Rebel Press edition of Guy Debord’s *Society of the Spectacle*, which exemplifies this trope.

the cocoon made possible the “festival of affects” structuring the “cinema situation”—“it is,” he writes, “because I am enclosed that I work and glow with all my desire” (345-346). In what other ways might we understand the architecture of the cocoon to structure cinematic spectatorship? If we imagine the cocoon not only as an enveloping darkness, but also as a structure of attachment that describes both the spectator’s overlapping, embedded and intercorporeal relation with cinema—as the structure of the erotic relation *shared* by the two—and the desire for that space in the face of its very impossibility, then we are reminded of an epigraph from Lauren Berlant’s article *Intimacy*, “to intimate is to communicate with the sparest of signs and gestures, and at its root intimacy has the quality of eloquence and brevity. But intimacy also involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way” (281). Berlant, in her introduction to the 1998 special issue of *Critical Inquiry* devoted to *Intimacy*, refers to intimacy not *as* something shared, but an “*aspiration for a narrative about something shared*” (281). What I argue here is that cinema spectatorship is structured by a desire to share a narrative with cinema itself which manifests in a desire for cinema to not simply move, but to move *us*. Berlant comments that intimacy’s “potential failure to stabilize closeness”—to achieve closeness—“always haunts its persistent activity” (282). Similarly, even as cinema serves a pedagogical function as a technology of intimacy to address our desire for this stability, it does so in a dynamic of impasse, in an irresolvable tension—an always-already there failure.

While cinema has been variously understood through the movie theatre (as Barthes has above), through the individual film, and through the apparatus after Victor Burgin, what stands as special interest, are those fragments of film that *remain* with us, reflecting our most intimate desires—our desires about intimacy. If, as Berlant writes, “intimacy builds worlds,” (282) then I

would like to ask what kind of a world cinematic intimacy builds. Unique to this position is Medem's film, whose fragmented screen shots create ambiguity, among characters, and their place in time, space and location. *Sex and Lucía* contrasts the fiction and reality of intimacy (sexually and cinematically) by concentrating on the intersecting lives of two couples, linked together by different destinies. In a series of scenes of narrative fiction, reality, and flashbacks, where we are challenged to distinguish whose vision we behold, we learn of Lorenzo's (portrayed by Tristán Ulloa) passionate encounter with Elena (portrayed by Najwa Nimri) on an island. Six years later, we learn of Lucía's (portrayed by Paz Vega) infatuation with Lorenzo after having read his first book. In the moving scene in which she declares her love to him she explains: "He leído tu novela, varias veces, y ya no he podido leer nada más. Se me ha agarrado por dentro, y no me suelta" (Lucía in *Sex and Lucía*). Following Carlota Larrea's premise of her article "Water, window, moon: visual metaphors in Julio Medem's *Lucía y el sexo*," Lucía embodies the ideal, passionate reader (a writer's fantasy), but far from the stereotypical bookish type, she is extroverted, outspoken, generous and warm" (45). She reads Lorenzo's work and comments on it, escalating her relationship with him from an initial literary connection, to a passionate, sexual and emotional commitment. Lorenzo's constant paralyzing self-doubt and writer's block reconnects him to his past, where he will learn that his passionate encounter with Elena resulted in their conceiving a daughter, Luna.<sup>84</sup> One of the most salient motifs of the film recurs through an intimate circulating movement, narratively and cinematically amid both sections of the film.

The first portion of the film, titled "Lucía," situates Lucía and Lorenzo as separate entities: reader and writer. It also follows Lucía on her panicked escaped to the island of

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<sup>84</sup> Luna is conceived on an island under the light of a bright full moon; hence Medem portrays the image of the moon metaphorically throughout the film.

Formentera, where she goes because she believes her boyfriend has died in a car accident. The second half of the film titled “El sexo,” opens up a complex narrative structure involving flashbacks and flash forwards between Lucía and her past in Madrid with Lorenzo. Both are transformed into characters within the written fiction, thus, fiction and reality become interlaced.

The characters, through their actions and opinions, determine the direction of the narrative, leaving the viewer unsure of what will happen next. “One of the main turning points of the story comes about as Lucía expresses a slight disappointment in Lorenzo’s new novel, which she expected to be as tragic as the first one. The film then develops into a tragedy, after Lorenzo’s discovery of the existence of his daughter and his dangerous fascination with her nanny Belén” (Larrea 45). Medem’s film presents various points of views through abstract relations: between city and island, past and present, reader and writer, immersing the viewer into an enigmatic cycle of time and space. In *The Cinema of Spain and Portugal*, Alberto Mira (et al.) comments that *Sex and Lucía* emphasizes atmosphere and location as much as it does character and plot (241). On *Sex and Lucía*, Medem’s official synopsis of the film is as follows:

Lucía is a young waitress in a restaurant in the centre of Madrid. After the loss of her long-time boyfriend, a writer, she seeks refuge on a quiet, secluded Mediterranean island. There, bathed in an atmosphere of fresh air and dazzling sun, Lucía begins to discover the dark corners of her past relationship, as if they were forbidden passages of a novel which the author now, from afar, allows her to read. (qtd. in Mira 241)<sup>85</sup>

Mira notes that “the list of IMDb keywords (submitted by viewers) gives a very different and considerably more dramatic impression of the film: male frontal nudity, animal attack, coma,

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<sup>85</sup> The official synopsis of the film is written by Medem himself.

dog, full moon, infidelity, internet, chat, island, love at first sight, mermaid, motor scooter, scuba diving, striptease, writer's block, writer" (241). One can argue, perhaps, that these keywords are exemplary of intimate associations with each other if positioned as follows: striptease-male frontal nudity, dog-animal attack, island-full moon, internet-chat, and love at first sight-infidelity. "Nonetheless, and in spite of frequent flashbacks, the plot seems to move slowly in relatively linear fashion towards a definitive conclusion: Lorenzo, who has survived a coma, returns to the island to be reconciled with both Elena, the mother of his lost daughter, and Lucía, his fugitive lover" (Mira 242). Medem plays with the narrative of the film, though, when he immediately returns us to the middle of the story for the final scene. "Elena is shown taking a photo of Luna in the Madrid square above which Lorenzo composes his novel with a happy Lucía in attendance" (Mira 242). Throughout the film, there is an intimate framing of the characters with the narrative. Lucía is often seen inside a closed intimate space opening a window to look out onto the world. "But equally often, Medem gives us an outside point of view and shows Lucía looking out of a window, so that we have a double frame, a frame within the screen frame (Larrea 45-46). Constant close-ups of the characters, along with sound editing help emphasize the architecture of these relations, making way towards intimate proximity for the viewer. This may also suggest a kind of restlessness that Emmanuel Levinas associates with proximity in his work *Otherwise Than Being*. Proximity, like impasse, like desire:

is not a state a repose, but a restlessness, null site, outside of the place of rest. It overwhelms the calm of the non-ubiquity of a being which becomes a rest in a site. No site then, is ever sufficiently a proximity, like an embrace. Never close enough, proximity does not congeal into a structure, save when represented in the demand for justice as reversible, and reverts into a simple relation. Proximity, as

the 'closer and closer,' becomes the subject. It attains its *superlative* as *my* incessant restlessness, becomes unique, then one, forgets reciprocity, as in a love that does not expect to be shared. Proximity is the subject that approaches and consequently constitutes a relationship in which I participate as a term, but where I am more, or less, than a term. (82)

As with the film's protagonists, the viewer is immersed in this blurring of reality and fictitious narrative via Lorenzo's novel. Structured with this aspect is the theme of sex and narrative storytelling in the screenplay, allowing for an utmost proximity between the viewer and characters.

Feminist film theory initiated studies of spectatorship with an interrogation of cinema's visual pleasures. However, what began as a critique of unacknowledged relations of power in the cinema had the effect of sedimenting subjective experience at the core of spectatorship as pleasure was understood to arise out of processes of identification based on the subject position of the viewer. The critique of essentialized spectators may be a well-known topic, but what is not focused on enough is the way that this framework likewise established very early on, the understanding of spectatorship derived from the *content* of the filmic text. Thus, what remains long after the film is gone is not that which satisfies us, but rather that which we desire. As seen with Lucía and Lorenzo's love-making, "both lovers are seen taking polaroids of their love-making and Medem crosscuts between the act itself and their later voyeuristic or exhibitionistic viewing of the photos. Typically self-conscious, Medem makes us aware of how voyeurism and fiction can be part of our most intimate experiences. Sex is by no means straightforward, not just a basic instinct" (Mira 243). Medem's cinematography allows the viewer to participate and

become a spectator of the film's close-ups and alternations between high, low, and whirling camera angles.

We get in very close to the principals (or their doubles) in the sex scenes, with body parts (a nipple, an erect penis) shown in extreme close up. The camera alternates between high and low angles as Lucía stalks the beach, often naked, or Lorenzo talks in the city square to his little daughter Luna. In the opening sequence once more, when Lucía returns to the flat and fears Lorenzo is dead, the camera whirls from side to side and up and down and chases after her through the empty streets. But elsewhere the camera can be static. Lucía and Elena are shot from within the black hole by the lighthouse, their looming figures framed by darkness against the blue Mediterranean sky streaked with white clouds. (Mira 244)

In conjunction with the film's camera shots are the narrative point of view as seen through Lucía's eyes or Lorenzo's writing. Mira comments that although Lorenzo is said to control the narrative, Lucía is generally granted the point of view.

On the morning after she is first drunkenly absorbed, Lucía strolls through Lorenzo's attic apartment, taking possession of this new space: we see the kitchen, furniture and computer all from her perspective. Elsewhere the camera wobbles sympathetically to imitate her drunkenness or seasickness (we are told that the island floats giddily on top of the sea). Medem uses reflections to complicate and qualify the individual's sense of self. Lorenzo is often shown reflected in the computer screen as he writes, at one with his words; but so is



Elena, as she receives the healing narrative from the ‘lighthouse man.’ The visual here coincides with the textual, cinematography with screenplay. (Mira 244)

Medem’s film is brought together by both visual and musical sound components to produce an ethereal, artistic effect. From swaying underwater seaweed, to a romantic waltz, Medem does not shy away from representing cinematic fetishism and the possessive impulse of love through Lucía and Lorenzo. Mira comments that “the young couple’s lovemaking is often accompanied by Alberto Iglesias’ main string and flute theme, an unmistakably romantic waltz, whereas Lorenzo’s kinky soirée with Belén is set rather to ominous electronic drones” proving that the “familiar scene of love-making can be shot and felt in an infinite number of ways (Mira 245).

Returning to the idea of spectatorship, Kaja Silverman's book *Threshold of the Visible World* includes a fascinating section that rereads Benjamin's “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” to argue, contra-Benjamin, that cinema's capacity to take the spectator out of him/herself can best be understood through the notion of aura he introduces in the same piece. By reading his comments on aura in “Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Silverman finds that the aura, associated with distance, is characterized in terms of the spectator's investiture, or the “productive attention of the spectator” (94). This aura is “essentially intersubjective” because, as she quotes from “Motifs:”

Experience of the aura...rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object, we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. (qtd. in Silverman 94-95)

Silverman comments further: “to invest the other with the ability to return our look is seemingly to accept the other as an other, or—to state the case rather more precisely—to concede that he or she is also a subject” (95). This raises a question of whom and what is near in the situation of intimacy—the core of the impasse. Following Ignacio Infante’s assertions in his article “Sex and the Luminous Interface: The Digital Vision Machine in Julio Medem’s *Lucía y el sexo*,” “Medem’s cinematic portrayal of Lucía, Elena and Belén can be considered to be the product of what Mulvey refers to as a ‘determining male gaze’ (qtd. in Infante 63). Jennifer Barker, whose book *The Tactile Eye* participates in a recent development in feminist theories of spectatorship which, *seeking* a more material explanation for the cinematic experience, utilize existential phenomenology to avoid the intersecting limits of Marxism and psychoanalysis, situates her study from the onset in terms of intimacy. For her, “exploring cinema’s tactility thus opens up the possibility of cinema as an *intimate* experience and of our relationship with cinema as a *close* connection... We *share* things with it: texture, spatial orientation, comportment, rhythm, vitality” (2). Reversals of sexual-role play in Medem’s film are also present, as with associations with erotic spectacle and female objectification. Lucía represents an icon of erotic fetishization, as seen with the constant display of her nude body, as well as with a striptease that she performs for Lorenzo. Mira poses that in the film, men are also fetishised as women:

Carlos may smear Lucia’s naked body with mud on the beach, but he is objectified himself, reduced to the huge (prosthetic?) penis. The latter is exploited by Elena as a source of sex without intimacy. The island’s typography is likewise reduced to two features, each as parodic or portentous as the other: the phallic lighthouse to which Lucía is constantly drawn and the vaginal hole down which she falls to the sea. (243)

The island's lighthouse and hole in the ground are exemplary of visual sexual objectifications, although a viewer is not likely to make the connection at first glance. What one can question, then, is the level of intimacy that these motifs serve in order to be classified as sexual objectifications.

Following Catharine A. MacKinnon's article "Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: "Pleasure under Patriarchy," the creation of sexuality, can itself be objectified because it represents a "social meaning imposed on your being that defines you to be sexually used, according to your desired uses, and then using you that way" (329).

If sex is a social construct of sexism, men have sex with their image of a woman. Pornography creates an accessible sexual object, the possession and consumption of which is male sexuality, to be possessed and consumed as which is female sexuality. This is not because pornography depicts objectified sex but because it creates the experience of a sexuality which is itself objectified. (MacKinnon 329)

Lorenzo, during mid-plot of the film becomes sexually infatuated with Belén, choosing her kinky black lingerie over keeping watch on his daughter's sleep. This pornographic scenario has tragic consequences, ending with Luna's life. Medem allows the viewer to identify with Lorenzo's lustful desire through erotic images of mother-daughter-men orgies. Belén, having a mother who is a porn star, mimics her mother's facial and bodily gestures, achieving a double role-play of desire, not only towards Lorenzo, but towards the viewer. As quoted in Infante:

Hard core desires assurance that it is witnessing not the voluntary performance of feminine pleasure but its involuntary confession. The woman's ability to fake the orgasm that the man can never fake [. . .] seems to be at the root of all of the genre's attempts to solicit what it can never be sure of: the out of control

confession of pleasure, a hard-core “frenzy of the visible.” The animating male fantasy of hard-core cinema might therefore be described as the (impossible) attempt to capture visually this frenzy of the visible in a female body whose orgasmic excitement can never be objectively measured. (82)

Lorenzo’s fixation with the mother-daughter pornographic scenario is blurred with levels of reality and fiction, leaving the viewer, at times, lost among the film’s narrative flow. The viewer sees a reverse close-up of Lorenzo’s face, “shot now from a low angle, in which Lorenzo, in a voice-over, begins to utter the words he is typing on the computer:

El deseo de la sangre, espesa, hinchaba los cuerpos de la madre, del hombre y de la hija [. . .]. There is then a close-up on the words typed on the monitor that emphasizes their role as the interface that literally opens up the visual access to the hard-core virtual world of the novel. As shot by Medem here, the digitized words on the monitor trigger the actual transfer from the realm of the real to that of the virtual, facilitating the overall communication between the two cinematic realms. (Infante 83)

At one point in the film, Lucía asks Lorenzo if he would prefer wild sex with a stranger or sex with a steady partner who is wildly in love with him. “Tienes que elegir. O polvo salvaje con desconocida, o polvo de amor, con salvaje conocida, loca por ti y tú por ella claro. Venga. Sé directo” (Lucía in *Sex and Lucía*). “Contigo” (Lorenzo in *Sex and Lucía*). “Por fin” (Lucía in *Sex and Lucía*). Up to what level, then, are structures of love and fantasy able to diffuse through both male and female genders? In her article, “Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess,” Linda Williams states, “For fantasies, are not, as is sometimes thought, wish-fulfilling linear narratives of mastery and control leading to closure and the attainment of desire. They are marked, rather,

by the prolongation of desire, and by the lack of fixed position with respect to the objects and events fantasized” (10).

The final sequence of *Sex and Lucía*, returns the viewer to the middle of the narrative, with a photographic image of Luna that dissolves into an actual shot of her, standing directly in front of Lorenzo’s apartment.

Leaving Elena and Luna below, the camera moves upwards along the wall of the building in a crane-shot that pauses at the balcony just below Lorenzo’s apartment, as we start hearing the sound of Lorenzo’s typing on his computer. After a dissolve, the camera moves up into Lorenzo’s study, right back to a close-up of the computer monitor, where we can see some digitized lines of Lorenzo’s novel and the superimposed reflected image of Lucía on the computer monitor while she is standing at the window. We then see Lorenzo stand up, and, with the camera following him, move towards Lucía, who is standing next to the window—literally bathed in the overexposed “interfacial” sunlight that usually surrounds her at the island—and appropriately singing “Un rayo de sol.” (Infante 85)

By offering an alternative path for Lorenzo, as well as for Lucía and Elena, Medem achieves a “virtual regeneration” for a narrative that is “lleno de ventajas.” Lorenzo, again, becomes the narrative voice-over and states:

La primera ventaja es que cuando el cuento llega al final, no se acaba, sino que cae por un agujero . . . ¡guujjhuuu!. . . y el cuento reaparece en la mitad del cuento. Esta es la segunda ventaja, y la más grande, que desde aquí se le puede cambiar el rumbo, si tú me dejas. ¡Si me das tiempo! (Lorenzo in *Sex and Lucía*)

What remains long after the film is gone is not that which satisfies us, but rather that which we desire. If we can agree that a film does not end when it is over, that spectatorship exceeds the bounds of the reel/s, the DVD, or the site of viewing, then we see that the parts of a film that remain with us, that linger, those that, as Victor Burgin writes it, seem as if they are illuminated more than others, offer a measure of our desire. They are what we hope for, what we return to, what we think through further. They are, to return to Berlant, those moments that provoke the aspirational narratives. Berlant describes intimacy's greatest aspiration as "having a life"—we might usefully transfer this intimate notion to cinema to understand the desire so comingled with cinema. We could stand to consider still further the impossibility of the cinematic scene, the impossibility of life and that impossibility's relation to intimacy, love, and desire.

## Gender Role Displacements

The female adolescent heroine may be easily prone to self-induced fear of “growing up.” She may choose to numb the idea or simply reject it. Critics have pinpointed a female protagonist’s “desire to switch gender” in order to “become a boy and avoid the deprivations of girlhood” (Pratt 30). Contemporary characterizations of this notion conclude that “growing down” tends to trail along this description:

“I’m not! and if turning up my hair makes me one, I’ll wear it in two tails till I’m twenty. . . . I hate to think I’ve got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster! It’s bad enough to be a girl anyway, when I like boys’ games and work and manners! I can’t get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it’s worse than ever now, for I’m dying to go and fight with Papa, and I can only stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman.” (quoted in Pratt 30)<sup>86</sup>

Rosa Montero’s female protagonists in her novel *Te trataré como a una reina* (1983), are consumed by marginal and misogynist circumstances of a superior and patriarchal system. The author gives voice to underrepresented women that deal with oppressive physical and psychological conditions. Both female protagonist’s embodiment of the erotic prevails over the power and authority imposed upon them leading from a transition of prohibition, repression and marginality to one of self formation. The female characters in the novel, Bella and Antonia, represent women that are situated within a patriarchal culture and are seen as erotic objects. In her article, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey challenges the notion of the woman as a spectacle by recognizing that there may be moments in films “in which a woman

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<sup>86</sup> Excerpt taken from Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, Grosset and Dunlop, 1947, p. 6.

central protagonist is shown to be unable to achieve a stable sexual identity, torn between the deep blue sea of passive femininity and the devil of regressive masculinity” (70). This can directly relate to the literary aspects of both novels, where both female protagonists are caught between passive and active conditions characterized by sexual and erotic changes. Antonia eventually transitions to a point where she no longer finds herself restricted on a physical or emotional level. In her article “Tropical como en el trópico,” Susana Reisz writes:

La escritura de Montero no es “trágica” sino “femenina.” Los temas y problemas que plantea con mayor insistencia y énfasis no son los callejones sin salida de “la condición humana”--por muy presentes que puedan estar en el trasfondo de sus ficciones--sino la penosidad de las relaciones amorosas (incluidas las homosexuales) dentro del marco de los papeles y los intercambios eróticos válidos en una sociedad que se pretende moderna y liberada pero que sigue resultando opresiva para las mujeres en general y para los varones de comportamiento desviante. (195)

In Rosa Montero’s novel *Te trataré como a una reina*, the author experiments with new literary elements under this new post-Franco period. In her dissertation, Carmen B. Bautista states, “Por ello, es esencial indagar en el contexto político social que se vivía en España en este periodo. La cultura occidental vivía la era del posmodernismo y el espacio cultural de las novelas en cuestión es el Madrid de la época posfranquista” (2). Montero presents female characters that purposely serve as testimony to the degradation and marginalized circumstances imposed on them by a patriarchal society. These concepts are linked to “la problemática social femenina, algunos de ellos son la soledad, la angustia ante la incomunicación entre el hombre y la mujer, el paso del tiempo, la vejez, la enfermedad y el miedo a la muerte en soledad, entre otros” (Bautista



10). The author plays with the narrative structure by presenting a fragmented reality through various points of view of the characters. As seen through Antonia, Bella, and Antonio, Montero purposely deconstructs the male and female roles by the placement of masculine and feminine traits to the opposite gender. She presents Antonia, who feels a constant “vértigo”<sup>87</sup> around awkward or intense situations, and who at 44 years old yearns for the body of a man to lose her virginity with. “Ahí estaba Antonia, la bata entreabierta, mirándose en el espejo el húmedo canal sobre el esternón, el desfiladero entre sus carnes intactas, virginales” (Montero 21). Montero assures that the reader is aware of the character’s guilt by what is to happen next: “Sabía ya lo que iba a suceder y sabía también que era pecado. Como también era pecaminoso el hecho mismo de estar así, en cueros, sintiendo resbalar el aire por los entresijos de su carne. Antonia había comenzado a cometer tales excesos hacía poco, apenas unos años” (Montero 21). It is obvious that Montero proposes the issue of pleasure as one that is taboo or unwelcomed because of its religious aspects; hence it is considered a sin. According to Bautista, examples of social existentialist topics applicable to Montero’s works are the following:

La confrontación de la mujer al “macho”, los estereotipos masculinos de la mujer, la discriminación laboral hacia la mujer, el tener hijos fuera del matrimonio, el deshonor de la familia y la figura del padre, la violencia física y psicológica de la mujer, así como las referencias a una sexualidad sin compromisos y a temas tabúes como la represión sexual, el aborto, el uso de contraceptivos y la masturbación de la mujer. (10)

In this case, it is Antonia who feels guilty towards her masturbating because she links it to

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<sup>87</sup> In *Te trataré como a una reina*, this “vértigo” is constantly mentioned through experiences of the female characters such as Antonia and Bella. i.e., “Y aunque Antonia procuraba no pensar en todo esto, a veces se le venían las ideas a la cabeza, como si fuera un vértigo” (Montero 19).

religion and its sinful connotation.

Although Montero confidently experiments with new literary aspects in her work, she is careful to subtly include glimpses of erotic text towards the reader. Through Antonia and her sexual experiences with Damian, the reader is confronted with glimpses of the erotic.<sup>88</sup> In his text *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes questions the idea of a text having pleasurable purposes. He states, “If I read this sentence, this story, or this word with pleasure, it is because they were written in pleasure (such pleasure does not contradict the writer’s complaints). But the opposite? Does writing in pleasure guarantee--guarantee me, the writer--my reader’s pleasure?” (4). Exemplary of this notion is Antonia and Damián’s first sexual encounter.<sup>89</sup>

Le recibió con un brazo quieto y maternal. Damián era un peso leve y huesudo que se afanaba en torpes movimientos espasmódicos. Sudaba encima de ella, y se agitaba, y se refrotaba, y le hacía un daño horrible allá donde Lulú solía mojar su lomo, pero Antonia ya no temía al dolor. [...] Damián empujaba inútilmente entre estertores y al poco se derramó con un quejido fuera de ella. (122)

Thus, Montero’s description of a woman’s first sexual experience with a male allows for the reader to either welcome or reject the written text as erotic. In her article “Taboos to Transgressions: Textual Strategies in Woman-Authored Spanish Erotic Fiction,” Jean Gilkison asserts that “the erotic can be seen to represent the ultimate frontier for women authors, and as such will not only exemplify but exaggerate the obstacles that women writers have had to overcome. Thus, as a taboo literature in itself, it both encodes and exaggerates the prohibition

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<sup>88</sup> Throughout the novel, Montero breaks the silence and gives voice to the feminine experience by presenting narrative that is arousing, or designed to arouse feelings of sexual desire. This is particularly emphasized with Antonia and Damián’s secret love affair.

<sup>89</sup> The sexual love affair between Antonia and Damián is characterized by a difference in age. Antonia is the older woman seeking pleasure from a younger man. This eventually leads to their arrest for public indecency.

against women taking up the pen in the first place” (719). The reader can then choose to experience pleasure out of reading erotic moments such as these, or choose to reject it. Montero consistently uses the female characters to prove that their marginality and repressed lives only exist in their individual fantasy worlds, and is also cautious of not losing the erotic discourse among both male and female characters. Representative of this is Antonia’s constant desire towards Damián. At one point, her desire to consume Damián is described as follows:

Pero ella no lo podía remediar. De todos los pecados cometidos, era el de mirar el que más placer le producía a Antonia...Antonia estaba un poco asustada de su gula visual. Porque había decidido que también se podía cometer pecado de gula con los ojos. [...] El caso era que no podía mirar a Damián sin desnudarlo mentalmente; era un pecado automático, no hacía más que posar sus ojos en él, y, zas, el chico se le quedaba en puros cueros. (Montero 164)

Antonia’s previous chastity is now consumed with desire towards Damián, characterized by erotic daydreams and fantasies. As with Lulú’s character in Almudena Grandes’ novel, Antonia is able to achieve a sense of sexual awakening through her first encounter with the male figure. In her work *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Toril Moi examines the methodological and theoretical approaches of feminists such as Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva, whose work is involved with feminism and literature. Montero’s placement of gender roles in her novel purposely deconstructs the role of both male and female by the placement of masculine and feminine characteristics on the opposite sex. Bella and Antonio, for example, are characters whose roles are displaced; Bella, a nightclub singer is violent, strong and brutal, while Antonio is fragile, weak, and passive.<sup>90</sup> Montero’s intentional subversion of the character’s gender roles contributes

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<sup>90</sup> Throughout the novel, “The reporter is trying to determine why Bella, a night club singer, attacked Antonio, a government clerk, and threw him out of a fourth story window. The fiction within the fiction is an extended

to the overall demystification of the patriarchal system of the male having sole power and authority over the female.

The author allows her female protagonist to shift their positions from one of oppression to one of power. Following Michel Foucault's dialogue in "Un diálogo sobre el poder," the author states: "El poder es lo que dice no. Y el enfrentamiento con el poder así concebido no aparece sino como transgresión; --permite pensar la operación fundamental del poder como un acto de la palabra: enunciación de la ley, discurso de lo prohibido. La manifestación del poder reviste la forma del "no debes" (80).

In Mary Ann Doane's article "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," the author elaborates on dichotomies of female spectatorship, the gaze, and the masquerade as represented in cinema. "For the female spectator there is a certain over-presence of the image--she is the image. Given the closeness of this relationship, the female spectator's desire can be described only in terms of a kind of narcissism--the female look demands a becoming (499). This can transform into a symbolic voyeurism and desire. Doane assures that:

The woman, the enigma, the hieroglyphic, the picture, the image--the metonymic chain connects with another: the cinema, the theater of pictures, a writing in images of the woman but not *for* her. For she is the problem [...] Spectatorial desire...voyeurism or fetishism...pleasure in seeing what is prohibited in relation to the female body. The image orchestrates a gaze, a limit, and its pleasurable transgression. (Doane 496-497)

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flashback that traces the lives of Bella, Antonio's sister Antonia, and several of their acquaintances in the weeks preceding the crime. The three principal characters, who come from the same small town in the provinces, are all in their forties" (Zatlin 39).

In Moi's analysis of Irigaray's view on feminism and power, she comments, "feminism is not simply about rejecting power, but about transforming the existing power structures--and, in the process, transforming the very *concept* of power itself" (148). In view of the evidence of the variety of stereotyped forms that dominate media and magazines, specifically those aimed at females, what is to say about the forms of power they promote? Is it possible for individuals to de-familiarize active modes of gender and conduct? If socially constructed gender binaries are negated or contested, do we achieve ideal modes of cultural conduct? Rolón-Collazo explains the typical realms of social media particularly aimed at females as follows:

Los modelos de mujer que predominan en la prensa femenina son el ángel del hogar (madre y esposa), la compañera del hombre y la mujer rival o competencia. Estos estereotipos presuponen una evolución que percibe la incursión ascendente de la mujer al mercado del trabajo. (39)

When considering the amount of power<sup>91</sup> that media has on its consumers, regardless of sex, there continues to be an extremely high amount of profit generated, as well as on the emphasis placed on consumption. In fact, a trendy feminine archetype of identity during the 1980s was that of the *superwoman*, which dictated:

- a) La capacidad seductora de la *vamp* (...)
- b) La capacidad laboral *masculina* (...)
- c) La disponibilidad sexual de la *prostituta* (...)
- d) El aspecto físico de la *modelo*
- e) La cultura de la *intelectual* (...)

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<sup>91</sup> This may be economic, social, political, cultural, technological, spatial, to name a few examples relevant to power.

f) La capacidad de comprensión y bondad de la *madre* (...) (quoted in Rolón-Collazo 39)

These archetypes of female womanhood produce open frameworks under gendered ideologies that seek to reconstruct this notion. Gilligan agrees that factors of inequality limit standards of measurement and a need for more contextual modes of interpretation, or what Jean Baker Miller constitutes as “a new psychology of women” which “recognizes that development does not displace the value of ongoing attachment and the continuing importance of care in relationships” (83). Miller proposes that there is an order of temporary and permanent inequality that identifies the distinctive psychology of women that occurs directly from connecting with other individuals:

Dominant in temporary relationships of nurturance that dissolve with the dissolution of inequality, women are subservient in relationships of permanently unequal social status and power. In addition, though subordinate in social position to men, women are at the same time centrally entwined with them in the intimate and intense relationships of adult sexuality and family life.

Through both Lulú and Antonia’s characters, both females are at one point, objects of fetish desires, but shift to power agents when they are able to achieve their own sexual identities. Barthes confirms that “the text is a fetish object, and *this fetish desires me*. The text chooses me, by a whole disposition of invisible screens, selective baffles: vocabulary, references, readability, etc., and, lost in the midst of a text (*not behind it*, like a *deus ex machina*) there is always the other, the author” (27). Barthes’ premise is relevant to Mulvey’s paradigm on pleasure in that it can be used as a weapon of fascination towards the viewer: “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. [...] The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her

visual presence tends to work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation” (715). Montero succeeds in presenting a novel that deconstructs a marginalized figure through her new literary expressions. It is through the treatment of the erotic that the author achieves a fresh position of the female protagonist’s sexual ‘coming-of-age’ that directly contributes to new literary forms of writing.

### Chapter 3: Recuperating the Past: Women's Condition in Post-Franco Spain

Desenredó del miedo el oculto sentido /  
del miedo a ya no ser parar ser con /

~Clara Janés

The development of the *Bildungsroman* is well suited under categories of historical explanation and in the context of its subgenres, especially concerning the role in education. During the era that the feminist and reformist Concepción Arenal<sup>92</sup> (1823-1893) published more than four hundred essays and texts, there was already frenzied debate in regards to the public and private roles that were acceptable for each gender.<sup>93</sup> Arenal was an active participant in political and social manifestations, and openly questioned the generally accepted notion of separate gender spheres, which, during her era, represented a central hindrance for the promotion of women. Issues regarding the public and private gender roles were already a heated debate, specifically with Arenal and her assessment of female's social position and intellectual capacity. Hegel, in his 1821 *The Philosophy of Right*, describes the difference between men and women as comparable to that between plants and animals:

Woman can, of course, be educated, but their minds are not adapted to the higher sciences, philosophy, or certain of the arts. These demand a universal faculty.

Women may have happy inspirations, taste, elegance, but they have not the ideal.

The difference between man and woman is the same as that between animal and plant. The animal corresponds more closely to the character of the man, the plant to that of the woman. (144)

Arenal promoted the necessity for women's education and right to claim it in her work *La emancipación de la mujer española*. She stressed how:

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<sup>92</sup> Spanish feminist writer and activist who was the first woman to attend a university in Spain.

<sup>93</sup> Male and female gender specifically.



la educación procura formar el carácter, hacer del sujeto una persona con cualidades esenciales generales, de que no podrá prescindir nunca y necesitará siempre si ha de ser como debe. Al educador del joven no le importa saber si el educando sera un día militar o magistrado, ingeniero o albañil; su misión es formar un hombre recto, firme y benévolo, y que lo sea constantemente en la posición social que le depara la suerte o él se conquiste; cualquiera que sea, su firmeza, su rectitud y su benevolencia son indispensables, si ha de conducirse bien, al frente de un regimiento o presidiendo un tribunal. Los accidentes, las exterioridades, las apariencias, podrán variar; pero las condiciones esenciales que la educación perfecciona son las mismas cualquiera que sea la posición social del que las tiene. (62)

Emilia Pardo Bazán, vastly influenced by Arenal's work, encouraged and favored Arenal's arguments in favor of expanding the sphere towards the promotion of females. Charnon-Deutsch explains that for Pardo Bazán, "worldwide progress for men, while desirable, was widening the gap that existed between both sexes:

Suponed a dos personas en un mismo punto; haced que la una avance y que la otra permanezca inmóvil: todo lo que avance la primera, se queda atrás la segunda. Cada nueva conquista del hombre en el terreno de las libertades políticas, ahonda el abismo moral que le separa de la mujer, y hace el papel de ésta más pasivo y enigmático. Libertad de enseñanza, libertad de cultos, derecho de reunión, sufragio, parlamentarismo, sirven para que media sociedad (la masculina) gane fuerzas y actividades a expensas de la otra media femenina. Hoy ninguna mujer de España—empezando por la que ocupa el trono—goza de verdadera influencia política; y

en otras cuestiones no menos graves, el pensamiento femenino tiende a ajustarse fielmente a las ideas sugeridas por el viril, el único fuerte. (quoted in Charnon-Deutsch 209)

Zealous advocates of women's education such as Faustina Sáez de Melgar pleaded for a public recognition in women's capacity to advance as seen in the prospect of her 1871 magazine *La mujer*:

Mujer, esposa y madre, antes que escritora, la fundadora de esta revista, ha consagrado siempre sus tareas a enaltecer a su sexo, ha luchado con todas sus fuerzas en tan espinoso terreno, reclamando el puesto que las corresponde en la esfera social, y enseñando a sus hermanas, que su misión de caridad, de paz y de amor no está en las ardientes luchas de la política, terreno propio del sexo fuerte, sino en el fondo del hogar, como madre, como educadora de sus hijos, como inspiradora del esposo, que [...] necesita la benéfica influencia de la mujer que se deja sentir dulce y blanda infiltrándose inconscientemente, quizá en el turbulento espíritu del hombre. [...] La revolución puede cambiar nuestra condición social si los hombres comprenden la importancia de la educación y nos marcan los deberes y derechos que nos son propios y nos guían por los caminos de la ilustración. (quoted in 4-5)<sup>94</sup>

In *Fictions of the Feminine in the Nineteenth-Century Spanish Press*, Lou Charnon-Deutsch comments that even Ramón García Sánchez, liberal Republican defender of women who also wrote for *La Mujer*, wanted women to aim towards a higher level of instruction, yet cautioned women that if they anticipated being loved, they should be careful as to not wander into the political public sphere:

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<sup>94</sup> Prospecto, *La Mujer*, Madrid (15 de enero de 1872), p. 1.

Que avance la humanidad cuanto quiera por la senda de la civilización; ella no debe ambicionar otros derechos que los que hoy posee, si desea conservar la adoración que el hombre la profesa.

El día que se igualara con éste interviniendo en la cosa pública, sería el último de su felicidad, porque en ella vería el hombre un rival más de su ambición y de su egoísmo. No; la mujer ha nacido para sentir y amar en la tranquilidad del hogar doméstico.

En el momento en que abandone esta esfera ha perdido la categoría de ángel y arrojado a los azares de la suerte la corona de su virginidad. (62)<sup>95</sup>

Although current times comprise internationalism, there continues to be incessant subordination in dialogues regarding the promotion of women, and Spain remains on the margins of the debate.<sup>96</sup> The institutionalized inequities faced by women in all facets have produced a widespread shift of social consciousness in efforts to dismantle the cultural structures that perpetuate misogyny and discrimination. The simple need for recognition and eradication of social restrictions has had widespread manifestations in contemporary and historical work. An excerpt from Martín Gaité's *Usos amorosos de la posguerra española* presents this notion:

La posición de la mujer española está hoy como en la Edad Media. Franco le arrebató los derechos civiles y la mujer española no puede poseer propiedades ni incluso, cuando muere el marido, heredarle, ya que la herencia pasa a los hijos varones o al pariente varón más próximo. No puede frecuentar los sitios públicos en compañía de un hombre, si no es su marido, y después, cuando está casada, el

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<sup>95</sup> La Mujer 1.6 [16 July 1871]: 7.

<sup>96</sup> I choose to emphasize Spain in particular due to the textual and cinematic analyses throughout the chapters.

marido la saca raramente del hogar. Tampoco puede tener empleos públicos y, aunque no sé si existe alguna ley contra ello, yo todavía no he visto a ninguna mujer en España conduciendo automóviles. (quoted in Martín Gaité 30)

The question of how to make and keep a man happy was also tied into the bourgeois ideology of public and private or domestic spheres such that:

El hombre —dice un texto— necesita a la mujer ‘tal como debe ser’. Todo estudio frío de la sexualidad femenina, de la psicología, del amor, de la volubilidad no hace sino alejarnos del punto al que queremos llegar. La mujer ha de ser siempre un poco Dulcinea, porque nosotros somos siempre, más que ninguna otra cosa, Don Quijote... Necesitamos de este respetuoso concepto de la mujer... La investigación el análisis, la historia, encontrarán muchas veces una Aldonza Lorenzo. ¿Pero qué nos importa a nosotros de esa zafia labradora carirredonda y chata? Lo importante es, naturalmente, doña Dulcinea, señora y princesa universal, andando entre ámbar y flores. Y sin dejar por ello, a ratos, de acechar trigo. (65)

The woman’s expected role with regards to femininity sustained an insistent emphasis on narcissism and consumption of beauty products, which is a strategy that continues to be stressed in the current century.<sup>97</sup>

For the first time in history woman-power is a factor in war. Millions of you are fighting and working side by side with your men.

In fact, you are doing double duty—for you are still carrying on your traditional “woman’s” work of cooking, and cleaning, and home-making. Yet, somehow,

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<sup>97</sup> Facial creams, hand lotions, make up, nail polish or anything related to female

American women are still the loveliest and most spirited in the world. The best dressed, the best informed, the best looking.

It's a reflection of the free democratic way of life that you have succeeded in keeping your femininity—even though you are doing man's work!

If a symbol were needed of this fine, independent spirit—of this courage and strength—I would choose a lipstick. It is one of those mysterious little essentials that have an importance far beyond their size or cost.

A woman's lipstick is an instrument of personal morale that helps her to conceal heartbreak or sorrow; gives her self-confidence when it's badly needed; heightens her loveliness when she wants to look her loveliest.

No lipstick—ours or anyone else's—will win the war. But it symbolizes one of the reasons why we are fighting ... the precious right of women to be feminine and lovely—under any circumstances. (Doane 29)

Studies have challenged the grappling resistance between active and passive manifestations during the Spanish transition to democracy. The economic and social development that flourished during this post-war period was a hope to ease the prior level of unrest and economic turbulence. Bearing witness to Spain's unstable time period has altered the need for authors to retrace the collective and silenced memory of this time. As Aleida Assmann affirms, "we live in the shadow of a past that still reaches into the present in many forms and haunts succeeding generations with emotional discord and moral dilemma" (40).<sup>98</sup> History is associated with events and memorials, whereas memory tends to attach itself to places of those dealings. Thus, trauma

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<sup>98</sup> Aleida Assmann, "Limits of Understanding: Generational Identities in Recent German Memory Literature," in *Victims and Perpetrators: 1933-1945. (Re)-Presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture*, ed. Laurel Cohen-Pfister and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 29-48 (p. 40).

and loss are key factors of an event experienced during adolescence or childhood, leaving profound emotions on an individual or collective group. Evident of this is Spain's mid-century generation "niños de la guerra" defined by their childhood experience of war. Since history is unconditionally linked to narrative and memory, it is vital to examine the question of its discourse. Richard Kearney sees a positive and optimistic perspective regarding the future of history, particularly in regards to its relationship to fiction and asserts:

Once history is narrated it already assumes certain techniques of 'telling' and 'retelling' that make it more than a reportage of empirical facts. History-telling is never literal. It is always at least in part *figurative* to the extent that it involves telling according to a certain selection, sequencing, emplotment and perspective.

But it does try to be *truthful*. (136)

In Spanish, the word 'historia' perfectly matches the dual meaning, precisely differentiating between its ambiguous nature of story and actual history. In *Memory and Amnesia* by Paloma Aguilar, the author discusses the two alternating forms of legitimacy utilized during the dictatorial regime, which were "origin-based legitimacy" and "performance-based legitimacy:"

The Franco régime seemed to wish to convince the Spanish that, whilst accepting that the Second Republic would have been legitimate based on its origins ... it may well have been de-legitimised as a result of its ineffective performance. The Franco régime, on the other hand, in the eyes of the majority of the population, gained power illegitimately, but sought to become legitimate based not only on its military victory, but also on its effective economic and social management. (36)

The regime gave way towards optimal terror and violence to declare its power, especially during its formative years. Antonio Cazorla Sánchez emphasizes:

The dictatorship did not try to bring reconciliation among Spaniards. On the contrary, it fuelled and used fear opportunistically to achieve its own objectives. This was a society in the hands of a ruthless man who used collective pain to preserve his ill-gotten power, and in the process manipulated the past, erasing or tarnishing the memory of its own victims. (19)

The merciless repression had many people opt for exile as the only solution. Writers and artists fled either fearful of persecution or because of the constrained and stifled environment marked by censorship and control. In Alda Blanco's essay "Desde la pared de vidrio hasta la otra orilla," the author describes the Spanish experience of exile:

El exilio Republicano de 1939 trae consigo, entre otras muchas cosas – reales y metafóricas --, los encuentros y desencuentros de vidas e historias de aquellas mujeres, hombres y niños que se vieron forzados a abandonar su hogar y tierra para poder sobrevivir después de haber perdido una guerra. Vencidos, salieron de España como refugiados políticos, desterrados no sólo de un país sino, también, de un proyecto político y cultural, el de la España republicana. (81)

Unmistakably, exile does more than just provide a geographical separation; it mirrors the failure of a system to bring together and unite its people. It unfavorably affects the development of the nation as well as the state of mind of individuals having to leave behind their country of origin. Aguilar assures that the profundity of trauma is present during the exilic process:

He loses his group of reference, which is split and dissolved; on the other hand, he loses his familiar spatial images, when he returns, not having been inculcated with the values which have socialized the rest of society over so many years, being unaware of the historical memory which has been transmitted and having only his

personal experience to fall back on, the subsequent break with his generation, with members of the former groups he belonged to and with this geographical area, is much greater. (11)

Rafael Alberti's poem "El mar. La mar" beautifully captures this sentiment:

El mar. La mar.

El mar. ¡Sólo la mar!

¿Por qué me trajiste, padre, a la ciudad?

¿Por qué me desenterraste del mar?

En sueños, la marejada me tira del corazón.

Se lo quisiera llevar.

Padre, ¿por qué me trajiste acá?<sup>99</sup> (84)

According to Nancy Bermeo, the concept of "political learning" has gained considerable importance in political sociology and merits attention in order to fully comprehend areas and spaces in redemocratization. It involves:

a process through which people modify their political beliefs and tactics as a result of severe crises, frustrations, and dramatic changes in environment ... and is based on the premise that beliefs are not fixed immutably in childhood and that they can be 'affected by political events' such as the replacement of one regime with another. (Bermeo 274)

She then notes that the "process of cognitive change is the essence" of political learning, a key factor to a progressive stage in the reconstruction of democracy, which denotes three phases:

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<sup>99</sup> From *Marinero en tierra* (1924) from which Alberti obtained the Premio Nacional de Literatura award. In this poem, he is asking his father why they had to abandon their beloved sea and move to the city.



The breakdown of a dictatorship, the creation or reconstruction of a democracy, and the consolidation of a new regime. Political learning is most important during the second phase of the democratization process—at the critical moment between the crisis of the old order and the consolidation of the new one—for it helps explain why a new regime becomes democratic in the first place. It helps explain why, in essence, a dictatorship in crisis is replaced by a democracy rather than another dictatorial regime. (Bermeo 273)

Bermeo assures that when the nature of political learning occurs individually, there is a higher chance democratic reconstruction will take place if there is a diverse amount of individuals who undergo a cognitive change.

The year 1975 marks the death of Franco, allowing Spain to assume the task of restoring peace and democracy in a country that had faced almost forty years of absolute rule. Thus, the responsibility to protect the transition from dictatorship to democracy ultimately fell in the hands of a generation who inherited the trauma of the war from their parents. A variety of critics have also argued against the concept of amnesia as a means to erase any possible trace of memory prompted by this period of turmoil. Jo Labanyi argues that “the obsessive memorialization of the Nationalist war dead throughout the Franco dictatorship led, at the time of the transition to democracy, to a desire to break with the past; it was not, as is often argued, a determination to forget, but a decision not to let the past affect the future” (89). Labanyi also concurs that “Spain’s transition to democracy was successfully implemented thanks to the “pacto de olvido” (pact of oblivion) whereby all political parties agreed to forget the civil war in order to reach consensus” (93).<sup>100</sup> Labanyi suggests that this “pact of oblivion:”

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<sup>100</sup> The historian responsible for institutionalizing this notion is Aguilar Fernandez (1996). The alleged “pact of oblivion” of the transition, enshrined in the 1977 amnesty law which pardoned all political crimes (including those

has become such a commonplace because it allows the transition to be seen as a break with the past, masking—conveniently for both political Right and Left—the fact that it was effected by politicians from within the former Francoist state apparatus. It was crucial for the interested parties to see the transition as a break with the past, not only in order to claim that Spain was freeing itself from nearly forty years of dictatorship, but also in order to claim that the country was making a “leap” into modernity—something which, as noted above, is conventionally seen as requiring a rupture with the past. (94)

Thus, denying the past was not something to be continued indefinitely. It was and continues to be dealt with in an effort to be acknowledged and set free.

Recent years have paved the way for the Spanish public sphere to be dominated by intense debates regarding the recuperation of the past and historical memory, focusing on the years of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the Franco dictatorship (1939-1975) and the transition to democracy in the immediate post-Franco period. This ample interest in Spain’s recent past has been reflected in contemporary literary and cinematic production, with a vast amount of works produced since the 1990s focusing on the aftermath of the Civil War.

On a sunny April day in 1939 the Nationalist troops entered Madrid. They found a city gaunt and semi-starving after nearly three years of civil war. From then until he died in November 1975, their commander-in-chief, who had been appointed Chief of the Government of the Spanish State by his fellow generals in September

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of the Nationalist forces in the war and those of the ensuing dictatorship), has become a major target of criticism in the recent campaigns to exhume the victims of the Francoist repression buried in unmarked mass graves (see Armengou and Belis 2004: 243–51). The existence of a “pact of oblivion” during the transition is taken for granted in recent studies of collective memory and cultural representation in contemporary Spain (for example, Colmeiro 2005: 18–22).

1936, ruled Spain as Caudillo by the Grace of God, as his coins announced, and as chief of state and head of government, prime minister and president all in one.

(15)<sup>101</sup>

To be Spanish was to be Catholic and power under the Franco regime meant “unity through religion. The optimism or anticipation (especially for women) created under the Spanish Republic (1931-1939) was abolished.<sup>102</sup> Critics have classified the ruling of Franco’s regime as the ‘three pillars of the Regime,’ which include: The Nationalist army, the Falange and the church. “These were the institutionalized families of the regime, the victors of the Civil War” (Carr and Fusi Aizpurua 21). All of the progressive legislation that had allowed divorce and equal rights to work was abolished, and the old civil code was put back into place. Women were once again the legal appendages of men and there was an absolute division of the sexes. This “golpe de estado”<sup>103</sup> or fall of the Republic in 1939 erased all of the gains that women had achieved. It was even enhanced by the Sección Femenina (Spanish Falange) by the Falange party. “La Sección Femenina de Falange Española de las J.O.N.S fue creada en 1934 para ofrecer cobertura a las actividades violentas del grupo falangista. Constituye una unidad organizada verticalmente, bajo la base indiscutible del mando único e integrante del gran cuerpo total de la Falange” (Gallego Méndez 215). Directed under the guidance of Pilar Primo de Rivera<sup>104</sup> the organization strived to *represent* and not *be*.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> See Carr, Raymond and Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpura. *Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979.

<sup>102</sup> The Spanish Second Republic was Spain’s government from 1931 until its destruction by a military rebellion led by General Francisco Franco. For the first time, under the Republic, a democratic system functioned. (Carr and Fusi Aizpurua 2).

<sup>103</sup> The rapid and violent seizure of political power of a state or country. [My emphasis].

<sup>104</sup> Daughter of Miguel Primo de Rivera and brother of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, both referenced in Carmen Maite’s work *Usos de amorosos de la postguerra española*.

El hombre era un núcleo permanente de referencia abstracta para aquellas ejemplares penélopes condenadas a coser, callar y a esperar. Coser esperando que apareciera un novio llovido del cielo. Coser luego, si había aparecido, para entretener la espera de la boda, mientras él se labraba un porvenir o preparaba unas oposiciones. Coser, por último, cuando ya había pasado de novio a marido, esperando con la más dulce sonrisa de disculpa para su tardanza, la vuelta de él a casa. Tres etapas unidas por el mismo hilo de recogimiento, de paciencia y de sumisión. Tal era el ‘magnífico destino’ de la mujer falangista soñada por José Antonio. (Martín Gaité 72)

As explained in detail by María Teresa Gallego Méndez in her work *Mujer, falange y franquismo*, the Spanish Falange set the following foundations for their organization<sup>106</sup>:

- 1) Incorporar la parte femenina del pueblo español a la obra de reconstrucción material de la Nación, Nacional-Sindicalista de justicia y del engrandecimiento imperial de España. 2) [...] difundir con la predicación y la conducta los ideales nacional-sindicalistas...propagar las virtudes, estilo y disciplina de la Falange y defender el honor de la Patria. 3) Dar una formación humana y nacional-sindicalista a las mujeres que integran la Sección Femenina de la Falange a fin de prepararles para su propio fin individual [...]. 4) [...] en la Falange las funciones de la mujer en el hogar – arreglo material, aliento y cuidado – [...]. 5) Considerando que en muchos casos las mujeres

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<sup>105</sup> My translation as seen in Carmen Martín Gaité’s work *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* in which she describes what this education in the Spanish Falange was like. (Editorial Anagrama: Barcelona, 1987).

<sup>106</sup> These are explained with more depth in her work, but I am only emphasizing specific points pertinent to the development of woman and her formation.

pueden verse en la necesidad de ejercer un trabajo que exceda de las comunes orbitas familiares, la Sección Femenina incorporará a sus afiliadas, que se encuentren en el citado caso, a los sindicatos correspondientes a su profesión y fomentará la actividad sindical [...]. 6) Para cumplir todos sus fines, la Sección Femenina se servirá principalmente de una exacta e indiscutible disciplina [...] y fijará a la mujer en el íntegro y pleno sentido del ser femenina, según es por naturaleza inabdicable, apartándola en la conducta, la forma y el estilo de toda función o apariencia varonil. (215-216)

The result, by way of reaction, was the emergence of a generation of women writers who absorbed themselves into the Spanish literary scene immediately after the Spanish Civil War. “In light of this long-awaited political transformation, it is not surprising that historiography is a central trope in late-twentieth-century Spanish fiction. The dictatorship prohibited study of the brief socialist period of the Second Republic (1931-36) and the Civil War (1936-39); thus, the *transición* opened the door to the reexamination of recent history” (Bergmann and Herr 40). Hence, I argue that literature or film may present itself as a form of rebellion where authors or cinematic directors give voice to the political and social perspectives that have been silenced and denied attention because it is the children, or the grandchildren of the victims or survivors of the Civil War that aim to recuperate and expose the daunting repression of the time; one that Dulce Chacón describes as a responsibility of her generation:

Nosotros, la gente que estamos en los cuarenta o los cincuenta años de edad, somos los hijos del silencio de nuestros padres [...] Pero es hora de romper este silencio en beneficio de nuestros hijos. Tenemos que rescatar la historia silenciada, es una responsabilidad de nuestra generación. (Valenzuela 2002)

The film *Las trece rosas*<sup>107</sup> (2007) directed by Emilio Martínez-Lázaro and influenced by the work *Las trece rosas* (2004) by Carlos López Fonseca,<sup>108</sup> is based on real-life events that took place in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>109</sup> Thirteen women were sentenced to death by a military court for a crime they did not commit. The thirteen victims' names who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty nine were: Carmen Barrero Aguado, Martina Barroso García, Blanca Brissac Vázquez, Pilar Bueno Ibáñez, Julia Conesa, Adelina García Casillas, Elena Gil Olaya, Virtudes González García, Ana López Gallego, Joaquina López Laffite, Dionisia Manzanero Salas, Victoria Muñoz García, and Luisa Rodríguez de la Fuente. These women were falsely accused of the attack on a Francoist military official, since they were already in jail when the assault took place. Most of the women were sympathizers of the Second Spanish Republic and were under legal age; however there was at least one that was entirely innocent of any association with the political left. She and her husband were executed because they helped a colleague who was a known communist escape the repression. They suffered harsh interrogations and were jailed at Las Ventas, one of the main female prisons in Madrid. The women, known as the 13 roses were ultimately executed by a firing squad against the wall of the East Cemetery on August, 5, 1939. I propose that through the aid of rebellion and the appeal of metaphorically using the image of the rose, the film aims to recuperate, detain and expose a silenced past.

The changing paradigms of current literary and critical theory have highly influenced this refurbished interest in collective memory and identity studies. Writers and directors dealing with

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<sup>107</sup> *The Thirteen Roses*. At times, I will sometimes refer to the film or 13 women as 'Roses' to emphasize its symbolic nature.

<sup>108</sup> The novel was also published in 2003 by Jesús Ferrero. I am only focusing on the film in relation to the current century.

<sup>109</sup> The film won four Goya Awards in 2008.

the subject of the Spanish civil war and the dictatorship have relied on modes that are less realistic such as using terror<sup>110</sup>:

in an effort to better capture the work of memory, the experiences of trauma, the silences and the voids of the past, the historical discontinuities, and the elusive nature of historical narrativization. One recurring element used in these works has been the trope of haunting, which underlies the ghostly nature of the past in its ever-returning nature, projecting its shadow towards the present and the future. These haunting narratives thus make visible the disappearances and absences silenced in normative historical accounts, and replicate the process of confronting a difficult past that still needs to be dealt with in the present. (Colmeiro 29-30)<sup>111</sup>

This shadow is a powerful reminder of the unsettled nature of the collective past, still haunting the present. Labanyi explains that there are effective ways of dealing with ghosts of the past:

One can refuse to see them or shut them out, as the official discourses of the State have always done. One can cling to them obsessively through the pathological process of introjection that Freud called melancholia, allowing the past to take over the present and convert it into a 'living death.' Or one can offer them habitation in order to acknowledge their presence, through the healing introjection process that is mourning, which, for Freud, differs from melancholia in that it allows one to lay the ghosts of the past to rest by, precisely, acknowledging them as past. (65)

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<sup>110</sup> Films such as *El espino del diablo* (2001) and *El laberinto del fauno* (2006) directed by Guillermo del Toro for example.

<sup>111</sup> Colmeiro, José (2011): "Nation of Ghosts?: Haunting, Historical Memory and Forgetting in Post-Franco Spain" [online article], *452°F. Electronic journal of theory of literature and comparative literature*, 4, 17-34, [Consulted on: 05/15/15], < <http://www.452f.com/index.php/en/jose-colmeiro.html> >.

In the same manner as the spectral representations of the past in the literary and cinematic works seen before, this shadow projects the image of a nation full of ghosts, awaiting recovery, resolution, and reparation.

Although the film does not particularly aim at presenting a horrific approach via ghosts or fantastic creatures, it does symbolically capture the appalling legacy of the horrors of the past in the present, maintaining its memory while keeping it from falling into oblivion. The film portrays the three phases of Fonseca's novel: "La lucha," "La represión," and "La venganza." The opening scene takes the viewer back in time to the year 1939 in Madrid showing Carmen and Virtudes<sup>112</sup> speaking on soapboxes to a small crowd of people. The two women remain faithful to the cause of the Republic and display unwaivering optimism, which, I deem to represent the initial act of revolt. The camera's point of view focuses on the two women, turning the twenty-first century spectator from an outsider to an insider. As if the viewers too were part of that small crowd, the viewer is guided through the camera's angle, to listen to the women's antifascist message about the dangers of Spain falling to the injustices of social repression. The speech given by the two women avoids mentioning their communist values, but sparks the interest of an older lady in the crowd who declares, "...ya hemos visto cuánto han luchado hasta ahora. Nosotros lo que queremos es que esto acabe de una vez. Queremos paz" (woman in the crowd in *Las trece rosas*). To this, Carmen replies, "¿Y de qué sirve la paz si no tenemos libertad? ¿Para qué queremos paz si no hay dignidad?" (Carmen in *Las trece rosas*). The viewers, along with the two women and the small crowd, are then encouraged to look towards the incoming set of guards and loaded trucks, Franco's troops who have entered the city, as the camera angle shifts in that specific direction. Besides being active promoters and advocating for

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<sup>112</sup> Portrayed by Nadia de Santiago and Marta Etura.



workers' and women's rights, most of the female protagonists are also seen emulating women's typical wartime roles: Adelina volunteers in a kitchen, serving soup, Julia is employed as a street car ticket vendor, and Virtudes and Carmen are actively involved in the dispersion of anti-Franco propaganda.<sup>113</sup>

The social trauma characterized by a nation surrounded by suffocation and poverty takes an interesting aspect in the film with the use of bread. Later scenes in the film show Virtudes' and Julia's political activism distributing flyers that read "Menos Franco, Más Pan Blanco." Film spectators are informed on how these women spoke publicly against Franco and about the difficult conditions that were created because of the war, specifically in regards to hunger. In one of the scenes, children are seated in a soup kitchen about to eat, but the sound of the sirens does not allow them to do so, prompting them to run and seek shelter at the "refugio." As everyone runs to the safe haven, one of the children, Bernabé, stays behind, curiously looking up at the aircrafts flying above them in the sky. One of the women runs towards him and tells him "Agáchate" fearing a bombing. To their surprise, small loaves of bread packaged with propaganda lettering fall from the aircrafts labeled: "En la España nacional, una, grande y libre, no hay un hogar sin lumbre ni una familia sin pan." The full inscription to this is as follows:

En la España nacional, una, grande y libre, no hay un hogar sin lumbre ni una familia sin pan. Vuestros jefes exportan las cosechas y malgastan el oro en propagandas calumniosas o en comprar armas con que prolongar vuestra agonía. La España nacional siente la angustia que padecéis y os envía una muestra de su recuerdo para los niños, las mujeres y los ancianos. Todo es mentira, todas las propagandas rojas. Éste el pan de cada día en la España de Franco, el que

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<sup>113</sup> Adelina is portrayed by Gabriella Pession and Julia by Verónica Sánchez.

guardamos en nuestros graneros para compartirlo el día de la liberación con los hermanos católicos. (415)<sup>114</sup>

This “bombardeo de pan” was strategic propaganda such that “la novedad más importante de este mes de octubre de 1938 fueron los propagandísticos “bombardeos del pan” realizados por aviones del bando sublevado sobre las hambrientas ciudades republicanas. El motivo que dieron los sublevados fue:”

Hoy, dos años después, la España Nacional celebra el 1 de octubre como la Fiesta del Caudillo, en homenaje a su salvador. En plena guerra, el frente nacional ofrece victorias constantes y la retaguardia una normalidad absoluta. De nada se carece en la zona de la auténtica España, ni de artículos de primera necesidad, ni de artículos de lujo. Pan para todos los españoles, tabaco en abundancia para todos los fumadores. Éstos son dos artículos que se encuentran en cualquier parte de la España Nacional. En Zona Roja, sin embargo, se carece de ambos. Al celebrarse la gran fiesta nacional, los españoles de Franco han querido dedicar un recuerdo a sus hermanos en campo enemigo y han decidido enviarles precisamente esas dos cosas: pan y tabaco. (415)<sup>115</sup>

In this scene, immediately upon bombardment, the woman picks up and opens a packaged loaf, breaks off a piece, and, as any parent would, gives the first piece to the child before taking a bite for herself.

Memory, specifically collective memory, articulated through language has been a popular area of study as a means of using the past to rethink the present. The term “collective memory”

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<sup>114</sup> *La Guerra Civil Española: Batallas de la Guerra Civil Española*. Kreactiva Editorial. 558 páginas.

<sup>115</sup> *La Guerra Civil Española: Batallas de la Guerra Civil Española*. Kreactiva Editorial. 558 páginas.

first coined by Maurice Halbwachs, who considered the notion of memory to be social, shaped by the groups of people with which one identifies with. His work “On Collective Memory,” pinpoints that: “It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory; it is to the degree that our individual thought places itself in these frameworks and participates in this memory that it is capable of the act of recollection” (38). Noa Gedia and Yigal Elam’s article titled “Collective Memory—What is It?” discusses how collective memory is solely a metaphorical entity:

To speak of a group as some integral entity with a will and capacity of its own is to commit the fallacy of concrete generalization, namely of treating a generalization as though it were some concrete entity. The employment of collective memory can be justified only on a metaphorical level - and this is how historians of old have always employed it - as a general code name for something that is supposedly behind myths, traditions, customs, cults, all of which represent the “spirit,” the “psyche,” of a society, a tribe, a nation. (34-35)

Authors and directors have aimed towards giving voice to any silenced or repressed history where:

the “acceleration of history,” then, confronts us with the brutal realization of the difference between real memory - social and unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies - and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past. On the one hand, we find an integrated, dictatorial memory - unself-conscious, commanding, all-powerful, spontaneously actualizing, a memory without a past that ceaselessly reinvents tradition, linking the history of

its ancestors to the undifferentiated time of heroes, origins and myths - and on the other hand, our memory, nothing more in fact than sifted and sorted historical traces. The gulf between the two has deepened in modern times with the growing belief in a right, a capacity, and even a duty to change. (quoted in Gedi and Elam 32)<sup>116</sup>

Although Malbwach is concerned with the pressure that society imposes on individuals—since he believes that the mind reconstructs memories under this pressure—he remains hopeful in society’s efforts to reshape by way of recollection:

whereas in our present society we occupy a definite position and are subject to the constraints that go with it, memory gives us the illusion of living in the midst of groups which do not imprison us, which impose themselves on us only so far and so long as we accept them. (50)

Memory and trauma facilitate negation of silencing pasts, where amnesia is conveniently opted for in order to stay true to the ‘pacto de olvido.’ Antonio Cazorla Sánchez concurs that:

those who knew what had happened did not dare to challenge the official truth in public, or even with their families. By not talking about things and people long gone, about freedoms and hopes dashed in blood, society started to forget. This led people, especially the young, to accept Francoism’s version of events. In this way, Spain became a society where amnesia and half-truths connived, and where the very same people who had lost so much because of the dictatorship quite often turned to Franco as the only hope that something would improve in the hopeless post-war decades. (20)

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<sup>116</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between History and Memory: *Les Lieux de Memoire*.” *Representations*. 26 (Spring 1989): 8-9.

This denial of the past, as Jacques Le Goff affirms must eventually be confronted:

at a metaphorical but important level, in the same way that amnesia is not merely a local disturbance of the individual's memory but causes more or less serious perturbations in his personality, the absence, or voluntary or involuntary loss, of collective memory among peoples and nations can cause serious problems of collective identity. (53)

The interplay of love between male and female genders in *Las trece rosas* is ironically, promoted through a “sleeping with the enemy” cliché. Both Adelina and Julia fall in love with two men from Franco's army. One of the soldiers, Perico, portrayed by Félix Gómez provides food for Julia and her family, and also offers to take her on a date to the movies. When Carmen confronts Julia about this, Julia dismisses her concern, suggesting to the viewers that her personal interests and emotional need for love comfort are more important than her commitment to a political cause.

The film's police interrogation scenes, leading up to the prosecution are emotionally compelling on the viewer. As the women are transported to their fateful trial, one of them snatches a view of the Buen Retiro Park through the crack of the truck and cheerfully says, “¡Mirad! ¡El retiro!” cueing the rest to hover over as well, ignoring the guard's prohibition to do so. Julia then asks if any of them have something tight to exchange for good luck: “¿Llevais algo apretado? ... Dicen que da suerte” (Julia in *Las trece rosas*) and they all begin interchanging ribbons, belts, blouses, and handkerchiefs, and then all perch over the truck to take in the spectacular sight. Kajsa Larson in “Remembering the Thirteen Roses: Blurring Fact and Fiction” mentions that the film fails to expose graphic torture scenes of the Roses to the public in comparison to its historical reality: “*Las 13 rosas* omits details about how women were

dehumanized through rape, being forced to swallow castor oil or have their heads shaved. The producers believed that this brutality would be difficult for the audience to watch” (Insert page).

In an interview, Martínez-Lázaro justifies the omission of these details:

la auténtica represión, de la crueldad de los franquistas aquellos primeros meses, sólo hay una centésima parte de lo que pasó. No contamos que a una de las chicas la violaron ocho veces en comisaría antes de llevarla a la cárcel, ni cómo las pegaron...Lo que se cuenta es ridículo respecto a lo que pasó. Sólo hay apuntes, porque tampoco quiero echar leña al fuego. (quoted in Larson 9)

Additionally, as Fernando Hernández Holgado comments that “la roja era, pues, una enferma criminal” such that:

estudiando casos históricos en la delincuencia, sacamos la consecuencia, bien comprobada, de que la mujer puede resultar, en ciertos casos, más perversa que el hombre. En los casos concretos de la delincuencia de la mujer se observa una mayor astucia al realizar el delito, un mayor refinamiento para rematarlo y una despreocupación total en los procedimientos, que no todos los delincuentes varones se atrevieron a realizar. (quoted in Hernández Holgado 129)

Hernández Holgado interviewed Josefina Amalia Villa, who was detained at Las Ventas on her twenty-first birthday in spring of 1939 and describes:

--“Detenida por la delación de una falangista, fue acusada de colaboración con la República y encarcelada preventivamente desde el 21 de abril hasta primeros de septiembre. Como tantos hombres y mujeres, durante los trece días de paso previo por Gobernación sufrió fuertes palizas de la policía que le dejaron secuelas físicas irreversible.” (138)

Josefina recalls the following:

--“Cuando llegué yo a la prisión de Ventas eran tres mil mujeres. La prisión estaba calculada para cuatrocientas cincuenta reclusas...y las cocinas estaban calculadas para cuatrocientas comidas. No se podía dar de comer. En cada celda individual había once personas. Más luego salías de la selda y los pasillos estaban llenos de mujeres, las escaleras...No se podían cerrar los departamentos, no se cerraba más la puerta de salida de la calle.” (Hernández Holgado 138)

Adelaida Albarca was a member of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU), and she was also detained in May of 1939 at a mere seventeen years of age:

--“A nosotras nos pusieron en una sala, que había sido de las duchas, cuando la cárcel funcionaba bien, había una caldera, duchas y cuartitos con bañera y allí nos instalaron, hasta en los cuartos de baño nos tenían que meter. Donde estaba instalada en otros tiempos la calefacción, por la caldera de agua entonces nosotras durante las noches teníamos que estarlas espantando [a las ratas], haciendo ruido, moviéndonos, para que no pasaran por encima, por encima de mi cara saltaron muchas veces las ratas.” (quoted in Hernández Holgado 139)

Carmen Castro was another minor who was also in custody in May of 1939 and she recalls:

--“Durante el período de mi estancia en Ventas puedo decir que en los primeros momentos nos hemos llegado a juntar ahí, en una prisión que era capaz para quinientas plazas, siete mil mujeres, y según me dijeron después, hasta trece o catorce mil. Los pasillos, los descansillos de las escaleras, los patios de las galerías, los váteres inclusive eran nuestros dormitorios”. (quoted in Hernández Holgado 139)

In chapter one of *Mujeres encarceladas*, Hernández Holgado describes the ironic realization of the Ventas' women prison under the direction of Director General of Prisons, Victoria Kent. The radical prison reforms that had begun during the nineteenth century under Concepción Arenal would now be under the development of Kent, who sought to re-establish the concept of imprisonment as well as re-educating the inmate for survival within society with the establishment of facilities such as workshops, classrooms and infirmaries.

Por paradójico que pueda resultar, la cárcel de mujeres de Ventas fue la realización de un sueño, la cristalización final de un ambicioso proyecto: el concebido por la abogada y diputada Victoria Kent durante su año largo al frente de la Dirección General de Prisiones, de abril de 1931 a junio de 1932. Pore so no es posible historiar dicha prisión sin referirse tanto a ese empeño personal como al discurso humanista que lo nutría, esto es, la dignificación de la condición del recluso y, de manera especial, de la mujer presa. Inaugurada finalmente en 1933, Ventas encarnó ese sueño de una Prisión Nueva—más moderna, más humana, más científica—al impulso de las corrientes reformadoras de la Segunda República. (Hernández Holgado 39)

Soon thereafter, Ventas was eradicated by severe overcrowding and the destruction of its facilities, as described by Josefina, Adelaida, and Carmen in their testimonies, when Francoist forces began to take over Spain. Tomasa Cuevas, who spent various years in prisons as a political prisoner throughout Spain, began to collect oral testimonies of the women she had known in prison. In chapter thirteen of the translated text, “Reflections on Prison Life for Women: Josefina Amalia Villa at Ventas and Segovia,” she presents Joesfina’s testimony:



--“Before I speak about my experiences in Ventas and Segovia, I would like to explain that prison life for women was no different than for men. When a woman was arrested, she was treated the same as if she were a man; she ran the same risks as the men. Because only older women and children remained at home, the arrested woman could expect no help from outside. In the first period of arrests at the end of the war, women and men were denounced and convicted for absolutely everything and anything. It was enough for someone, anyone—a neighbor, a colleague at work, a widor or relative of a person killed by the “Reds” –simply to appear at the police station or the Civil Guard or Falange headquarters and denounce a person. That denouncer might not have any specific ideas about the beliefs or actions of the woman for her to be arrested, tortured, and left to rot in jail.” (110)

The brutal reality of the irreversible passing of time is also described by Cuevas:

--“Another pain that sharpened with the years was seeing our youth pass by, a youth that in many cases had scarcely been lived at all. How sad it is for a woman to be aging and to know instinctively that she disappears as a woman when she ceases to be desirable. I saw a woman about to go free after ten years in prison weeping with uncontrollable bitterness; she realized that menopause had deprived her of the desire and hope to have children. But it doesn’t do a woman much good to think about how she is to realize herself as a human being. For such a plan to a real content she must have choice in her life; she must be able to choose her role and not have it imposed on her in some implacable form. It wasn’t only the tenacious struggle to survive that dehumanized us women. There were the close

quarters, the uninhabitable conditions, the impossibility of having a single minute to yourself, the lack of mental stimulus.” (110-11)

Coincidentally, Robin Templeton expands on the conditions of prisons in the United States having been built since 1930 in her essay “She Who Believes in Freedom: Young Women Defy the Prison Industrial Complex” in *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*. Its descriptions are also disturbing, given the conditions and testimonials that have been described up to now regarding the confinement of women in prisons in Spain.

From 1930-1950, a total of five women’s prisons were built in the United States. During the 1980s alone, thirty-four were constructed. According to a recent Amnesty International Report: “Even this could not keep pace with the swelling numbers of women in prison. Women’s prisons are understaffed, overcrowded, lack recreation facilities, serve poor quality food, suffer chronic shortages of family planning counselors and services, obstetrics and gynecological specialists, drug treatment and childcare facilities and transportation funds for family visits—which are necessary due to the remote locations of the women’s prisons. (266)

Templeton continues:

Maintaining a relationship with a loved one or a family member behind bars begins at the level of individual experience but extends into the realm of collective accountability: “You have no idea what it’s like to love someone who is being tortured inside a prison. You never get used to living with so much horror,” says Asha Bandele, an editor at *Essence* magazine and author of *The Prisoner’s Wife*. Bandele describes how this experience stretches into the domain of collective responsibility: “Whenever I hear of police and prison abuses, it doesn’t matter if I

know the person or not because it could always be happening to anyone I love.”

(quoted in Templeton 272)

Prior to the execution scene in *Las trece rosas*, the film’s climax, the Roses are transported to the cemetery, singing the official theme song of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas “Joven Guardia:”

Somos la joven guardia  
que va forjando el porvenir.  
Nos templó la miseria,  
sabremos vencer o morir.  
Noble es la causa de librar  
al hombre de su esclavitud.  
Quizá el camino hay que regar.  
con sangre de la juventud.  
Que esté en guardia,  
que esté en guardia.  
el burgués insaciable y cruel.  
Joven guardia,  
joven guardia,  
no le des paz ni cuartel,  
¡paz ni cuartel!  
Es la lucha final que comienza,  
la revancha de los que ansían pan;  
en la revolución que está en marcha

los esclavos el triunfo alcanzarán.

Siempre en guardia,

siempre en guardia,

joven guardia.

Hijos de la miseria,

ella rebeldes nos forjó.

Odio la tiranía

que a nuestros padres explotó.

Más hambre no hemos de sufrir.

Los que trabajan comerán.

La explotación va a concluir.

Nuestras las fábricas serán.

[...]

Mañana por las calles

masas en triunfo marcharán.

Ante la guardia roja

los poderosos temblarán.

Somos los hijos de Lenin,

y a vuestro régimen feroz

el comunismo ha de abatir

con el martillo y con la hoz.

[...] (13 women in *Las treces rosas*)<sup>117</sup>

The women are then forced to get out of the truck and line up on the cemetery wall while Julia rebelliously yells to the executioners, “¡Vosotros no sois hombres! ¡No tenéis corazón! ¡No tenéis alma! Si tuviérais no estaríais aquí!” which can be interpreted as the final act of revolt (Julia in *Las trece rosas*). The viewer has no choice but to sympathize with all thirteen women and their tragic circumstances. The camera then shifts to Blanca<sup>118</sup> and viewers are able to share her anguish and distress for the future of her young son. Together, all thirteen women begin to hug and hold hands as the executioners get in position to fire. Huddling and trembling, the viewers witness the Roses’ defeat to the sound of gunshots. Their cause and execution was notorious such that Rafaela Fernández honored them in a poem:

I

When the stars die

Green, green water ...

A sky of blue fish

The stars have died!

Shrouded roses among the white rushes

of the dawn. The whiteness of maidens!

Ay! Green, green water ...

II

The stars have fallen in their flight,

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<sup>117</sup> The film only presents the women singing up until the chorus “...no le des paz ni cuartel.” The song is taken from Marco Antonio de la Ossa Martínez’s *La música en la Guerra Civil Española*. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2011 p283-284.

<sup>118</sup> Portrayed by Pilar López de Ayala.

three stars, red  
blue and yellow,  
and the earth is covered with currants,  
and white roses and little bells  
for the stars have died ...!  
Ay! Green, green water ...

### III

Thirteen stars have died,  
thirteen vestals  
from the temple of freedom  
Virgins!  
Who in a white cortege without uttering cry  
in the arms of death move toward infinity  
Ay! Green, green water ...

### IV

You course silently among the lichen  
and nourish the fields and the garden  
with eternal essences  
verdure of spring!  
of purity!  
of grace and beauty!  
Thirteen roses have rent the eternal rose garden  
Ay! Green, green water ...

Goddess of nature! (119-120)<sup>119</sup>

The visual accounts of the Roses generate compassion in the viewers by tapping into the personal relationships that the women sustained with their loved ones. The film's last scene particularly puts emphasis on Blanca and her role as a mother and love for her son. In the film's last scene, Blanca's voice narrates a portion of the letter to her son:

Querido, muy querido hijo de mi alma. En estos últimos momentos tu madre piensa en ti. Voy a morir con la cabeza alta, sólo por ser buena. Tú mejor que nadie lo sabe Kique mío. Sólo te pido que seas muy bueno... Enrique, que no se te borre nunca el recuerdo de tus padres. Que te hagan hacer la comunión, pero bien preparado, tan bien cimentada la religión como me la enseñaron a mí. Te seguirá escribiendo hasta el mismo momento, pero tengo que despedirme de todos. Hijo, hijo, hasta la eternidad. Recibe después de una infinidad de besos el beso eterno de tu madre. Blanca. (Blanca in *Las trece rosas*)

In this last scene of the film, Enrique reads his mother's farewell letter, which she writes to him in a chapel before being executed. This last scene juxtaposes Blanca's image with that of her son. One side of the screen narrates the letter she writes, while the other shows Enrique walking away with his bicycle as he reads it. As he walks away, Enrique passes a group of young boys playing in the streets who are reenacting an execution. This innocent play among the boys communicates that even after the Roses' death, there continues to be challenging prospects for the future of Spain.

Larson comments that much of the cultural production with respects to the Spanish Civil War tends to promote depressing accounts, which is something the film was trying to avoid.

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<sup>119</sup> Cuevas, Tomasa. *Prison of Women: Testimonies of War and Resistance in Spain, 1939-1975*. trans. and ed. by Mary E. Giles. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Instead, its marketers opted for “a martyr story with Hollywood appeal” (7). The spotlight on cultural products enables construction of narratives about the past. Sarah Leggott, in her article “Memory, Postmemory, Trauma” agrees that these works end up “responding to a desire to counter the historical amnesia imposed by the dictatorship and continued during the transition, by contesting hegemonic discourses and creating alternative versions of history” (26). Yet, despite this pattern, the twenty-first century continues to recuperate and expose post Civil War films such as *Laberinto del fauno* (*Pan’s Labyrinth*, 2006) directed by Guillermo del Toro, *Los girasoles ciegos* (*The Blind Sunflowers*, 2008) directed by José Luis Cuerda, and *Pa negra* (*Black Bread*, 2010) directed by Agustí Villaronga. David Archibald cites Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, observing that “more than half of the three hundred historical films produced in Spain between 1970 and 2000 present themes related to the Second Republic, the Civil War, or Franco’s dictatorship” (76). Larson also argues that due to the Roses’ omission of pure graphics, the film fails to generate critical consciousness and “while film spectators no doubt ponder the Roses’ defeat, they leave the theater with only a vague understanding of the conflict and trauma from the civil war and dictatorship, and with even less of an understanding of how these events are related to twenty-first century Spain” (16). I would argue that although including those graphic scenes would have accredited attention to the brutal realities of the moment, the overall production of the film does not fail to commemorate and promote active, political, and psychological solidarity among females.

Following Carmen Laforet’s same narrative structure is the work of Ana María Matute, also a Spanish author who wrote during the Spanish Civil War. Her work ranges from the portrayal of children, infancy, fantasy, the passing of time, and the imagination. She considers



her own infancy the most important momento of her life.<sup>120</sup> Her novel *Primera memoria*<sup>121</sup> (1960) follows the thread of Carmen Laforet's narrator-protagonists and their coming-of-age. Unlike Andrea in Laforet's novel *Nada*, Matía the protagonist of Matute's *Primera memoria* confronts filthy surroundings<sup>122</sup>, is disillusioned about love and "sees the hypocrisy of her elders, fears that as she embarks upon womanhood she will become like them, and bids childhood a definitive farewell, but dreads the violent, treacherous adult world, against which she has no defense" (Bergmann 146). At one point in the novel, Matia questions the war and states, "Qué extranjeros y absurdos, nosotros. Qué fuera del mundo y hasta del tiempo. Ya no éramos niños. De pronto ya no sabíamos lo que éramos" (114). Like Andrea's Aunt Angustias, Matia's grandmother is constantly looking after her and is concerned about Matia's attainment of beauty, which, according to her, is the only thing that serves well in a woman, if she has no money. Matia's initiation into adulthood is symbolically represented through a flask of French perfume given to her as a gift for the Three Kings Day.<sup>123</sup> Matia culminates her sense of self formation towards the end of the novel, when she hears Borja's confession to his grandmother of stealing money from her and when she loses Gorogó (her doll). Matute places notions of moral responsibility, as well as the pain and confusion of growing up in her novel. "En aquel momento me hirió el saberlo todo. (El saber la oscura vida de las personas mayores, a las que, sin duda alguna, pertenecía ya. Me hirió y sentí un dolor físico)" (239). References of fairy tale stories are

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<sup>120</sup> See Alicia Redondo Goicoechea. *Mujeres y narrativa: Otra historia de la literatura*. Madrid: Siglo, XXI de España Editores, 2009.

<sup>121</sup> Ana María Matute received the Premio Nadal for his novel in 1959.

<sup>122</sup> Emilie Bergmann classifies these filthy things under adult sexuality. See Bergmann, Emilie L. "Reshaping the Canon: Intertextuality in Spanish Novels of Female Development." *Anales de la literatura Española contemporánea*. 12.1/2. 1987: 141-156. (p146)

<sup>123</sup> This is an Epiphany Christian holiday that traditionally falls on January 6 that celebrates the revelation of God the Son as a human being in Jesus Christ.

also dispersed throughout the novel, and Matute emphasizes the disenchantment of these stories in Matia's self- reflection at the end of the novel:

Y de pronto estaba allí el amanecer, como una realidad terrible, abominable. Y yo con los ojos abiertos, como un castigo. (No existió la Isla de Nunca Jamás y la Joven Sirena no consiguió un alma inmortal, porque los hombres y las mujeres no aman, y se quedó con un par de inútiles piernas, y se convirtió en espuma.

(243)

Matute places issues of cruelty, betrayal and guilt (as well as Biblical analogues) in the mindset of the protagonists transitioning into the adult world, with the 'first memory' of becoming an adult as being the act of treason. In an interview Matute is asked why she writes and she states:

--"Yo no escribo para divertir, escribo para inquietar y con la literatura que me siento más afín es con la que me inquieta, con la que rompe el conformismo. Cada vez que escribes algo que inquieta descubres cosas nuevas tú también, rompes muchos velos, a veces voluntarios, rasgas muchos tabúes y llegas más allá de la aparente realidad, porque hay muchas realidades, ¿sabes?, hay muchos mundos aunque todos estén en este, como decía Paul Eluard. ¿Sabes lo que es la vida? Me lo dijo una vieja *madame*: la vida es como la escalera de un gallinero, corta y llena de mierda." (Goicoechea 151)

Shedding light on the *Bildungsroman* María del Carmen Riddel states: "La rebeldía que encubre la *Bildungsroman* de Matute se codifica en el tono desencantado de la voz narrativa correspondiente a la mujer adulta. Este tono desencantado es el que da testimonio del mantenimiento de la disgregación y a la vez del efecto negativo de esa disgregación en el personaje" (73). Thus, rebellion is proposed here as a manifestation of self attainment.

Another author whose work threads alongside of Laforet and Matute is Catalan Spanish novelist Mercè Rodoreda. Her difference in the context of Spanish Literature stems from three sources, for she wrote as a woman, as a Catalanian, and for the greater part of her career as an exile. Her post-Civil War novel *La plaza del diamante* (1962)<sup>124</sup>, presents Natalia, who narrates her oppressed life under the Civil War and the longing to be free. She is later given the name Colometa<sup>125</sup> when she marries her first husband Quimet. Rodoreda originally wrote this novel in Catalan, but it was banned for publication because of its minority language. Classified by critics as literature of exile, Rodoreda's work embodies one that was silenced and shortened when the Republic collapsed, causing her immediate exile to France and Switzerland.<sup>126</sup> Rodoreda's novel *La plaza del diamante* also depicts a coming-of-age novel, although this formation is not present in an adolescent figure as with Andrea from Laforet's *Nada* or Matia from Matute's *Primera memoria*, but with a young adult woman who does not achieve a sense of adult formation and maturity until the wedding of her daughter Rita, her own remarriage, (which erases the name of 'Colometa' imposed on her from her previous marriage), and the end of the war. Rodoreda does not present the normative female figure characterized by a romance novel. Narrated in the first-person, Natalia is an antithesis of the conventional wife and happy mother, metaphorically symbolized by the pigeons that surround her environment.<sup>127</sup> She marries Quimet, and feel

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<sup>124</sup> Originally in Catalan, *La plaça del diamant*. The novel was later made into a film in 1982 and was directed by Francesc Betriu.

<sup>125</sup> This name is symbolic of the pigeon(s) that surround her home throughout the novel, up until her first husband's death. Natalia loses her sense of identity with this name given to her by Quimet, and is left behind when she becomes "señora Natalia" with her remarriage and, coincidentally, the end of the war.

<sup>126</sup> Critics have also emphasized the exile of Rosa Chacel whose literary contributions were also truncated due to the fall of the Republic.

<sup>127</sup> Doves are also symbolic of love and peace, which in the case of the novel, result in the opposite. The doves bring instability and unease to Natalia to a point where she starts killing them.

suffocated: “La meva mare al cementiri de Sant Gervasi i jo a la plaça del Diamant [...] I la meva mare morta i jo aturada com una bleada i la cinta de goma a la cintura estrenyent, estrenyent” (Rodoreda 20). Like Andrea in *Nada*, Natalia feels the same suffocation and frustration in her own life, feeling a sense of abandonment as she thinks of her mother in the cemetery.

Poverty and hunger is also highly emphasized throughout the novel and Natalia narrates the reality of her and her children’s destitute situation:

Y aquel día, para cenar, comimos entre los tres una sardina y un tomate florido y si hubiésemos tenido gato, no habría podido encontrar las espinas. Y dormimos juntos. Yo en el medio y un niño a cada lado. Si teníamos que morir, moriríamos así. Y si por la noche había alarma, y las sirenas nos despertaban, no decíamos nada. Nos quedábamos quietos, sólo escuchando, y cuando tocaban la sirena de acabado del peligro, dormíamos si podíamos pero no sabíamos si estábamos durmiendo porque no hablábamos nunca. (Rodoreda 181)

Motherhood brings her unwanted desires, and when she finds herself alone without a husband, she even considers killing her own children: “Tuve que hacerme de corcho para poder seguir adelante, porque si en vez de ser de corcho con el corazón de nieve, hubiese sido como antes, de carne que cuando pellizcas te hace daño, no hubiera podido pasar por un puente tan alto y tan largo” (Rodoreda 179). Rodoreda’s interior monologue is at times, ironic, yet firm with exposing the tragic conditions of the Civil War. Following Bergmann’s paradigm on the lack of maternal love, she observes that Natalia is not an “unconditionally loving mother, because she did not have such a model to follow” (153). In addition, both she and her daughter Rita achieve a sense of freedom upon their mother-daughter separation and with their own marriages.

Later, when Natalia returns to her home at Plaza del Diamante (Diamond Square) after the cataclysm of war, she bids farewell to her youth in a cathartic scream, releasing all of her repressed feelings:

...di un grito de infierno. Un grito que debía hacer muchos años que llevaba dentro y con aquel grito, tan ancho que me costó mucho pasar por la garganta, me salió de la boca una pizca de cosa de nada como un escarabajo de saliva...y aquella pizca de cosa de nada que había vivido tanto tiempo encerrada dentro, era mi juventud que se escapaba con un grito que no sabía bien lo que era.

(Rodoreda 258)

Natalia's first scream in the novel is filled with pain and anguish, upon giving birth. The final resignation of her life as "señora Natalia" comes at the conclusion, after she is able to let go of pent-up frustration, carving her name 'Colometa' into the door of her previous home.

The figure of Natalia is exemplary of the *Bildungsroman* and it is unique because of the protagonist's attainment of maturity when she is already a young woman and not an adolescent. She achieves an interior self-formation when she is courted by Antoni, whom she eventually marries. "Me costó levantar cabeza, pero poco a poco volví a la vida después de haber estado en el hueco de la muerte" (Rodoreda 207). The novel opens and ends in the square of La Plaza del Diamante emphasizing a circular structure, but concluding with an open ending.

## Progressing towards Transition

The *transición* of the late 1970s and early 1980s following the death of Franco in 1975, proved to be constructive, characterized by a series of fundamental transformations in politics and society. The final phase towards Spain's democratic system was a key moment for Spanish women that brought about the modification of the Spanish Civil Code of 1981,<sup>128</sup> as well as the lifting of censorship. This moment also produced pertinent social changes such as the legalization of contraceptives, regulation on abortion, and approval of divorce, to name but a few. Nieva de la Paz assures:

Todo ello contribuyó, sin duda, al singular interés que despertaron las narradoras como colectivo entre editores, lectores y críticos, llegándose a proclamar a finales de los setenta un segundo *boom* en el panorama literario español, tras el conocido de ciertos escritores hispanoamericanos en los sesenta: el *boom* de la narrativa de mujeres. (15)

Initially, Spain's effort to forgetting the horror of the recent past diminished, as it looked ahead towards a better future. Spanish fiction began to address explorations of feminine concerns, marking the beginning of a culture of diversion. No longer would women's role be defined in terms of her mothering potential, capturing a new angle in females' capacities. The conservative ideology of female domesticity would now shift from a private to a public domain. This period in the 1980s served as a distraction from digging into the past. David Herzberger, in his work *Narrating the Past*, assures that a novel or genre reveals history to promote truth and wholeness and is usually a subjective first-person narration (85). He continues:

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<sup>128</sup> According to Pilar Nieva de la Paz, "la reforma del Código Civil de 1981 permitió superar la situación de dependencia legal de la mujer en el matrimonio, protegiendo sus derechos sobre los hijos y sobre la propiedad, entre otros cambios fundamentales" (13). See Nieva de la Paz, Pilar. *Narradoras españolas en la transición política: textos y contextos*. Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 2004.

The individual self seeks by commingling the past and present through the process of remembering. This process may be activated either voluntarily or involuntarily, the self in search of definition, the definition of self perceived always within the flow of history. (Herzberger 66-67)

Critics have asserted that women writers tend to adopt a contrasting style to their male counterparts when remembering the war years. Janet Pérez, in her work *The Spanish Civil War in Literature* observes that many of the female authors may avoid glorifying death or destruction of the Civil War, opting for exposure of the negative effects it had on women, children and families:

Nearly all present some variation upon the theme that war is hell, and most prefer the reconstruction of small, seemingly insignificant moments overlooked or forgotten in the larger scheme of things, ignored or scorned by historians and chroniclers of war's 'major' events. Their sphere is largely 'intra-history', the effects upon the daily and future lives of unsung and largely unknown, concrete individuals whose collective human history is more 'typical' and authentic than the abstract dates and solitary heroes found in historians' texts. (172)

Pérez also observes that the bestselling theme in Spain of the last decade has been specifically on the Civil War "as readers restricted to onesided, official versions of events for forty years have rushed to devour anything and everything presenting a pro-Republican or anti-Franco view" (167).

Many years would pass before persons inside Spain could hear or read the points of view of the losers, or have access to more serene objective appraisals of the national tragedy. Not until the early 1970s, shortly before the death of the dictator,

did works of important literary figures in exile receive approval for printing and distribution in Spain. (2)

This change in the leadership in Spain became a crucial aspect towards the hopeful development of the transition.

Soledad Puértolas<sup>129</sup> sets an example of this (auto) biographical novel with her work *Cielo nocturno* (2008). Although this is one of her recent works, Puértolas considers the burden that the past has on the present. In her novel, she presents a narrative-protagonist, whose name we are never given. Puértolas explores childhood, adolescent, and young adult memories via relationships and perception of others. The anonymous narrator describes her growth during Franco's Spain. She describes her discoveries and constantly analyzes her surrounding environment. Her character revolves around isolation and discovery of exiles through her aunts, love and sex through her relationships, and rebellion through her active participation in student manifestations at school. Critics consider this novel as Puértolas' direct testimony and autobiographical account, having been born during the Franco dictatorship. From the beginning of the novel, Puértolas presents a hopeful and anxious narrator-protagonist: "Quedaba algo más, dentro de mí: el deseo de salir de mi ciudad en cuanto pudiera. [...] Pero soñaba con algo más, sin saber lo que era" (10). The war has just ended and there remains a strong spirit of rebellion in her. She questions herself and undergoes a sense of 'vértigo' when she goes against the rules and expectations of her parents. Nonetheless, time takes its toll on this heroine and it is only when summer arrives when she states that she had achieved her independence.<sup>130</sup> She begins to question her future:

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<sup>129</sup> Soledad Puértolas won the Premio Planeta prize in 1989 for her work *Queda la noche*.

<sup>130</sup> A common trait that I have found in novels categorized under the *Bildungsroman* is that the protagonists tend to change or achieve a sense of personal growth during the summer, such as Andrea in *Nada* by Carmen Laforet, Matia



Me parecía imposible que, nada más salir del colegio, nos fuéramos a transformar en aquellas mujeres del colegio, nos fuéramos a transformar en aquellas mujeres perfectas que las monjas querían que fuésemos. Me preguntaba, llena de curiosidad, cómo sería yo en esa vida que me esperaba. (93)

During her participation in school manifestations, the narrator-protagonist meets Mauricio, with whom she becomes romantically involved with but does not tell anyone about. She chooses to remain isolated, and this symbolizes her entry into adulthood. “Sin el sabor fresco y ácido del helado de limón en la boca, me recreé en mi soledad, como si fuera un signo de madurez, de la vida adulta a la que acababa de acceder” (95) Upon graduating from high school, she looks forward to no longer using a uniform upon her entry at the university, also symbolic of her formation: “El uniforme ya no colgaba de una percha dentro de mi armario. Cada mañana me ponía una cosa distinta, me peinaba de forma distinta” (97) Puértolas also allows this female figure to undergo a sense of sexual liberation:

Nadie me había anticipado [...] que mi cuerpo guardaba dentro de sí la posibilidad de ese inesperado placer. Había allí una fuerza poderosísima, incontrolable, que asustaba un poco. ¿Sería por esa razón por lo que no se nombraba? Debía de ser parte fundamental de la vida de los adultos, pero al tratarse de algo tan sumamente privado, todos callaban, como si fuese algo prohibido. (114)<sup>131</sup>

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in *Irlanda* by Espido Freire, Valba in *Los Abel* by Ana María Matute, and Mónica in *Una manera de vivir* by Teresa Barbero Sánchez. I propose that this is metaphorically symbolic with nature and the season, where many of the heroines may be close to adolescence, puberty or simply leaving a cloudy past behind to begin a new sunny one ahead.

<sup>131</sup> The narrator-protagonist has various sexual encounters with Mauricio, and she questions her own feeling of pleasure, and relates it to a feeling of guilt and/or shame.

Thus, prohibition of any sort may either hinder an individual's liberty of exploring that which has been repressed or provoke rebellion towards his or her curiosity:

If we don't follow the rules so deeply embedded in our feminine unconscious we fear a terrible retaliation. And so we continue to observe the taboos for our gender, remaining reluctant to even know what could turn us on. [...] Being interested in sex is a primary taboo for women. Perhaps that is why *Women Against Pornography* could attract so many women ready to swear that they find none of that sleazy, pornographic sex interesting. [...] When women discuss eroticism in private, the content of the dialogue is depressingly predictable. Starting with a complain filled with disappointment, or even rage, it moves to fantasies of a more pleasurable sex life but ends with the imponderable—is it her/him or me? Is it possible to get what I want? Am I asking too much? Is it maybe not really that important to be sexually fulfilled? (Daly 137)

Nonetheless, the narrator-protagonist remains positive towards her attainment of liberty and place in the world. Puértolas ends the novel with the protagonist's questioning of life, acknowledging that life's mysteries eventually progress towards the realization of physical and emotional maturity.

Hence, the temporal modalities necessitated by discourses of power relations have aimed to ease the restlessness among literary and cinematic genres, calling for a re-examination of this view. As H. Cixous states:

It is time to liberate the New Woman from the Old by coming to know her—by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay, by going out ahead of what the New Woman will be, as an arrow quits the bow with the

movement that gathers and separates the vibrations musically, in order to be more than herself. (878)

To modern observers, as increasingly familiar as they are becoming with this notion in all its aspects, gender based perspectives in general, may be a territory prompting their desire to move in directions that have been designated taboo or unfeminine. It is not the intention to urge subordinates to conduct open conflict on the personal level, but to act from a base of strength and attempt to redefine some of the terms to which individuals have become accustomed.

## Conclusion

As we have seen, the female *Bildungsroman* is a promising trend within the narrative and cinematic genre that will not cease to lose its relevance and popularity among its public. The last several decades have been marked by an ever-growing number of novels of formation and scholarly criticism dedicated to the genre. Gregory Castle ensures that moments of social change are deemed responsible for this revived interest in the genre: “It is precisely the breakdown of traditional forms of identity and of *normative*, harmonious socialization that gives the *Bildungsroman* a new sense of purpose” (5). I find that, although it is important to find answers in literature, it is essential to raise questions and continue to explore areas and gaps that may be present in this coming-of-age genre:

Por primera vez en España, las mujeres escritoras se han decidido a decirlo todo: sus sueños, sus fantasías y deseos, sus penas y alegrías, sus cuerpos y sus distintas formas de pensar, de amar y de sentir y, con ellas, sus variadas formas de ser y de vivir. Por fin las obras de nuestras escritoras han alcanzado esa libertad creativa por la que vienen luchando desde comienzos del siglo XX y, por ello, la crítica literaria debe acercarse a las mismas sin juicios establecidos, es decir, sin prejuicios, hasta que el tiempo, y con él las sucesivas generaciones de lectoras y lectores, sitúen las cosas en su sitio.” (Goicoechea 125)

The Franco regime shared with the Roman Catholic Church a series of assumptions based on gender roles and their allegedly ‘natural’ basis in sexual biology. The writers under this study address the physicality of the trauma of the Civil War and the ensuing Francoist repression. Experiences and places were transformed in Francoist structures of memory, perpetuating the trauma of the Civil War. The social trauma caused by the Civil War and the repression of the

dictatorship resulted in a wounded Republican identity, hopeful for a progressive entrance into democracy.

Bildungsromane, thus, become a shared territory where female writers and readers can discuss different scenarios of development, voice their concerns about the problematic aspects of growing up female, and participate in a joint endeavor of resolving the issues of facing them. (Bezhanova 1)

The advances and the attendant changes in the position of women have led many critics to believe that the post-1970s motif of the *Bildungsroman* “would concentrate on reflecting and celebrating a wider range of options now available in women’s lives” (Bezhanova 8). Although the contemporary *Bildungsroman* may depict innovative life styles for individuals, it has not completely dismissed the expected conventions and narrative techniques of earlier novels of development.

The novel of self-formation has had an impressive capacity and potential to transform and to adapt to changing historical, social, and cultural norms. Although new trends within the contemporary female novel of formation may differ from and contradict those of the nineteenth-century, these contradictions do not detract from the novels’ value of the *Bildungsroman*. This genre has notably developed in diverse and sometimes even opposite, directions. The existence of such distinct trends within the contemporary female *Bildungsroman* testifies to the genre’s capacity of adapting to the complexity of the world. Throughout this study, we have noted the substantial value of a body of theories that speak for themselves; they permit adaptation, detail and effectiveness, and we trust that it will offer continuity in the Spanish context. I conclude with the words of María Zambrano from her novel *Delirium and Destiny: A Spaniard in Her Twenties*:

To wake up is to be re-born each day. And the light is already waiting for us, whatever history or story that we must continue is already underway. To wake up is to enter a dream already in progress, to come from the pure desert of oblivion and, first thing, to enter our bodies, to remember them without rancor, to begin to inhabit them and reclaim our souls, with their memories, and our lives, with their tasks. Waking up is like entering a cocoon spun by countless industrious worms; we pick our threads again and return to work on the cocoon, where the worm-man labors tirelessly, producing the dreams that become objectified, making history.

(39)<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> From *Delirio y destino: Los veinte años de una española*. Ttranslated in English. See Zambrano, María. *Delirium and Destiny: A Spaniard in Her Twenties*. Translated by Carol Maier. United States: State University of New York Press, 1999.

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