

The Prohibited Backward Glance:  
Resisting Francoist Propaganda in Novels of Female Development

by

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## Abstract

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This dissertation examines the unique ways in which three canonical novels of female development subtly responded to the Francoist propaganda that surrounded their production. In order to better understand the covert resistance in Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960), and Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), I explore the strategies and patterns of the messaging presented to women in propagandistic magazines, textbooks, and manuals of social behavior published by the Sección Femenina (Women's Section) of Franco's regime. This propaganda promoted a model woman who was young, energetic, optimistic, cheerful, self-sacrificing, and just educated enough to educate her children; at the same time, internal paradoxes within the ideology of the Sección Femenina, the Falange, and the Franco regime provided apertures for critique, which I find in the selected novels. Building on the foundational work of David Herzberger, I read the authors' choice of the female *Bildungsroman* genre as an inherently subversive move for its emphasis on growth and individuality, particularly in a woman. I also see specific mechanisms in each novel that deconstructed particular elements of Francoist doctrine. By revisiting the archive and the canon, I forge a new way of approaching both hegemonic and fictional representations of womanhood.

In Chapter 1, "Andrea Writing and Wandering: Critical Passivity in Carmen Laforet's *Nada*," I show how Laforet questions in particular the requirement that women be both cheerful and subservient. While other critics have debated whether protagonist Andrea has grown or changed in order to argue that the novel can or cannot be categorized as a *Bildungsroman*, I see Andrea's passivity as in fact critical: she completely opts out of system by aimlessly wandering city streets, wasting money, and seeking both privacy and friendship in nonstandard ways. Chapter 2, "Destabilizing Dichotomies in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*," investigates how Matute also undermines Sección Femenina doctrine, in this case by focusing on the deconstruction of absolutes and the courting of complexity and uncertainty. Whereas the propaganda encourages unity of the individual, which in turn served the unity of society, Matute instead creates opposites that can coexist, such as a natural world that is both nurturing and menacing, which reflects a simultaneous fear and interest in growing up. Finally in Chapter 3, "In Search of Breadcrumbs: Circling Back Through the Past in Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*," I turn to the only work in this study that was published after Franco's death, which

Franco's death, which allows Martín Gaité to bring to the forefront many of the issues only hinted at in the previous two works. In performing the prohibited backward glance that she discusses in her historical work, she boldly circles back through her past memories in order to reclaim them; as she loops through history, memory, conversations, and storytelling, she rejects the mundane circularity imposed upon women.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	ii
Introduction “Prohibido mirar hacia atrás”	1
Chapter 1 Andrea Writing and Wandering: Critical Passivity in Carmen Laforet’s <i>Nada</i>	20
Chapter 2 Destabilizing Dichotomies in Ana María Matute’s <i>Primera memoria</i>	45
Chapter 3 In Search of Breadcrumbs: Circling Back Through the Past in Carmen Martín Gaité’s <i>El cuarto de atrás</i>	75
Conclusion Looking Back, Looking Forward	103
Works Cited	106

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## Introduction

### “Prohibido mirar hacia atrás”

In her well known historical work *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987), Carmen Martín Gaité famously claims that during the three-decade dictatorship of Francisco Franco it was “Prohibido mirar hacia atrás” (13), particularly back to the brutal realities of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and to daily life in the immediate postwar. In her memory it was plagued with hunger, cold, rationing, social control—to mention nothing of the more systematic violence committed against the Spanish people. The repression of these memories, and then the great deluge of memoirs and novels of memory after Franco’s death in 1975, has become ubiquitous in Spanish literary history, and Martín Gaité’s 1978 novel, *El cuarto de atrás* (the subject of the third chapter of this dissertation), is her contribution to and critique of that explosion of narrative production after Franco’s death. The act of writing about the past takes on a subversive nature when framed in this context. Critic David Herzberger has made a similar claim in his seminal book *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” (2).

Martín Gaité reminds us in her introduction to *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* of the important connections between history and fiction:

empecé a reflexionar sobre la relación que tiene la historia con las historias y a pensar que, si había conseguido dar un tratamiento de novela a aquel material extraído de los archivos, también podía intentar un experimento al revés: es decir, aplicar un criterio de monografía histórica al material que, por proceder del archivo de mi propia memoria, otras veces había elaborado en forma de novela. (11-12)

For Martín Gaité herself, this historical work is intrinsically connected to *El cuarto de atrás*, which provides an aperture that hints at the kind of inter-genre work that can be done—not only within an author’s own oeuvre, as Sara Brenneis has adeptly done in her book *Genre Fusion*, but also by placing it, along with works by other authors who also dared to recover history, against Francoist rhetoric. In the specific case of works written by and about women, the task that this dissertation addresses is a sustained close reading of the Sección Femenina (Women’s Section) archives alongside new readings of the novels of female development produced at or shortly after that time, looking back on the period of the postwar. In this way I continue Martín Gaité’s project of performing the prohibited backward glance—into the archives *and* into the individual histories and stories of the past.

In her attempt to explain youth culture and behavior in the 1940s and 1950s in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, Martín Gaité cites the huge corpus of propaganda geared toward women. She had already alluded to this same propagandistic output in *El cuarto de atrás*, and her autobiographically slanted protagonist C. feels overwhelmed by the very project that Martín Gaité completes with *Usos amorosos*. Yet literary studies of the second half of the

twentieth century have largely forgotten about the Francoist propaganda that surrounded the production of many of the great literary works of the period. I read Martín Gaité's opening of the archive as an invitation—perhaps even a challenge or call to action—to continue investigating the archives of Francoist, and especially Sección Femenina, publications. When she tells us that it was “prohibido mirar hacia atrás” during the Franco dictatorship, she also shows us in her post-1975 writings that the backward glance is precisely what authors need to be doing in their narratives—and precisely what scholars need to be doing in our research.

Following her lead, I have revisited the archives, in particular those of the Sección Femenina, paying special attention to the rhetorical and metaphorical techniques that the regime used in its attempts to coax women into submission. This archival work illuminates new aspects of well known novels written in that context. It also helps us remember that when Carmen Laforet and Ana María Matute, the other authors selected for examination in this dissertation, were writing during the dictatorship, their readers understood that they were responding to a shared cultural context, even when they could only obliquely mention its causes and difficulties. Martín Gaité was able to be more explicit in her critique of Franco in *El cuarto de atrás*, so I now take that impetus from her own work in order to revisit the canon of postwar novels of female development by Spanish women. In doing so, we can understand more of the nuances of the literary production by these three key women as covert critical responses to the propagandistic production of the regime. Through this work, I am forging a new dialogue between canon and archive, and between hegemonic and individual representations of femininity.

This study considers these novels *in their context*, and investigates them as veiled responses to the proliferation of anti-woman values in woman-centered propaganda, such as magazines, manuals of social behavior, and speeches at Sección Femenina conferences. Through my archival work at the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid and the Geisel Library at University of California, San Diego,<sup>1</sup> I highlight some of the specific rhetorical and stylistic strategies the regime used in an attempt to control women's homes, bodies, and thoughts. The omnipresence of this invasive propaganda explains why novels of female development would become such an attractive genre for women writers. I am then able to utilize the three selected novels—Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960), and Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*—as case studies of subtle resistance to the State's norm, placing the texts in their context in order to highlight the complexity and subtleties of their subversive nature. In contrast to the state's infantilization and control of women, the three novels question and undermine the prescribed roles for women by emphasizing growth, exploration, and independence.

Building on Herzberger's work, I also show how the appropriation of the *Bildungsroman* genre by women in the postwar period means that these novels are inherently subversive: they undermine official State historiography as they focus on growth and look backward to a past that does not always agree with the State-sanctified History. In particular, the home and family become doubly problematic, not only due to the normal, generic growing pains and increased independence of adolescents navigating their way toward adulthood, which strain family relations even in the best of cases, but also more acutely so because of the distorted and atavistic sense of family and womanhood created by the Spanish Civil War and Franco's regime. Adolescent girls, deprived of the opportunity to strike out on their own and find an independence defined as masculine, had to do so in another way. By drawing these connections, my

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<sup>1</sup> The magazine *Y* has been digitized and is available through the Hemeroteca Digital of the Biblioteca Nacional de España. I viewed *Y* and all other publications in person as hard copies or on microfilm.



dissertation illuminates the subtly and inherently subversive nature of books detailing female development. Additionally, identifying these conflicts in the three selected novels of development reveals paradoxes inherent in the Francoist regime and the Sección Femenina, particularly regarding women and families.

This dissertation also builds on previous scholarship, as well as gaps in that scholarship, by attempting to bridge the divide between, on the one hand, close reading and literary and theoretical analysis of postwar novels of female development, and, on the other, historical research on the understudied archive of Francoist and Sección Femenina propaganda. I place the novel, arguably the most literary of the literary genres, alongside State propaganda, which is not traditionally “literature” at all. In doing so, I am interested in analyzing how the State constructs femininity, and how individual women construct their own versions of (fictional) femininity in response to that construct. In the three novels, I show how each author finds spaces in which she can resist authoritarian power in her subject matter and also in her specific rhetorical and stylistic conventions. The goal of the dissertation, then, is to use these three canonical novels as case studies for what I identify as a covert resistance to State discourse, tying them together in new ways and placing them back in their historical context via the archive.

In considering Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité’s novels together and alongside the Sección Femenina propaganda, this dissertation will also delve into questions of the coming-of-age novel, and its historical importance as a subversive genre. As we are well aware, literature does not exist in a vacuum. And neither does propaganda. In this dissertation, I am interested in the as-yet unnoticed crossings and intertextualities between these modalities. What were the Sección Femenina magazines saying, not saying, implying, or insinuating about where women belong or do not belong? In return, what messages about the regime and its propaganda can we read in important novels by and about women, and the spaces their female characters carve out for themselves? How, during the Franco regime, did these writers create protagonists who resist and subvert Francoist expectations of women? What were their strategies for looking back and for representing a divided, resisting consciousness? I begin this work with some of the most well known novels in the hopes that it can expand toward a more thorough investigation of fiction that encodes opposition to the regime.

## **The Paradoxical Sección Femenina of the Falange**

Central to the backdrop of the novels analyzed in this dissertation is the status of women at different stages of the Franco dictatorship, and how that status was influenced by the continuous Falangist ideology of the Sección Femenina, its Women’s Section. The regime attempted to control all citizens in order to achieve a unified Spain, and paid particular attention to women through its Sección Femenina. This branch of Franco’s government was run for its duration by Pilar Primo de Rivera (1907-1991), sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1903-1936), who had been the leader of the Falange party. In reality, in its goals and methods, the Sección Femenina both supported and undermined the greater goals and methods of Franco’s regime, as Martín Gaité has adeptly shown in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*. These contradictions exposed the various paradoxes and ambiguities within the structure of the Sección Femenina, the Falange, and the Francoist government, as well as crucial apertures for the subtle criticisms that I will demonstrate in the novels.

Franco gained power by drawing support from a conglomeration of right-wing groups (including the aforementioned Falange), which he managed to unify despite some ideological differences. Most important for his eventual success, as well as for a study of the Sección Femenina and their (attempted) influence on Spanish women, was the Falange party, which had been founded in 1934 by José Antonio (son of 1920s dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera) and was influenced by fascist Ramiro Ledesma Ramos and by Italian fascism (Payne, “Franco” 191-192). The Falange party, much like others who embraced right-wing ideologies at the time, emphasized Spain’s previous greatness as an empire, and sought to regain that honor and pride by rejecting its most recent history, which it portrayed as catastrophic, due to the influence of modern, liberal, cosmopolitan ideas that conflicted with their idea of traditional Spanish values. The leftist government that promulgated these modernizing ideas was characterized as an immense threat to the one true Spain. José Antonio and the Falange party claimed that they were healing the nation. He said, “We have the will of Empire... We reclaim for Spain a position of pre-eminence in Europe... we support a unifying of culture, of economic interests and of power” (qtd. in Richmond 2).

The Falange, though small, began to garner more support through its opposition to the Frente Popular, the leftist party which barely won the 1936 elections. During that same year, José Antonio was executed in a Republican prison,<sup>2</sup> and Franco led his rebellion (which would start the Civil War) based on similar political principles. Membership to the Falange grew. A few months later, in 1937, Franco’s Decree of Unification merged all the right-wing parties together as a kind of nationalist coalition under the Falange. Franco did not agree with all the Falange’s positions, and in fact was accused of having “emptied José Antonio’s movement of all ideological content” (Ofer 17). Most prominent was Franco’s interdependence with the Catholic Church, which was not as central for the Falange. Franco “was a strong nationalist, believed in undivided authoritarian rule, traditional Catholic religion and culture, an economy based on private property but highly regulated and controlled by a system of state corporatism, and the imperative justice of empire as exercised by superior peoples” (Payne, “Franco” 195). Despite the differences between Francoism and Falangism, Franco knew that he could take advantage of the Falange name as a means of drumming up more support toward winning the Civil War and harnessing control afterward. He also made good use of the Falange’s “hierarchical structure and doctrine of obedience to its leader” (Richmond 3) as he pushed forward his own *nacional-catolicismo*. To maintain Pilar and her Sección Femenina as allies, he publicly thanked the Sección Femenina and “set out its mandate for the post-war period. It was to organize training of all women, to equip them for life in post-war Spain” (Richmond 8), which meant, of course, a life as homemakers, wives, and mothers to future Spaniards.

In the postwar period, however, famine and fear continued as Franco consolidated power and established his regime. He allowed some Falangist departments to expand, but these programs would later fade away or become little more than “bureaucratic entities” after the Second World War (Richmond 4). In contrast, the Sección Femenina “maintained its original structures, ideology and programme with only minor changes up to the end of the Franco regime” and “retained its credential as the part of the National Movement truest to the doctrinal

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<sup>2</sup> José Antonio Primo de Rivera’s execution solidified his status as an almost divine figurehead, a martyr for the cause whose words could be recycled ad nauseam in Falangist propaganda. Richmond has shown how his sister Pilar took advantage of her connection to him, both to continue his legacy and to bolster her own position of power within the Sección Femenina. See also Stanley Payne’s “Franco, the Spanish Falange and the Institutionalisation of Mission,” p. 193.

purity of its early years through the identity and political motivation of its leader, Pilar Primo de Rivera, who was José Antonio's sister and Miguel's daughter" (Richmond 4).<sup>3</sup> Thus, while Franco emptied out most of what had constituted the Falange, the Sección Femenina was allowed to continue operating in a manner very similar to its original establishment. The Sección Femenina's adherence to the original Falangist ideology of José Antonio makes for an interesting triangulation of belief systems, as the Sección Femenina's Falangism was not always in direct alignment with Franco's *nacional-catolicismo*. It is precisely because of this "doctrinal purity" of the Sección Femenina that I see it as important to understand and focus on the *nacionalsindicalismo* of José Antonio, as we consider how the Sección Femenina attempted to control women throughout the Franco regime, even as Franco loosened many of his policies over the decades.

Pilar led the Sección Femenina from its founding in 1934 until its dismantling in 1977. Much scholarship has emphasized her dedication to the memory of her brother in the form of her mission to uphold and promote his original Falangist doctrine. Yet she herself embodies one of the many paradoxes inherent in the Sección Femenina. Despite traditional Spanish views and Falangist and Francoist doctrines that seemed to embody the separate-spheres model of gender relations by highlighting women's roles as wives and mothers (Enders and Radcliffe 3), women held major leadership roles in the Sección Femenina. This began with Pilar, who, along with a few other women, demanded entry into early Falange meetings and active participation in the cause (Richmond 6), leading to the creation of the Sección Femenina. This fundamental ambiguity persisted throughout the Sección Femenina's existence—precisely because its leaders were women, yet its official dogma (and that of Franco's leadership) maintained that a woman's first duty was to her family, and "political participation was discouraged as unfeminine" (Brooksbank Jones 2). While Pilar and a few other right-wing women were insisting that women belonged at home, they were also insisting on participating in political activities. Pilar never married or had children, and she had a clear desire to be politically involved, but her brother José Antonio's personal beliefs and political ideology would have prevented her from doing so. Pilar's task, then, was "how to develop the separate role of women as outlined by her brother to fulfill Falangist aspirations without challenging the authority of the male" (Richmond 8).

One of the major ways she did so was through an emphasis on what was considered a woman's realm: homemaking and childcare, with special interest paid to domestic usefulness and efficiency (particularly in the immediate postwar). The regime strove for separate spheres through explicit laws and interventions, as well as through the work of the Sección Femenina. For example, Franco reversed Republican laws by returning to the Civil Code of 1889, which subordinated women to the authoritarian male head of family, in his eyes returning women to where they belonged before liberalism and capitalism disrupted things. Under this law, married

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<sup>3</sup> Striking in Sección Femenina publications, including some textbooks even in their third editions and published into the 1960s, is the lasting dedication to José Antonio and his *Nacionalsindicalismo*, a trend which Martín Gaité and other historians have noted as well. Whereas Franco's regime enveloped (and some would say even co-opted) the Falange, just one of many conservative groups that he successfully aligned, the Sección Femenina clung to the representation of José Antonio as a demi-god for far longer than the Francoist government's official ideology did. This dedication to the original mission of José Antonio, the references to him in the present tense even after his death, the constant recycling of some of his famous quotations—took place not only in the textbooks but also the magazines and other propaganda circulated by the Sección Femenina. The textbooks and teachers' manuals cited in this Introduction, editions from 1960, continued to cite José Antonio's words and ideas; the teachings of the Sección Femenina were based very clearly in his philosophies and beliefs.

women's legal status was the same as that of minors, with her husband as her legal guardian. Furthermore, the 1938 Fuero de Trabajo (Labor Charter) was the first law that restricted women's work, reading that "el Estado en especial prohibirá el trabajo nocturno de las mujeres, regulará el trabajo a domicilio y libertará a la mujer casada del taller y de la fábrica" (qtd. in Brooksbank Jones 75). The rhetoric of liberation in this discourse on work is ironic but was echoed throughout Catholic and Francoist writings and propaganda: the new government would free women from oppressive workplaces, thereby improving their health and the health of their children. Instead of actually granting freedoms to women, this kind of law toyed with language and claimed that women were being freed *from* oppression. The regime characterized feminist notions as anti-Spain, and even anti-woman, since allowing women to work, for example, would tear them away from their homes and families (Richmond 14). State intervention and control of marriage and family life was, of course, a crucial aspect to Franco's rule, especially because women were raising future generations of Spaniards (Nash, *Represión* xi).<sup>4</sup>

The Sección Femenina upheld these legal changes by also seeking to control women and "promot[ing] female education and culture in the belief that women were *de facto* educators of their children" (Brooksbank Jones 10). Its female leaders were trained and then passed their knowledge on to other women, which meant that the organization "used women themselves to drive home its reactionary message to the whole of the female population...to intervene in the lives of other women to ensure their compliance with the regime's social and political aims and themselves serve as exemplars of traditional gender roles" (Richmond 14). Examples they were not, however, as we will see below. The Sección Femenina established a "Servicio Social" (social service), which was a six-month course covering "topics including religion, the family, sewing, domestic science and economy, childcare and physical education" and requiring volunteer work (Richmond 9). This course was mandatory for women seeking a passport or drivers license, among other things (Richmond 9). A 2011 documentary produced by Radiotelevisión Española (RTVE), "La 'mili de las mujeres,'" estimates that in its forty years of operation over three million women participated in the Servicio Social program ("La 'mili' de las mujeres").

Magazines such as *Y: Revista para la mujer nacional sindicalista* (which ran 1938-1946), *Teresa* (1954-1977), and *Medina* (1939-1946) were issued by the Sección Femenina (specifically by their Servicio de Prensa y Propaganda) around the country and heavily marketed. According to Ángela Cenarro, *Y* and *Teresa* reached a distribution of 18,000 and 20,000, respectively, in 1945 (95). Amidst articles on beauty, fashion, home décor, and gardening, the magazines also featured updates on the party and the Sección Femenina as well articles on ideology, history, and religion. Interviews, quizzes, short stories or poetry, advice columns, photo montages and illustrations, recipes, and advertisements comingled between their covers. They inculcated readers with messages of traditional values that encouraged marriage, family, and homemaking, while also attempting to modernize and rejuvenate those messages and tailor them to their contemporary audience. The magazines adhered to the established norms of women's magazines: "el predominio de un tono personal, próximo al epistolar, más propio del diálogo que de un sistema de difusión hacia una masa anónima, una temática centrada en el hogar, la maternidad y la moda y el cultivo del género narrativo, como la novela amorosa o el relato moralizante" (Cenarro 95). The diversity of topics covered in the magazines and their wide diffusion made

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Nash's edited collection, *Represión, resistencias, memoria: Las mujeres bajo la dictadura franquista*, provides a thorough collection of articles that investigate the more concrete ways in which women were legally repressed and incarcerated under Franco's rule.

them “fuentes privilegiadas para explorar su potencial desestabilizador de las versiones más rígidas de la feminidad normativa franquista” (Cenarro 96).

An additional promoter of traditional feminine roles was, of course, the Catholic Church, which had supported the Nationalists in the Civil War and been an ally to Franco. Catholicism was a key element in the new yet traditional Spanish identity that Franco promoted; in fact “the regime sought to fuse Catholicism with the concept of fatherland and national identity” (Morcillo 28). Catholicism was also fundamental in the revival of Spain’s glory days. For the Sección Femenina, this connection to Catholicism meant a renewed interest in historical Catholic women like the Virgin Mary, Queen Isabel, and Saint Teresa of Avila (the latter two inspired the names of the magazines *Y* and *Teresa*, respectively), as well as a return to Renaissance writings on the proper role of wives (Morcillo 4). The Sección Femenina further aligned itself with Catholic ideals by “using a discourse of abnegation and sacrifice” in the trainings and propaganda geared toward women (Morcillo 25). Some contentions between the Sección Femenina and the Church did arise, as in for example the Sección Femenina’s emphasis on physical education (Richmond 24). It was important to disassociate the physical education from feminism or from leisure, instead promoting health with the goal of childbearing, while also maintaining a certain degree of modesty around the female body (Richmond 25-26). Richmond uses this conflict surrounding women’s physical education as an example to explain that while the common goal was promoting the Nationalist cause, “the dynamism which SF’s elites wished to instill in the female population did not sit easily with traditional Catholic virtues of modesty and self-effacement” (Richmond 28). Despite what she sees as grey areas, though, Franco, the Sección Femenina, and the Church were generally aligned in their valuing of the family, and their insistence that a woman’s role was to serve the State by serving the family. The public became private, and vice versa.

While the regime and the Church together promoted the home as a woman’s space, the Sección Femenina simultaneously encouraged education and work for women, at least for some women, to some extent. This highlights another internal conflict of the Sección Femenina: logistically and metaphorically speaking, how could they spread Francoist ideals among the teachers and mothers of the nation’s future, all the while keeping women in the home and maintaining their distance from the liberal ideals and programs of the Second Republic? The desire for a productive citizen was one that conflicted with the demand for a traditional female figure: the Sección Femenina’s “vision of woman as an active participant in the economic and spiritual reconstruction of the nation was consonant with the fascist ideal of a mobilized population ready to tackle problems in a modern, dynamic way. But this had to be weighed against another fascist imperative—the rejection of liberal politics and the freedoms they implied” (Brooksbank Jones 75). The vast majority of women had to be educated via the Social Service courses, in addition to their normal schooling. In another ironic twist, the existence of the Sección Femenina meant hundreds of positions for women to volunteer or work on the payroll, as *mandos* (the elite members), provincial leaders, local leaders, specialist teachers, etc. This framework mirrored that of the male Falange (Richmond 7).<sup>5</sup> The Sección Femenina also organized leadership conferences and set up schools to train its staff, the central one in a castle called La Mota, which Franco had restored after the war so that the Sección Femenina could utilize it. In addition to the Sección Femenina’s internal training and summits and their Social Service for all women who wished to travel or study, the Sección Femenina also ran, beginning

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the structure of the leadership, employees, and volunteers of the Sección Femenina, see also Inbal Ofer, p. 7.

in 1946, a network of *cátedras ambulantes*, or traveling schools, which sent teams of teachers from town to town to combat rural illiteracy and teach skills such as health, homemaking, and the like (Ortiz Heras 8).

As a contrast to the official emphasis on marriage and family, though, much of the Sección Femenina's leadership consisted of *solteras*, or single women, like Pilar (Ofer 21). They wore severe uniforms of blue shirts and black skirts, with hair short or pulled tightly back, and no makeup or jewelry—all designed to downplay their sexuality or femininity and to highlight their seriousness (Ofer 39). The female elite of the Sección Femenina further embodied just the kind of woman whom they warned against, by their very existence as paid female employees. The Social Service courses, run by these single, visually androgynous, working women, taught Spanish women to value the exact opposite: femininity, stylish dress, marriage, and homemaking, to name just a few. Ofer explores the topic of spinsterhood in *Señoritas in Blue* and compares the choice to remain single among many Sección Femenina leaders as similar to that of women who enter the convent. The dedication to political service as a reason for remaining single was common in fascist Italy and Germany as well (Ofer 43-45). Ofer also found in interviews with delegates of the Sección Femenina that many women denied that their membership had been the reason for their "spinsterhood," instead claiming it had been a personal decision. In any case, she shows, being single allowed them to work, travel, and claim a unique legal status—all despite Francoist's official disapproval of the single woman (Ofer 48-49). This contradicts the idea that they were traditional role models to Spanish women; if anything, they were modeling an alternative lifestyle.

It is within this multifaceted context that authors such as Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité were able to subtly point out and exploit these paradoxes. More specifically, I would like to show that with novels of female development, they showcase the conflicts both within and outside of this problematic definition of womanhood. As their young characters Andrea, Matia, and C. navigate the complexities of growing up in the postwar period, they face more than the standard issues of rebelling against authority and finding their own way.

## **A Unified Self, Family, and State: Falangist and Francoist Ideology in Daily Life**

In *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, Martín Gaité outlines and criticizes a variety of the ideals of the Sección Femenina, with her focus on gender relations, as they were presented to the public through publications. Her tone is, of course, critical and sarcastic, as she exposes the idiosyncrasies and paradoxes of the expectations of women and the manner in which these expectations were communicated and enforced. Martín Gaité notices important patterns in the messaging of the Sección Femenina, which will be important in the literary analysis I will develop further. Her exploration of the textual productions of the regime focuses on magazines and newspapers. I would like to also complement that work by including Sección Femenina textbooks as well, in order to provide another layer to the multifaceted, all-encompassing propaganda. The textbooks furthermore provide a more formal and regimented presentation of Falangist ideology.

A principal piece in the regime's messaging, according to Martín Gaité, was the idea of *bendito atraso*, the topic of her first chapter. She claims, "Frente a otros países más avanzados por su tecnología o su riqueza, nosotros no teníamos más baza que la de seguir siendo siempre españoles, que consistía más que nada en decir una y otra vez que no queríamos parecernos a

nadie” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 34). Franco’s regime presented liberal, cosmopolitan, global modernity as dangerous and undesirable. Seemingly paradoxically, this adherence to backwardness conflicts with another tenet of the regime: the prohibition to look back. In reality, the desire for a triumphant history meant that only specific moments of that history could be remembered, in particular the “Golden Age” of Spain.

It was also in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* that I found signposts for the archival work I have done. Martín Gaité has suggested patterns in the representation of the ideal woman, and I have found systematic examples for these patterns in the magazines and beyond. Most of all, she claims, women were supposed to find husbands. The ultimate goal of all the other critiques, recommendations, and prescriptions was to become an eligible wife, and it was inconceivable that a woman might desire any other course in her life: in her own words, “Se daba por supuesto, efectivamente, que ninguna mujer podía acariciar sueño más hermoso que el de la sumisión a un hombre, y que si decía lo contrario estaba mintiendo” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 45). Advice columns proliferated in women’s magazines, and nearly all of them, she claims, revolved around this desire to find a husband. While fishing licenses for women required a certificate of completion of the Servicio Social, Martín Gaité jokes that “pescar marido” was a completely appropriate kind of fishing (*Usos amorosos* 60). Marriage was promoted not only in magazines, and not only for frivolous reasons: it was logistically necessary for the physical reproduction of Falangist subjects, so it was woven into Falangist ideology. We can see an example of this self-propagating theory in the second edition of *Formación Político-Social. Texto para el profesorado de la Sección Femenina* (1960), which was the teachers’ manual for Sección Femenina classes on the topic. First, the text emphasizes the importance of a stable union for reproduction: “La propagación de la especie se obtiene no por concurso fortuito, accidental o transitorio de los dos sexos, sino por unión estable y singular del hombre con la mujer” (*Texto para el profesorado* 29-30).<sup>6</sup> With the scientific diction, the text implies that this point of view is a fact rather than an opinion, and therefore cannot and should not be questioned. The Sección Femenina text defines the roles of men and women in a marriage so as to uphold the patriarchal hierarchy and the separate spheres doctrine: “En la sociedad conyugal la jerarquía la tiene el marido por preeminencia del sexo, queda desterrada la doctrina de la paridad de sexos. Si al marido le es entregada la autoridad, en cambio a la mujer se le entregan los trabajos domésticos. Hay luego deberes mutuos: amor, fidelidad, asistencia, apoyo, etc.” (*Texto para el profesorado* 30). Inequality of the sexes is a given.

Martín Gaité’s critique centers on magazines, which were rife with recommendations for the woman desiring a husband. Above all, she should aim to be as uncomplicated as possible, and this had various implications. To give one example, smiling and cheerfulness were central. Martín Gaité writes, “Las prédicas sobre la sonrisa femenina como panacea son incontables en las publicaciones de la época y tienen una clara vinculación con la ideología de la mujer fuerte y animosa propugnada por la Sección Femenina de Falange” (*Usos amorosos* 40). Martín Gaité does incorporate a literary example into her work, but it is to quote the novel *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*, written by Sección Femenina member Carmen de Icaza, who writes, “la vida sonríe a quien le sonríe, no a quien la hace muecas” (qtd. in *Usos amorosos* 40). Indeed, my research has shown that Sección Femenina publications promote a cheerful attitude, even (especially) in the face of adversity, which gives different meaning and power to the pessimism

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<sup>6</sup> In order to distinguish it from the student textbook, I will cite this teachers’ manual here and in future mentions as *Texto para el profesorado*. Its full title, as listed in the Works Cited, is *Formación Político-Social. Texto para el profesorado de la Sección Femenina*.

and doubt of *Nada*, *Primera memoria*, and *El cuarto de atrás*: more than just imperfect attempts at the *Bildungsroman*, the books question and resist the qualities expected of women. When Andrea, Matia, and C. refuse to smile, their authors implicitly acknowledged their readers' resistance.

Also in line with the reduction of complexity was the very unsurprising collocation of woman in the house. Her tasks were simple, useful, and never-ending, and she was to do them happily. Martín Gaité points to an example from the magazine *Y*, in June 1944, in which Marichu de la Mora writes, "Leemos diferentes artículos, y una cosa queda clara en nuestro espíritu femenino: que en resumidas cuentas, ¡por fin!, hay un Estado que se ocupa de realizar un sueño de tantas mujeres españolas: el ser amas de casa" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 53). The implication is that women *want* to take on this role—indeed, have always wanted to—and feel a sense of relief at a government that will finally allow them to fulfill the duties of homemaker with pride.

This resistance to complexity is a reflection of the greater Falangist ideal of unity, which continued to be central in Francoist ideology as well.<sup>7</sup> José Antonio's brand of fascism promoted unity above all else; he wrote, "Fascism is not a tactic—violence. It is an idea—unity" (qtd. in Payne, *Fascism* 79). There was to be only one true Spain, and only one true History of Spain: "Una retórica mesiánica y triunfal, empeñada en minimizar las secuelas de aquella catástrofe, entonaba himnos al porvenir. Habían vencido los buenos" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 13). In a series of textbooks entitled *Formación político-social* published by the Sección Femenina,<sup>8</sup> themes such as *unidad* and *convivencia* play a key role in attempts to explain the natural state of humankind as one that supports, leads to, and reproduces *Nacionalsindicalismo*.

For example, in the curriculum for the second year of the *bachillerato*, the first lesson explains the origins and reasoning behind the "unidades de convivencia," which are based in the fact of human sociability, a quality defined as "tender desde lo íntimo de su ser a relacionarse con otros hombres, a vivir con ellos, a ayudarlos, a buscar su protección también y a realizar en comunidad obras importantes que solo nunca podría llevar a cabo" (*Formación político-social* 7). The supposedly God-given quality of sociability also helps humans "desterrar la soledad y el egoísmo, y produce en el hombre sentimientos elevados de generosidad, de cooperación, de patriotismo, de servicio a la humanidad y de caridad o amor al prójimo" (*Formación político-social* 7). Because of this natural, inherent human quality, the textbook explains, men have created *unidades de convivencia*, such as the family, the community, the government, the Patria; all these *unidades* share three basic qualities: "La Unidad (material o espiritual)" (*Formación político-social* 8-9), "el Fin (un destino)" (*Formación político-social* 8), and "la Jerarquía" (*Formación político-social* 11). Each *unidad* builds on the one below it, explaining why the Falange would have wanted to control each level—in the context of this dissertation, it explains why looking at representations of the self and the family can convey meanings about the government and the country; all are intertwined, purposefully and by design. The lesson in the

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<sup>7</sup> See Anny Brooksbank Jones, David Herzberger, Jo Labanyi, or Kathleen Richmond, among others.

<sup>8</sup> I have chosen to focus on textbooks and teachers' manuals alongside the magazines analyzed by Martín Gaité for a few reasons. First, I was interested in the whole of the Sección Femenina's publication output. Second, the textbooks and teachers' manuals represent the polished presentation of ideology as the Sección Femenina hoped and planned it would be presented to children and young adults, who are the protagonists of the coming-of-age novels I will study in the dissertation. While these textbooks are not explicitly mentioned in the novels, we can assume that the three authors and their female readers were at the very least aware of them because of the Sección Femenina's required Servicio Social.



textbook is followed by discussion questions and a reading from the Bible, reinforcing the partnership between Francoist and Catholic doctrine.

Analyzing the teachers' manual alongside the student curriculum also brings insights into the goals of this indoctrination, offering much greater detail and deeper explanations, since it provides detailed tables of the “esquema filosófico del Nacionalindicalismo” (*Texto para el profesorado* 11) and the “esquema sociológico del Nacionalindicalismo” (*Texto para el profesorado* 17), accompanied by long explanations. In discussing the philosophy behind Falangism, the emphasis is on unifying disparate parts, since José Antonio pursued “un pleno interés por *unificar* los elementos disgregadores de su tiempo: la razón y la fe, la autoridad y la libertad, el alma y el cuerpo, el destino temporal y el destino eterno, la jerarquía eclesiástica y el poder civil” (*Texto para el profesorado* 11). A primary goal of forging a new Spain was finding—or forcing—unity between differences. This goal referred not only to the empire but also to the other *unidades de convivencia*, as well as to each individual. The text continues, “De la concepción del hombre como ser íntegro, en el cual lo material y espiritual, lo individual y social, debidamente jerarquizados, se conjugan, surge el Nacionalindicalismo” (*Texto para el profesorado* 12). My approach keeps in mind the idea of an integrated whole self who submits himself to the integrated whole society, in particular as I analyze the individual voices of young, female protagonists who live on the margins of their society. Indeed, the Sección Femenina writes further in the teachers' manual, “El individuo—como tal individuo—no entra directamente a formar parte de la historia, sino sólo como ser social” (*Texto para el profesorado* 35), stating clearly that the individual had little purpose beyond his or her service to the whole society; in fact, “El hombre es el sistema” (*Texto para el profesorado* 15). In this way, simply the act of writing an individual story, a novel focused on the growth and maturity of one protagonist, is a step away from the regime's ideology. Furthermore, when we hear Andrea, Matia, and C., we gain access to individual voices who do not conform to the prescribed roles in other ways, both subtle and overt. And their stories undermine various ideas of unity as defined by the regime.

Indeed, this nonconformity is what Brenneis signals when she writes about marginalized (leftist) Spanish writers, the “losers of the war who could not get behind the dictator's unflinching rhetoric of triumphalism” and who “did not fit the mold of this single, unifying truth/myth/history” (90). Brenneis claims that their stories “can only be explored in alternate histories. But these texts were considered subversive during the dictatorship, and thus were rare. However, they proliferated once Franco's death permitted a diversity of opinion that began to challenge openly the dictator's monolithic historical truth” (90). While the idea that subversive texts were uncommon during the postwar and dictatorship and then were allowed to come to fruition during the Transition rings true for many scholars, I think there is another way to understand those postwar texts that might *seem* less subversive or have even been read as pro-regime (indeed, two of the three I've chosen were even granted national literary awards during the Franco regime, despite their protagonists' nonconformity). We can all agree that Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* is an open criticism of Franco, and that this form of direct statements could only be published after his death—but there are also traces and hints of this criticism in earlier works. My approach to these traces builds on the work of Herzberger, who finds a subversive questioning of Francoist historiography in the social realist project of the mid-twentieth century.

I also see a unique aperture for women writers, who were already marginalized; in some ways, this allowed for them to be considered less seriously, even as they were awarded prizes.

The Sección Femenina's own magazine, *Teresa*, ran an article in December 1955 titled "Rafael Vázquez Zamora rechaza la acusación de feminista que se hace al jurado del Nadal" with photos of such authors as Carmen Laforet, Elena Quiroga, and Luisa Forrellad. The title implies that *feminista* is, of course, a negative term. The brief unauthored interview with Vázquez Zamora, the secretary of the committee that selected recipients of the country's prestigious Nadal prize, features just two questions. First, when asked "¿qué concepto le merece la mujer novelista?" he responds:

Bueno, francamente bueno. La mujer, como escritora de novelas, posee unas cualidades muy eficaces. Puede que al sexo femenino le falte genialidad, y tal vez por eso ninguna mujer conquista todavía una posición señera dentro de la novela. Me refiero a que no se ha dado todavía un Dostoyewski, un Balzac o un Dickens [sic] entre las mujeres. Esto es lo que nos dice la historia, de ésta y de todas las artes; que lo que vaya a depararnos al porvenir está, naturalmente, por saber. A la mujer le sobran condiciones para el relato, y como, a mi juicio, contar un historia dentro de una novela es algo capital, entiendo que para este menester la mujer está incluso mejor dotada que el hombre. ("Rafael Vázquez Zamora" 44)

Second, to the question of why so many women have received the Nadal prize, he responds that the question is absurd, clarifying that in fact only four women have won over the course of eleven prizes awarded. In both his responses, Vázquez Zamora implies that women writers have an advantage in the kind of perception necessary for writing novels, but he also minimizes their achievements by claiming that they can never compare to the great writers of the nineteenth century—to mention nothing of Galdós or Cervantes. There is a fundamental contradiction in his simultaneous praise and critique, which echoes the many internal paradoxes of the Franco regime and the doublespeak they required to try to explain them.

According to Falangist ideology, the *unidades de convivencia* all served a purpose in fulfilling the ultimate "destino," as outlined in the aforementioned textbook: "El destino familiar es la educación de los hijos; el destino escolar, la educación de la juventud; el destino sindical o laboral, el trabajo; el destino municipal, el bien de las familias; el destino de la Patria, el participar en las empresas del mundo" (*Formación político-social* 8). In the words of Martín Gaité, this meant for women something very different from what it meant for men:

El hombre era un núcleo permanente de referencia abstracta para aquellas ejemplares penélopes condenadas a coser, a 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. (*Usos amorosos* 72)

Men and women each had a role in supporting and fulfilling their respective *destino*. The separate spheres doctrine dominated the official messaging even from childhood; understanding

this fact, we can see how the three novels selected for examination in this dissertation undermine some of the core tenets of Falangism and Francoism.

The lessons around the idea of *destino* emphasize the family as one of the *unidades de convivencia* with a central aim: “la generación y perfección de los hijos” (*Texto para el profesorado* 19). Furthermore, the text continues,

La familia educa a los hijos, evidentemente, en función de la salvación, pero atendiendo a las vertientes de su individualidad y de su sociabilidad. De ahí la importancia del cumplimiento de esta tarea educativa en el orden social y político. Pues la familia educa a sus miembros también como sujetos políticos, esto es, como sujetos participantes de una forma de convivencia humana superior. (*Texto para el profesorado* 20)

The regime hopes that the hierarchy of the patriarchal family will churn out more productive members of their society—certainly not a novel idea in the growth of a totalitarian political movement. But José Antonio attempted to distinguish his *Nacionalsindicalismo* from other totalitarianism regimes by explaining, “De los sistemas totalitarios que surgieron por reacción al liberalismo y el marxismo (fascismo, nazismo), el nacionalsindicalismo supera a éstos por haber visto al hombre desde el punto de vista de su integridad” (*Texto para el profesorado* 15).

Evidently, the family was central to the creation of a Falangist society and, later, the Francoist regime as well; as such, *Sección Femenina* publications devote sustained attention to the family and the gender-defined roles within it. In a textbook, students received the following clear-cut explanation: “El padre es la jerarquía de la familia. ¿Por qué? Porque Dios le ha dado dentro de ella las funciones y las obligaciones más importantes, y Dios da la máxima autoridad a quien tiene las máximas responsabilidades” (*Formación político-social* 21). His jobs are to “sustentar, enseñar, defender, dirigir, corregir y mandar” (*Formación político-social* 21), and the mother’s are to support him in those roles.

The *Formación político-social* textbook also makes explicit the connections between State and family:

Una de las misiones del Estado es la protección de la familia. El Jefe del Estado y su Gobierno dan leyes para la «educación», para la «economía», para la «salud», para el «trabajo»; crean centros de «formación profesional», escuelas; construyen pueblos y viviendas, etc.; es decir, hace todo lo posible por ayudar a los padres de familia en su misión. Con esta ayuda, las familias se completan y perfeccionan y se hacen «cuerpos vivos» en el servicio de la Patria. (*Formación político-social* 22)

In other words, there is a symbiotic relationship formed between family and State: the government wishes to protect and nurture the idealized family, so that the family can support and contribute to the State functions. Similar to the forced parallels between a unified subject and a unified State, the regime also harnessed the family structure to support the State structure, and vice versa.

Being a Falangist was, ideally, an all-encompassing identity. In addition to utilizing the individual and the family as elements to be unified and controlled, José Antonio’s teachings emphasize an almost indescribable essence that should imbue each subject. He is quoted:

“Tenemos que adoptar ante la vida entera, en cada uno de nuestros actos, una actitud humana, profunda y completa. Esta actitud es el espíritu de servicio y sacrificio, el sentido ascético y militar de la vida” (*Texto para el profesorado* 147). He emphasizes contradictory values in an almost nonsensical way.

Similarly, Martín Gaité recounts the ridiculous story of a professor who insisted that a young woman’s declaration of her dedication to the Falange would protect her from unwanted male attention in public. She writes,

Recuerdo haber escuchado a cierto profesor de Formación Política, un rubio fornido del que todas las chicas estábamos algo enamoradas, aconsejarnos en uno de sus discursos que si nos decían algún piropo por la calle, no debíamos limitarnos a callar o a apretar el paso con apuro, porque eso era anticuado. Que lo que había que contestar con la cabeza alta era: «¡Yo soy de Falange!», cuya declaración se suponía conjuro de suficiente eficacia como para poner en fuga al osado tentador de nuestra fortaleza. (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 65)

This energy, youthfulness, and vitality were presented as defining elements of young Falangists, which would serve them in both fishing for their husbands and also in avoiding unwanted male attention—no mention of preventing the problems the young women were facing. Youthful energy and action were key ideas in many Sección Femenina publications, showing the prevalence of this kind of thinking. In the previously cited *Texto para el profesorado*, the authors write, “La revolución nace siempre de una insatisfacción, de un descontento. Lleva, pues, implícita una enorme dosis de energía vital incontrolada” (147).

The textbook continues, “para transformar en realidad viva aquellos postulados teóricos, *aquel modo de pensar* que José Antonio concreta en su discurso, se impone como primera medida *la transformación del modo de ser* de los españoles” (*Texto para el profesorado* 147). There must be a union between thinking and being: “Estas son las dos vertientes de la existencia humana: el pensar y el ser. Cuando no hay una adecuación entre ellas, surge el desequilibrio de los que, pensando rectamente, obran torcidamente, o al contrario” (*Texto para el profesorado* 148). Here the textbook returns to the idea of unity, and the importance of behaving as one believes, and believing as one behaves—calling to mind the writings of Michel de Certeau, who theorizes that subjects can appear to conform while also subverting from within (32). Certeau shows that our beliefs are revealed in our behavior, not necessarily in our professed values. Franco’s understanding of the possibility of this disjointedness, inherited from José Antonio’s own attention to it, might explain the regime’s attempts to control the minutiae of everyday life: not only actions but also beliefs, and the unity of these two elements.

The imposition of united beliefs and values relied on the mythical view of a permanent, unchanging Spain, which exists in accordance with the upholding of permanent, unchanging values. Thus José Antonio is upheld as a great thinker and leader in Sección Femenina publications, even after his death and after the end of Franco’s adherence to many of his policies and ideals. The ideology that remains strong—and strongly promoted—is linked to a sense of greater, universal morals and permanent, unchanging truths about human nature and society. In this way, Spain was unchanging and everlasting; so, too, were its great leaders José Antonio and Franco. The teachers’ manual explains:

No inventa José Antonio para España o para la Falange, cuando habla de la revolución moral y de sus postulados, una manera de vivir y de comportarse ante la patria nueva, diferente o extraña. Inventa una «manera vieja de vivir», al viejo estilo, ya olvidado, al estilo español. De ahí que los preceptos de la moral nacionalsindicalista tengan un carácter de permanencia y universalidad. No son unos preceptos para caracterizar una organización (aunque sea a esa organización a quien le conviene dar ejemplo de ellos), ni para caldear en un momento determinado el trance de una guerra civil.

Son los eternos preceptos morales del modo de ser español, como la constante respuesta de España ante los problemas de la vida y del mundo.

Así, pues, la moral nacionalsindicalista no está hecha de hábitos accidentales y transitorios; responde, por el contrario, al estilo de los mejores tiempos; también aquí se trata de «encontrar bajo los escombros de una España detestable la clave enterrada de una España exacta y difícil.» Pero refiriéndose a la conducta. (*Texto para el profesorado* 148)

The Falangist/Francoist insistence on unity—on a singular story and history, and on a narrowly defined acceptable *modo de ser*—makes literature almost necessarily suspect, for what is literature without complexity and complications? Even the social realist project of the mid-twentieth century, it has been shown, was obliquely anti-regime because, “By infusing their publications with the realities and daily struggles the vast majority of Spaniards suffered during the postwar, the social realists were able to combat, however obliquely, the idealist vision of the postwar propagated by Francoist historians” (Brenneis 91). Additionally, with the 1938 Ley de Prensa and the required *consulta previa* through the 1950s, “the very act of writing in Spain constituted a subversion regardless of censorship” (Ugarte 613).<sup>9</sup> A realistic representation of the violence of the Civil War or of the hunger, poverty, and suffering of the decades following would seem to be an especially difficult topic to get past censors, which is why “Writers left themselves open to their readers’ (or spectators’, or listeners’) interpretation. It has even been suggested that censorship made for the sharpening of the writer’s traditional tools: irony, allusion, ambiguity, association, multiple signification, and other devices that enhance the sophistication of the writing and the reader’s reception to it” (Ugarte 613-614).

Brenneis and Ugarte certainly reflect Juan Goytisolo’s explanation of the role of Spanish authors of the postwar, who were writing at a time when censorship prevailed and the government controlled media representation of reality, explaining in *El furgón de cola* (1967) that, “En una sociedad en la que las relaciones humanas son profundamente irreales, el realismo es una necesidad” and “Para los escritores españoles la realidad es nuestra única evasión” (Goytisolo 34). He claims that fidelity to realism is both difficult and necessary. He continues explaining the necessity of realism,

los novelistas españoles—por el hecho de que su público no dispone de medios de información veraces respecto a los problemas con que se enfrenta el país—responden a esta carencia de sus lectores trazando un cuadro lo más justo y equitativo posible de la realidad que contemplan. De este modo la novela cumple en España una función testimonial que en Francia y los demás países de Europa

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Ugarte’s chapter “The literature of Franco Spain, 1939-1975” provides a concise overview to the four phases of censorship during the Franco regime.

corresponde a la prensa, y el futuro historiador de la sociedad española deberá apelar a ella si quiere reconstituir la vida cotidiana del país a través de la espesa cortina de humo y silencio de nuestros diarios. (Goytisolo 34)

When the regime controls so much of the literary, historical, and journalistic output, the distinctions between these genres become blurry. At the same time, choosing a realist style or a certain genre—in this case, the female *Bildungsroman*—becomes an important choice as well, a way to cope with censorship while still telling a truthful story.

## The Covert Resistance of Postwar Spanish Novels of Female Development

From a more literary angle, this dissertation builds on the wide body of scholarship on the genre of the female *Bildungsroman* or the novel of female development, whether broad and theoretical or specifically focusing on the Spanish postwar context.<sup>10</sup> The complexities of the genre inform my reading of the works as anti-regime by building also on the work of Herzberger, whose book *Narrating the Past* shows how other contemporary genres, such as social realist novels of the mid-twentieth century, could be seen as antithetical to the hegemonic historiography of the regime. The use of fiction to read against propaganda has aided my view of these three novels of female development, which, in their use and subversion of the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, question the representations of reality offered by the regime's propaganda.

In *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, editors Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland show how scholars have expanded the *Bildungsroman* genre to incorporate broader questions or alternative historical and cultural contexts. They see, however, a lacuna in the incorporation of gender as a factor to be analyzed, “despite the fact that the sex of the protagonist modifies every aspect of a particular *Bildungsroman*: its narrative structure, its implied psychology, its representations of social pressures” (Abel et al. 5). In their Introduction, they ask, “What psychological and social forces obstruct maturity for women? What are the prevailing patterns of women's development in fiction? How does gender qualify literary representations of development?” (Abel et al. 4). My dissertation deliberately selects works written by women and following female development in order to address some of these questions in the modern Spanish context, in order to fully appreciate their subversive power. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland also identify defining characteristics of their conceptualization of the female *Bildungsroman*: “belief in a coherent self (although not necessarily an autonomous one); faith in the possibility of development (although change may be frustrated, may occur at different stages and rates, and may be concealed in the narrative); insistence on a time span in which development occurs (although the time span may exist only in memory); and emphasis on social context (even as an adversary)” (14). Each of these elements can be found, in different ways, in the novels I have selected. We can additionally find a key contradiction between the Falange's ideology of unity and the Sección Femenina's restrictive teachings about women's roles, resulting in a fragmentation of the female self and suppression of nonconforming experiences. Further, because of the regime's own emphasis on gender differences and its attempts to control women, writing, evolving, and writing about evolving were subtle ways to reject the official

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<sup>10</sup> A complete literary history of the *Bildungsroman*, from its Germanic origins in the nineteenth century, would exceed the scope of this study. See Randolph P. Shaffner's *The Apprenticeship Novel* or Franco Moretti's *The Way of the World*.

State view of women. This brings us back, too, to Goytisolo's idea about the importance of all fiction and especially realist fiction.

More recently, analyses have begun to identify patterns and idiosyncrasies in the corpus of Spanish coming-of-age novels and the representation of youth in fiction, and I hope to add to this scholarship by considering the novels alongside and in response to the hegemonic discourse at the time. Michael Thomas has argued in his book *Coming of Age in Franco's Spain* that novels portraying a protagonist's development are not simply nostalgic grasps at a lost innocence, but rather anti-fascist works that, in their quest for individuality and their compassion for the "other," undermine the official state rhetoric promoting a unified Spain.<sup>11</sup> He refers to Cristina Moreiras-Menor, who holds that individualism is insurgent because individuals under Franco should be "subsumed into the group and disappear as singular identities; their greatest virtue is to belong to the group and to sacrifice their will, through violence if necessary, for that of the group (in this case, the nation)" (Moreiras-Menor 123). He focuses on five novelists whose works were published in the 1940s and 1950s—Sender's *Crónica del alba*, Miguel Delibes' *El camino*, Laforet's *Nada*, Matute's *Primera memoria*, and Martín Gaité's *Entre visillos* and *El cuarto de atrás*—claiming that the novels offer "a contrary *ethos* and *telos* by appropriating the traditional narrative vehicle of the *Bildungsroman* and by advocating divergent definitions of Spanish values and virtues" (Thomas 4). This outlook has inspired my initial work on Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité; my consideration of the Sección Femenina archives will provide a more nuanced understanding of the specific covert resistance taking place in the novels.

In her dissertation, Victoria Hackbarth modifies the definition of *Bildungsroman* in order to create the subgenre of the novel of female development and provides a framework based on the key elements of works that fall into the genre. Tracing the origins and evolutions of the *Bildungsroman*, she sums up many scholars who deal with the topic, from its German origins to its more modern implications. She emphasizes a "chronic dissatisfaction" with the term *Bildungsroman*, which "drove literary critics to constantly redefine the term, molding it to the specificities of the time, country and gender in which the novel was produced," and which she feels proves its continued relevance as a genre (Hackbarth 7).

Olga Bezhanova's 2014 book, *Growing Up in an Inhospitable World: Female Bildungsroman in Spain*, building on Lorna Ellis' drive to expand the definition of the *Bildungsroman* (in her book *Appearing to Diminish*), incorporates a large number of Spanish novels by women, across many centuries, into her study. In her chapter on Franco-era Spain, she notices the power of finding one's voice amidst expectations of quiet: "In a repressive patriarchal environment of the Franco dictatorship that strove to silence women, novels of female development allowed writers to create a shared space where obstacles to women's growth were discussed" (Bezhanova 57-58). She also contributes to scholarship that has shown how, while Franco's regime promoted a very narrow definition of acceptable femininity, writing novels of development allowed for a covert yet very real subversion by way of creativity, dialogue, and influence. She writes,

The dictatorship silenced this plurality of voices and imposed a monolithic discourse as to the only acceptable way of being female. Female *Bildungsroman* flourished during Franco's regime because it was now the only space where

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Thomas also credits and builds on Herzberger's foundational work in *Coming of Age in Franco's Spain*.

different versions of female development could be explored. Writers belonging to different generations and separated by exile could establish a dialogue about female *Bildung* in their novels of female development. This creative dialogue produced some of the greatest contributions to the genre of female *Bildungsroman* in Spain and influenced Spanish novels of female development long after Franco's death. (Bezhanova 105)

My own work has much in common with Bezhanova's, and I believe our findings complement each other in many ways. However, her study only briefly acknowledges the greatness of canonical authors Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité, choosing instead to focus its in-depth analysis on other texts, spanning from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. In the Franco years, she studies writers in exile who establish an intergenerational dialogue through their creative works and letters. This dissertation focuses its inquiry in a different direction, into the Sección Femenina archives and the canon. This intensive contextualization and rereading is precisely the work that I felt Martín Gaité challenged us to do.

This brings me now to the specific works I have chosen for analysis. In Chapter 1, titled "Andrea Writing and Wandering: Critical Passivity in Carmen Laforet's *Nada*," I examine hegemonic Francoist representations of the ideal woman as content, active, energetic, and self-sacrificing in order to reframe the question of Andrea's passivity, a question which for decades has invited scholarly debate over whether Andrea can be seen to exhibit growth or independence. Instead, I propose that Andrea's perceived passivity is a kind of subversive but covert resistance to the expectations of Francoist doctrine. When Andrea walks through the city with no destination and no purpose, when she squanders her money on luxuries instead of necessities, when she lazes around in her room—she in effect refuses to participate in her family and in her society as the proactive and happy and active Nationalist that the regime promoted. Her opting out can be perceived as passive, but in reality it becomes an act of defiance.

In Chapter 2, "Destabilizing Dichotomies in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*," I show how the novel can be read as anti-regime in its deconstruction of contrasts, such as the common distinctions between childhood and adulthood, naïveté and maturity, good and evil. As she establishes dichotomies within the novel, Matute also breaks them down by showing a complex world in which it is not one or the other, but rather both at the same time. For example, narrator-protagonist Matia's unique backward glance through the use of parentheses and the verb *recordar* allows Matute to both separate and conflate the older narrating Matia from her fourteen-year-old self on the island. As such, she can both desire and fear adulthood, which becomes the central tension of the novel, and of adolescence itself. Similarly, as Matute describes and exaggerates differing functions of nature—as refuge but also as threat, as beautiful background but also as a reflection of the emotional pain of its inhabitants—she again creates a new realm of reality that allows for the coexistence of opposites. This emphasis on dualities and their coexistence undermines the Francoist regime, both specifically, by destabilizing its glorification of rural life and of woman's role in cultivating the land and its bounty, but also more generally, by destabilizing its representation of a unified Spain with a singular history and existence.

In Chapter 3, titled "In Search of Breadcrumbs: Circling Back Through the Past in Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*," I consider the 1978 masterpiece as a capstone to the previous chapters, which synthesizes many of the implicit themes of the previous two novels by explicitly mentioning the Francoist propaganda that I incorporate through the dissertation. *El*



*cuarto de atrás* emphasizes circularity in its backward glance, a gesture that Martín Gaité reminds us was “prohibido” during Franco’s regime and yet is so central to *Nada* and *Primera memoria*, among other contemporary works. In doing so, the book illuminates other spatial and thematic circles, which in turn reflect back on the centrality of boldly circling into the past. I read *El cuarto de atrás* as an experiment in writing as well as a kind of guidebook for how that writing should be done: with the endlessly circular presentation of C.’s story, Martín Gaité is encouraging a very specific kind of storytelling, reading, writing, investigating, and conversing. As she writes the novel, she also promotes a theory of narrative that bases its storytelling in conversation; as she theorizes this kind of novel, she also writes it; and through it all, she writes about writing. In this constant circling between fiction and theory, Martín Gaité breaks down the boundaries that often separate them.

Together these three chapters serve as case studies for a much more extensive project: a revisiting of the archive and of the canon, in order to find new ways of reading and studying works that we think we have already understood. We can find the more subtle power in women’s writing, in the *Bildungsroman*, in works that evaded censorship. By flying under the radar, authors who conform just enough can achieve a more covert form of subversion or resistance. Beyond the scope of what I have done, then, it is my hope that this study of propagandistic publications geared toward women alongside canonical novels by women will in time allow for a rejuvenated interest outside the small body of narrative work that I have selected.

## Chapter 1

### Andrea Writing and Wandering:

#### Critical Passivity in Carmen Laforet's *Nada*

Carmen Laforet's 1945 novel, *Nada*, winner of the first Nadal prize and published during the earliest and most oppressive years of the Franco dictatorship, has sparked continued debate around the question of whether we can classify the novel, in which protagonist Andrea narrates a year living in a family apartment in Barcelona, as a *Bildungsroman*. Relatedly, though Andrea is typically characterized as passive and apathetic, is there evidence that she grows or matures at all? Is the book a kind of feminist manifesto of its time, with Andrea modeling a rebellion against expectations of young women? This chapter takes into consideration many of these conflicting critical viewpoints and maintains that, instead of focusing on agency as a marker of growth, we can actually view her passivity as a covert strategy for undermining Francoist doctrine on the proper place of women in society. In fact, Andrea's ambivalent attitude and passive behavior are antithetical to the models of womanhood promoted by Francoist ideals, and understanding this dichotomy will shed new light on the power of her (in)action throughout the novel, as well as reveal a veiled critique of the Franco regime's propaganda for young women.

Many essays and books read Andrea as, in the words of Celita Lamar Morris, "a new kind of post-war heroine" (40), or some version thereof, emphasizing her progress and triumphs, however small, in the context of Franco's Spain. Since then, debate has swung back and forth as it analyzes whether and how Andrea matures, to what extent we can consider her an active (versus passive) character, and the importance and implications of her growth and liberation—or lack thereof. For Sara Shyfter, Andrea achieves "un sentido claro de dirección y autosuficiencia, un estado mental que ha alcanzado por si sola y no a través de la relación con un hombre" (90). Mariana Petrea sees female imagination as a driving force for her empowerment and emancipation, thus highlighting Andrea's agency and power. Marsha Collins has analyzed the novel "as both *Bildungsroman* and romance, two genres that stress the acquisition of identity and knowledge about life, in order to provide greater understanding of the structure and implications of the work" (298).

And Carmen Martín Gaité has famously illustrated how Andrea establishes a new type of character, a "chica rara," as opposed to the heroine of a *novela rosa*. Andrea is a *testigo* who observes and tells, not just a passive character to whom things happen (Martín Gaité, *Desde la ventana* 92-93). Martín Gaité explains that Andrea "Lo mira todo sin juzgarlo, despedazada a veces por el deseo de entenderlo mejor, otras de una forma más indiferente y apática, como en sueños" (*Desde la ventana* 98). Because no one truly knows her—not other characters, not readers, perhaps not even herself—it is impossible to categorize her as a fighter or as a victim. In fact, she is something different: a marginalized hermit, or, "En una palabra, Andrea es una chica «rara», infrecuente" (Martín Gaité, *Desde la ventana* 99). Martín Gaité maintains that this is why people, such as Andrea's friend Ena, are interested in her. In this context, the immediate postwar, Martín Gaité reads Andrea as an "audaz pionera" (*Desde la ventana* 100).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In an interesting parallel, Carmen Martín Gaité's narrator C. refers to Carmen Laforet's Nadal prize in *El cuarto de atrás*, and admires Laforet's daring decision to wear her hair straight instead of fashionably curled, even in the photo on the back cover of the novel *Nada* (Martín Gaité, *El cuarto de atrás* 60).

More recently, Barry Jordan's article "Laforet's *Nada* as Female *Bildung*?" again takes up the question of genre and weighs in on the debate of whether protagonist Andrea undergoes maturation at all, with a controversial answer. In many ways, Jordan outlines, the narrator grows, and her growth is how other critics have defended their view that the novel falls into the category of *Bildungsroman*. However, there is something strange about Andrea: she

seems excessively passive as a character. On occasion, she will do things in response to another's invitation or entreaty.... But, on the whole, she does not act in the conventional sense of initiating things, of planning and executing ideas, of carrying them through, of actively engaging in her quest for independence through some conscious resolve or driving ambition. On the contrary, perhaps in the manner of a number of nineteenth-century literary heroines (predominantly silent, brooding, coy, blushing), Andrea is the object, rarely the subject, of actions or events. Things happen to her and are done on her behalf. (Jordan, "Female *Bildung*" 108)

Jordan emphasizes that Andrea remains in a spectator role and "feels much safer looking on, observing the actions of others, adopting a withdrawn, voyeuristic role" ("Female *Bildung*" 109). And Andrea herself claims, "Yo tenía un pequeño y ruin papel de espectadora. Imposible salirme de él. Imposible libertarme" (Laforet 163). For Jordan, then, any progress made by Andrea is happenstance. She is a passive spectator to her own story, almost a victim, and this prevents the term *Bildung* from really applying to the novel. Furthermore, he writes, "it is as if Andrea does not really want to escape and transcend her childish voyeurism," since "the very obstacles to Andrea's development are regarded ambivalently by her" (Jordan, "Female *Bildung*" 109). Her struggles, her rising up against obstacles, and her eventual "escape"—all these achievements are actually coincidental or effected by others, never by herself. So, he sums up, "On the surface, Andrea appears to follow a gradual path of development from immaturity to maturity, along which she overcomes certain obstacles. However, below that surface, she changes very little and does almost nothing, giving rise to the impression that she is not really developing at all" (Jordan, "Female *Bildung*" 110). In sum, "Andrea is not an agent for narrative change. Her dominant position is that of passivity. Her mode of resistance, as we have seen, is to resign herself" (Jordan, "Female *Bildung*" 112).

Collins agrees in some ways with Jordan's reading of Andrea's passivity, explaining that "Andrea's passive, spectatorlike nature contributes to her inability to forge her own being," supporting this claim by reminding us that "Ena dominates her, even if in a friendly, loving way. Gerardo leads her around Barcelona as if she were a small child while Pons and his friends act as if she were a little sister enjoying the exploits of her older brothers" (Collins 303). She cites the oft-referenced scene on the Noche de San Juan, when she again calls Andrea a spectator who "silently watches the dramatic encounter between Gloria and Roman take place before her. At crucial moments Andrea cannot act" (Collins 303). Both Collins and Jordan choose moments from the novel where Andrea seems frozen or incapable of action to claim that she is passive, apathetic, and immature.

And while I agree that one of Andrea's most salient traits is passivity, this does not imply that she is resigned to the situation. I see, as many others do, an underlying rebellion in this trait. In fact, it is precisely this passivity, her proclivity for simply loafing about, her unproductive wanderings and musings, her willingness to simply let things happen, and her aversion to any

action—characteristics which might seem at first glance to simply reflect the period’s existentialism and/or its traditionalist expectations of women—that are, in fact, anti-regime. This claim modifies that of Jordan’s paper, which concludes that “The image of Andrea as a resolute, purposeful, radical female subject speaks more to the desire of certain feminist critics than to the novel’s textual and cultural effects” (Jordan, “Female *Bildung*” 117). Despite the condescending tone, there is some truth in Jordan’s assertion that seeing Andrea as radical is a stretch. But he argues that, because she is not purposeful and radical, it follows that “*Nada* is arguably more convincingly seen, not as a manifesto of self-creation, but as a primer on self-discipline, a deportment book in tune with the Franco regime’s views on the position of women” (Jordan, “Female *Bildung*” 117). Here is where my reading differs. Jordan’s interpretation demonstrates only a superficial understanding of the regime’s views on women. It is precisely in her passivity, though, that Andrea refuses to choose between the options presented to her: she appears to do *nothing*, to learn *nothing*, to think *nothing*; in reality she refuses to conform to Francoist expectations that she be youthful, energetic, and oriented toward marriage and motherhood. Her passivity and antipathy become, however imperfect, a way to reject the status quo—she does not have to be resolute, purposeful, and radical to do so.

This prompts us to reframe the question of Andrea’s growth and maturation: her supposed passivity is actually something different, and not a lack of progress. Instead of seeing “nada,” we can find a negation of the ideal woman promoted by the fascist regime, confirmed by a careful analysis of its policies, publications, and propaganda. This ideal woman is, in some ways, passive—but this passivity might be better defined as subservient. In other words, she is submissive toward men, but she maintains a purpose in life, one that is oriented toward service. Understanding the subtleties of this construction of womanhood requires an in-depth investigation of the period’s propaganda. Andrea is in reality questioning and rejecting (both materially and metaphorically) the gendered spaces where she has been told she belongs. In this context, we can read *Nada* as a creative exposé of the ever-evolving paradoxes and polemics in the regime’s official rhetoric on women. While these expectations were most severe in the early Franco years, when *Nada* was published, even as these expectations “loosened,” they continued to be problematic and limiting. Andrea’s stunted growth, what Michael Thomas calls her emerging adulthood, is due not necessarily or not only to her upbringing, as he suggests<sup>2</sup>—but rather is a commentary on the difficulties of growing up when there is no acceptable model available to emulate. In addition to simply highlighting these difficulties, *Nada* utilizes that absence to reveal and criticize some of the inherent paradoxes in the regime’s model of womanhood.

Indeed, we can take this revelation one step further if we consider Jean Baudrillard’s theory of the precession of simulacra. Baudrillard studies the transformation of an image as it relates to reality. In the first stage, the image is “the reflection of a basic reality,” in the second “it masks and perverts a basic reality,” in the third “it masks the *absence* of a basic reality,” and in the fourth “it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (Baudrillard 11). With this fourth phase, it is a simulation. In other words, the image eventually supplants reality and reflects only itself, not reality; there is “a liquidation of all referentials” (Baudrillard 4). This chapter will demonstrate how Laforet’s novel covertly exposes the regime’s

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<sup>2</sup> In *Coming of Age in Franco’s Spain*, Michael Thomas utilizes psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood, published 2000, which proposes emerging adulthood as distinct from adolescence or early adulthood, signaling it as a contemporary phenomenon. Thomas applies this theory to Andrea to analyze her liminal state during her year in Barcelona.

attempt to present and uphold a specific image of a young woman as, in fact, nothing more than a glittering mirage, or “its own pure simulacrum.” Baudrillard explains the implications of his procession of simulacra:

The transition from signs which dissimulate something to signs which dissimulate that there is nothing, marks the decisive turning point. The first implies a theology of truth and secrecy (to which the notion of ideology still belongs). The second inaugurates an age of simulacra and stimulation, in which there is no longer any God to recognise his own, nor any last judgement to separate true from false, the real from its artificial resurrection, since everything is already dead and risen in advance. (12)

Andrea’s lack of role models in the novel highlights a lack of the kind of referent that the Sección Femenina’s propaganda purports to showcase: the image they display is a simulation, not a representation of reality. Andrea’s passive opting out of those false icons, and of the negative models available in her reality, take on more significance in this context.

### **Youthful, Energetic, and Subservient: Early Francoist Depictions of Women**

Franco’s government was often quite explicit about its expectations of an ideal woman, via many avenues, including the Sección Femenina, and these expectations were grounded in basic concepts of sexual difference and maternity. First, laws and policies attempted to control women and keep them in the home. Much scholarship has focused on the effects that Francoism had on women’s lives, especially since a surge in interest in the topic in the 1990s. According to Mary Nash,

el régimen franquista impulsó un arcaico arquetipo femenino recatado y sumiso, que expulsaba a las mujeres de toda actividad en el ámbito público, siendo el hogar y la familia los únicos espacios autorizados. Estableció por ley un orden de género de dominio masculino que reguló la dependencia obligada de las mujeres. Convertidas en seres subalternos, sin derechos, relegadas a la domesticidad forzada del hogar, las mujeres fueron obligadas a permanecer bajo la permanente tutela masculina, sin identidad propia. (*Represión* xi-xii)

Beyond their laws, Francoist public rhetoric and publications geared toward women, which showcase the attitudes that underlie those policies, thus can illuminate the importance of Andrea’s opting out in *Nada*. In early Falangist publications, especially produced by and for the Sección Femenina, the ideal woman is subservient, but not passive. She has a specific, defined role in society and in her family. The leader of the Sección Femenina for its entire existence, Pilar Primo de Rivera, summed up the purpose of the organization when she explained:

To guide the Women’s Section’s educational task, we are going to follow, as always, the teachings of José Antonio. He said: ‘We must bring men down to earth.’ And for women that realm is their family. That is why, besides offering our members the mystique that elevates them, we have to attach them, with our

teachings, to the daily routine, the child, the home, the garden. Our goal is that women find there all their purpose in life and find in men all their comfort. (qtd. in Morcillo 101)

This woman is clearly distinct from Andrea: she is not apathetic, but rather purposeful and deferential, focused on the importance of serving a man. Above all, Francoism's ideal woman was extremely *abnegada*, or selfless. For this reason, she was seen as a symbol of nurturing care who would always put her parents, her husband, her children, and her country before herself. This subservient role was logistically important during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), which devastated the country, killing over half a million people and exiling another half million, and cutting agricultural production and other industries dramatically (Shubert 206). The war created the very urgent need of providing support to soldiers; the Sección Femenina membership grew during this time (Gallego Méndez 48), and women took on roles related to the war effort, such as sewing flags, administering emergency food supplies, serving as nurses, corresponding with soldiers, and fundraising (Richmond 7). Because of this growth and patriotism, Inbal Ofer calls 1939 the "heyday" of the Sección Femenina, at which time they attained over half a million members and "gained control of the Syndicate of Female University Students, the nurses' and teachers' syndicates, the Social Service for Women (Servicio Social de la Mujer) and others" (1-2).

The Falange and Sección Femenina press and propaganda harnessed the power of this wartime frenzy and the need for women's support of the war. For example, Pilar's opening speech at the I Consejo Nacional de la Sección Femenina in Salamanca in 1937 emphasized the enormity and difficulty of the task ahead of them, saying "A las afiliadas se les pide espíritu de servicio y sacrificio para desempeñar los menesteres que se les encomiendan" (P. Primo de Rivera 9). In their jobs with the Sección Femenina, she assures her audience, "Encontraréis en vuestro mando situaciones desagradables, y se os ordenarán cosas difíciles y duras" (P. Primo de Rivera 9), but her rhetoric and enthusiasm make these statements celebratory, almost joyful. She imbues the audience with a pride for their hard work and determination by calling on José Antonio Primo de Rivera's legacy (a favorite technique of hers), on difficulties they as a group have already overcome, and on the sacrifices of their comrades on the battlefield. For example, "¿Y no os acordáis, camaradas, de cuando caían nuestros primeros muertos, asesinados por las esquinas de las calles? Ellos no pensaban en la dificultad de la lucha, y caían en la intemperie de la noche, bajo las estrellas, como escogidos por Dios. Se dieron cuenta de que España necesitaba sangre joven para redimirse y ofrecieron sus vidas" (P. Primo de Rivera 10). The deaths of these men, and the hard work of the women in front of her, serve a greater cause. Pilar winds down her speech by concluding,

Y nada os será difícil y trabajoso si pensáis en los camaradas que luchan en el frente y pasan las noches al raso, sobre la nieve, y en los que mueren cara al sol, en este amanecer de España, ofreciendo a Dios y al Imperio los mejores días de su juventud; y en los que todavía están en la cárcel, con sus vidas vendidas a cada minuto, sin la compensación de ver nuestras banderas en la lucha. (P. Primo de Rivera 11)

With this closing, Pilar synthesizes many of the important metaphors for what they expected of Francoist women, who should embrace the old as new, look forward optimistically, and complement men's work in a supportive, sacrificing role.

Pilar returns to this idea of femininity in many of her speeches, insisting that the women of the Sección Femenina must uphold all that the men have fought for. They can look to these wartime sacrifices for inspiration, to help them find the endurance to continue in the difficulties of their own jobs. At the II Congreso Nacional in Zamora in 1939, she almost shames the Sección Femenina *afiliadas*, “seríamos de muy mala calidad si por frivolidad o por cansancio perdiéramos esta ocasión de España” (P. Primo de Rivera 19).

Drumming up wartime support was a convenient shortcut for the Sección Femenina. Images of women in their supportive role peppered their publications at this time, such as the magazine *Y: Revista de la mujer nacional sindicalista*, and even after the end of the war as they strove to maintain the enthusiasm and the sense of purpose. For example, an article on “La mujer española” shows an illustration of a young woman labeled “Símbolo y esperanza en paz y guerra” and depicted caring for wounded soldiers (Suarez 14-15)—just one of many visual examples of the caring, serving woman fulfilling her duty to the men who have served the country. She is not fighting on the front lines, but instead taking a secondary role in caring for the soldier who did or does.

A larger feature in *Y* on the “Lavanderas”<sup>3</sup> who washed soldiers' clothes also makes similar use of the expectation that women are caring and willing to sacrifice themselves. While she is not fighting the war, the *lavandera* is depicted right in the middle of the action: indeed, the article opens with questions, “¿Qué hay en el barracón, en pleno frente? ¿Cómo es que están allí en medio del peligro, unas muchachas? ¿Y por qué tienen todas las manos, que debieron ser finas, agrietadas, y rojas, e hinchadas?” (Lara 24), emphasizing the implausibility of women being there. Author Lula de Lara continues to denaturalize the presence of women on the battlefield with more questions: “Si el misterio os intriga, nosotros os lo podemos revelar. En el barracón hay un lavadero para los soldados, y aquellas muchachas han ido a lavar. ¿Que hay riesgos?... ¿Que el cañón está cerca?... ¡Ah, claro! ¡Pero si es un lavadero del frente!... ¿O creáis que las mujeres servían tan sólo para enjuagar pañolitos de encaje, en aguas perfumadas de jabón?” (24). As she moves to embody the voice of the reader, she implies that we would have these same doubts and concerns, which in turn implies that they are appropriate concerns to have. Winking at her reader, she uses and reinforces the assumption that women don't belong on the front lines, while also casting aside the notion and suggesting that indeed they do, so long as they're not fighting. Their role—“Desde la mañana a la noche, las muchachas lavan, y cosen, y planchan”—also involves sacrifice and pain: “¿Qué importa que las manos se agrieten y duelan! ¡Qué importa el peligro!...” (Lara 24). But, of course, they don't mind at all.

In small vignettes featuring four *lavanderas*, we hear their voices. While these blurbs seem like part of the formula for a simple human interest story, we can also hear implied notions

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<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, laundresses in traditional popular ballads were often sexualized figures, skirts raised and bare legs exposed in the water of streams. Direct references to this imagery are, perhaps not coincidentally, nonexistent in the present article. While some of Lula de Lara's language might be construed as sexual in nature—“Vedlas ahora, sudorosas, y activas”—the sexualization is quickly dispelled by the rest of the sentence—“sumergidas casi entre montañas de ropas ásperas, tiesas de suciedad, pululantes, a veces, de miseria, con toda esa mugre sublime del soldado en guerra” (24). The photographs of the Lavaderos de Comellana in Asturias are mostly of indoor tasks like ironing; the only one at the river shows five women with their bodies concealed behind the clothes being washed.

of the importance of service for one's country, and suggestions for dealing with doubts about the topic. The story told by María Luisa—one of the earliest to join the efforts, a woman who actually heard José Antonio's voice—reinforces the glorification of the Falange's most important figures (Lara 24). Next, Lily, a "niña bien," has joined up to change her own life, explaining "Por cada hora de ocio quiero diez de trabajo" (Lara 25). The focus of Rosario's story is her family, who was at first hesitant to let her take on the job for fear she would be hurt. "¡Qué susto en mi casa, cuando dije que me venía al frente" she explains (Lara 25). But she justifies it to them, and to readers, by explaining that her life before had no meaning because "Yo nunca salí de mi hogar. Pasaba los días junto a la ventana, bordando y cosiendo" (Lara 25). Since she has no brothers and her father is too old, she is the one to represent her family and serve the war effort. This sketch has an underlying purpose, though, as it debunks many of the excuses a woman or her family might make to avoid the work of *lavandera* and gives "tips" if she needs help convincing. Lastly, Carmen, "la que estaba triste," lost her husband to the war and no longer has the honor of washing *his* uniform: instead, she focuses on the thousands that still do need washing (Lara 25). Carmen's story suggests that service continues even after tragedy, and refers to all the work that still needs doing, making a call to readers that they too join the effort. As huge as the risks taken on by the *lavanderas*, each reader can do a small part, too.

Women were expected to contribute to the war effort and to the greater efforts of the Falange to establish a "new" Spain. Still, the constant messaging was that her role was very specific to her womanhood and to the idea of service, and that she should not overstep these boundaries. Pilar makes this idea explicit when in a 1939 speech she says, "nuestra misión en esta tarea es misión de ayuda, no es misión directora, porque esa sólo corresponde a los hombres. Lo que tenemos nosotras que hacer es preparar a todas las camaradas, para que cuando tengan una casa y cuando tengan unos hijos sepan inculcarles en su espíritu de niños este modo de ser de la Falange" (P. Primo de Rivera 19). Whether a woman is an *afiliada* of the Sección Femenina or someone being "taught" by the Sección Femenina, her role is secondary to the real work being done by men. And her role is always one of support, service, and education—always geared and oriented toward others; grounded in the drive to perpetuate such a system; and focused on the progress, education, and service of others (never herself).

The idea of separate spheres was of course nothing new, and it would not lose potency during Franco's reign. Underneath everything, perhaps the most important aspect of a woman's role was that it was *different* from a man's. It was of supreme importance and even difficulty, but it belonged only to her, and she should fulfill only that role. Falangist thinkers justified women's subservient position by emphasizing what they framed as undeniable differences between the sexes. Women were simply better at certain things. The rhetorical move that bolstered this ideology and kept women in their place was, somewhat ironically, the elevation and praise of women's role and women's work.

In the very first edition of *Y*, an article by José Antonio, the founder of the Falange party, sums up the ideals of womanhood that would define the Sección Femenina's project. Rejecting feminism, he states that giving a woman man's work is no way to respect her, and "A mí siempre me ha dado tristeza ver a la mujer en ejercicios de hombre" (J.A. Primo de Rivera 3). Instead, he promotes the separate spheres doctrine, emphasizing the importance of what women do and writing that true feminism should "rodear cada vez de mayor dignidad humana y social a las funciones femeninas" (J.A. Primo de Rivera 3). He attributes specific qualities to men and to women: while men are egotistical, he says, women are selfless. In an interesting twist, he praises this self-sacrifice inherent in women, saying that in this way women can become models for



men. He writes, “Ved, mujeres, cómo hemos hecho virtud capital de una virtud, la abnegación, que es sobre todo vuestra. Ojalá lleguemos en ella a tanta altura, ojalá lleguemos a ser en esto tan femeninos, que algún día podáis de veras considerarnos ¡hombres!” (J.A. Primo de Rivera 3).

This discourse has parallels with Pilar’s: an emphasis on abnegation in women, a distinction between men’s roles and women’s roles—and also a distinction between men’s *qualities* and women’s. In this construction of male-female relations, and in the positive “spin” given to a woman’s character, we can see a clear example of “benevolent sexism,” as conceptualized and defined by psychologists Peter Glick and Susan Fiske: “a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but that are subjectively positive in feeling tone (for the perceiver) and also tend to elicit behaviors typically categorized as prosocial (e.g., helping) or intimacy seeking (e.g., self-disclosure)” (491). They distinguish benevolent sexism from hostile sexism, or negative or violent attitudes and behavior toward women. What makes benevolent sexism so pervasive is that “even though benevolent sexism suggests a subjectively positive view of women, it shares common assumptions with hostile sexist beliefs: that women inhabit restricted domestic roles and are the ‘weaker’ sex. Indeed, both hostile and benevolent sexism serve to justify men’s structural power” (Glick and Fiske 492). In a more recent psychological study, “Yet Another Dark Side of Chivalry,” Julia Becker and Stephen Wright show that hostile and benevolent sexism are “complementary tools of control, the stick and the carrot, that motivate women to accept a sexist system” (63). They expand the definitions of these two kinds of sexism:

Hostile sexism is grounded in the belief that men are more competent than women and thus are deserving of higher status and more power. This is accompanied by a corresponding fear that women leverage sexuality or feminist ideology to extract power from men.... In contrast, benevolent sexism is an affectionate or chivalrous expression of male dominance. Although patronizing, it characterizes women in a way that can be perceived as flattering. (Becker and Wright 62-63)

They identify three subcomponents of benevolent sexism: “protective paternalism (e.g., the belief that women should be protected and taken care of by men), complementary gender differentiation (e.g., the belief that women are the “better” sex and have special qualities, such as a superior moral sensibility, that few men possess), and heterosexual intimacy (e.g., the belief that women fulfill men’s romantic needs)” (Becker and Wright 63). It is easy to find evidence of all three aspects in Sección Femenina publications.

Considering Glick and Fiske’s ideas in the context of the Falangist propaganda being studied, it is evident that benevolent sexism was a fundamental part of their messaging about women. Seemingly positive, the regime’s words constantly praise women’s roles and women’s work—with this glorification serving only to reinforce stereotypes and expectations, and to continue controlling women. The previously examined article by José Antonio is an explicit, exaggerated example of just such a technique. But this subtle method of control, this system of encouraging specific characteristics and behaviors by praising them, crops up all over Falangist propaganda, and often in more covert ways. In *Y and Teresa*, for example, the woman being featured on a given page, her qualities being highlighted, the parts of her interview that are quoted in the article, the photos or images that accompany it—all of these editorial decisions represent micro-examples of benevolent sexism. Over and over, Francoist publications praise service, sacrifice, and purposeful passivity in an effort to encourage those traits: articles that at

first glance appear to dignify and ennoble women's work, when read through the lens of benevolent sexism, are simply more examples of the paternalistic, condescending tools at the disposal of the regime, utilized to keep women in their place. Indeed, "benevolent sexism" was anything but benign.

In the magazine *Y*, for example, Ricardo Baroja's article "Palinodia" publishes a letter written by "un señor viejo, solterón, barbudo, completamente *antiguo régimen* que escribe a una de sus numerosas sobrinas, enfermera desde hace año y medio en algún hospital de sangre" that begins as a sharp criticism of how the young woman used to behave: lazing about his house, not eating well, and neglecting her appearance (Baroja 15). When she tells him she wants to be a nurse, he thinks it's a ridiculous idea, but he admits his own mistake and acknowledges the sharp changes he has noticed in her since beginning her training: "Veo con asombro, con entusiasmo, con respeto, que a pesar de tu pelo oxigenado, de tus depiladas y curvas cejas, del carbón de las pestañas, de tu piel yodada, de esa insustancialidad que yo veía en tu general conducta, eres... una heroína. Así como suena. ¡Heroína!" (Baroja 15). While these descriptions are positive when taken at face value, the underlying message continues to reinforce a woman's proper place and characteristics as she cares for herself and for others. The uncle's story in this article also serves as a kind of advertisement to women: you, too, could change your character and turn your life around if you wanted. And you could do it through service, through a dedication to your country.

The article "Quehaceres de María y de Marta en la España Nueva" calls for Spanish women to emulate the tenderness of Mary and the industriousness of Martha (Igaza 52-53). The images on this page clearly emphasize the types of chores that women should do: a photo shows a woman teaching children; one illustration shows Mary providing love and comfort; and an illustration of Martha shows her peeling potatoes, representative of all the mundane tasks of running a household. Part of the text reads that "España quiere que sus mujeres le sirvan únicamente como mujeres" (Igaza 52) and "Les exige un máximo rendimiento en servicio y sacrificio. Les exige conocimiento y renunciamento: conocimiento de sus deberes y renunciamento a egoísmos, frivolidades, ambiciones personales y pequeñas" (Igaza 53). There are expectations that she serve and make herself useful, but only in specific, subservient ways. Furthermore, this woman must know how to turn a difficult life into one full of the "Alegría y belleza que nuestras Secciones Femeninas enseñarían a poner hasta en los gestos más nimios y las cosas más pequeñas de la existencia cotidiana" (Igaza 53). Mary and Martha are just two of many Catholic models who welcome suffering and sacrifice with energy and enthusiasm.

In his "Mensaje a la Falange Femenina," published in *Y* in March 1938, Eugenio D'Ors encourages this service and abnegation by differentiating between the sexes: he writes, "Femenino, en el vocabulario de la Ciencia de la Cultura, es *cuanto en la actividad del ser humano, tiene por fin inmediato otro ser humano*; viril, al revés, es, dentro del mismo lenguaje, *cuanto, en la actividad del ser humano, tiene por fin inmediato las cosas, los objetos, materiales o ideales, exteriores al ser humano y que subsisten independientemente de él*" (D'Ors 60). By nature, he claims, women's sensibilities are oriented toward others, toward service, toward submission. This is why he advises women, "en vuestra intervención nacional, mujeres de la Falange, llegad hasta la cumbre, llegad al confín, en cuanto se refiera a la acción del ser humano por el ser humano," and warns them, "Pero, ni un paso más allá" (D'Ors 60). In other words, he urges women to perfect those qualities that belong to them, but only those.<sup>4</sup> As with José Antonio's message, the paternalism here again embodies the description of benevolent (or allegedly benevolent) sexism: "by portraying women as wonderful but childlike, incompetent,

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<sup>4</sup> Eugenio D'Ors had already expressed many of these same ideas in his 1911 book *La ben plantada*.

needing men to protect them, and therefore best suited for low-status roles, benevolent sexism justifies gender inequality” (Becker and Wright 63).

In a September 1939 article in *Y*, “Consejos que se dan en la víspera de las nupcias para doncellas que se casan con mozos que vuelven de la guerra,” L. Mour-Mariño urges women to prepare themselves and their home to welcome men home from war, stating with no doubt that “Querrá, ante todo, el soldado que vuelve con su imaginación encarnada de amor, encontrar una «mujer, mujer»” (27). She shouldn’t talk about war or politics or the difficulty of her life. Instead, “La mujer tiene que aportar a la vida nacional las virtudes femeninas políticamente aprovechables” (Mour-Mariño 28). These examples have demonstrated quite straightforward examples of benevolent sexism, of explicitly telling women how they should and should not behave.

In the Sección Femenina magazines, which show models of womanhood and criticize women who do not fit it, the messaging becomes almost subliminal. Pilar herself is often held up as an example of hard work, dedication, and humility. A tribute to Pilar in *Y* in October 1938<sup>5</sup> written directly to her reads, “en ti, Pilar, encontramos en magnífica conciliación las más estimadas cualidades de la mujer española: discrección [sic], bondad, inteligencia, recato y constancia,” and continues, “En ti, Pilar, hemos visto también la más suprema expresión del sacrificio” (“Tribute to Pilar” 3). Ironically, Pilar was far from the model wife and mother: she never married, was involved in politics, and remained in a position of power for the duration of the Sección Femenina’s existence.

## The “Modern” Youthful Woman

The paradox illustrated by Pilar herself reflects a greater, fundamental paradox in the Falange’s paradigm: the problem of how to incorporate a modernity that the regime wanted to control. Their solution was a focus on—almost an obsession with—youth and vitality. Fascist activist Carmen Werner Bolín,<sup>6</sup> the Regidora Central de Cultura y Formación de Jerarquías who also wrote textbooks of social behavior for young women, claims in a 1938 article on culture that

lo que la Sección Femenina pretende y quiere y está decidida a conseguir (por medio de la Organización Juvenil), es un tipo de mujer que a los dieciocho o veinte años esté capacitada para crearse una cultura propia, para leer y pensar... Y fundamentalmente queremos conseguir un tipo de mujer para su casa, considerando la casa como depositaria de todos los valores espirituales. (Werner Bolín, “Santificación” 40)

She emphasizes that a young woman should be cultured, which she could achieve through appropriate reading and then use to improve her running of the household.

José Antonio himself referred to the importance of “a small and selected group of people, who will represent a clearer, purer and more energetic Spain, free from mediocrity and conservatism. Those who will join this group will be like young, fresh branches that take over an old and shriveled trunk” (qtd. in Ofer 20). The emphasis on energetic youthfulness is blatant, and

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<sup>5</sup> The article is untitled and has no author; I will cite it as “Tribute to Pilar” here and in the Works Cited.

<sup>6</sup> In different articles, books, and other resources, Carmen Werner Bolín is also referred to as Carmen Werner. I will aim for consistency by referring to her by her full last name, Werner Bolín.

a key component to the way the party wished to present themselves; they had to simultaneously inhibit, however, ideas that were *too* modern or progressive. The progress gained by Spanish women during brief periods in Spain's recent history before the Civil War, though in some ways lagging behind their European contemporaries in feminist movements, was threatening to the Falange and the Sección Femenina, who strove to regain control over women's lives. This was not the youthful modernism that Francoism idealized. Instead, Franco and his supporters needed to make the old new again. As Martín Gaité explains in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, "Era preciso renovar su faz buscando la inspiración en modas tradicionales" (19-20). So, she writes, "Frente al espejuelo de riqueza y «modernidad» de aquellos otros países que nos despreciaban, se levantaba el banderín de la tradición autóctona" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 22). The regime had to find a way to modernize the traditional, demure, Catholic wife and mother, a way to seamlessly blend the very old and the very new while ignoring the recent past. In other words, "Dotar de novedad, es decir vender como moderno, aquel tipo de mujer tradicional Antigua y siempre nueva es tarea a la que se dedicó incansablemente la propaganda de la época" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 27). This is evident in the publications geared toward women.

Even early on, the Sección Femenina and the Falange would claim big changes and a new, modern outlook on life, all the while clinging to outdated traditions and looking back to a distant, romanticized past. In her 1939 speech at the III Congreso Nacional in Zamora, Pilar was already claiming,

Desde hace tres años, debido quizá a las circunstancias de la guerra, las costumbres han cambiado completamente en España. Las mujeres tienen hoy mucha más libertad que tenían antes; por lo tanto, tenemos nosotras toda la responsabilidad de encauzar esta nueva manera de vivir que tienen las españolas, sin apartarlas para nada del ambiente de la familia, que es la base principal y la primera para el bueno gobierno de las naciones. (P. Primo de Rivera 22)

Despite evidence to the contrary, this speech erases past realities and claims that women already have more liberties than before while it simultaneously clings to a stale model of a traditional family and home.

Later Falange publications had to continue to respond to changing times and incorporate a more modern conceptualization of a woman's role—or at least give the appearance of such an evolution. For example, in the first issue of *Teresa*, published in January 1954, the opening welcome to its readers plays with the magazine's name, personifying this Teresa: "TERESA echa a andar como echa a andar siempre TERESA. Con resolución y a lo que sea. A la antigua, pero motorizada. TERESA, que anduvo por el ancho mundo en borriquillo (el ancho mundo era entonces el camino entre Avila y Alba de Tormes, alfa y omega de una vida sin par), anda ahora en 'Vespa', habla un poco de inglés, fuma y nada, porque eso no es pecado" (Serna, "Teresa," no pagination).<sup>7</sup> She is characterized by constant forward movement, both literal and metaphorical, and remains "alegre y deportiva" (Serna, "Teresa"). As she zooms into the future, her world expands with her: "El ancho mundo de TERESA es ahora medio planeta" (Serna, "Teresa"). At the same time, "TERESA está muy bien criada, sabe muy bien dónde está el pecado y dónde está la virtud, y cree que ni la gloria de Dios puede andar entre los pucheros, ¿por qué no va a andar

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<sup>7</sup> The byline for this article appears as "V. de la S.," which I have identified as Victor de la Serna, a Falangist journalist who was published in other editions of *Teresa*.

en un instituto de belleza, entre potes de cremas? Se librará muy bien de la frivolidad pura, pero se librará también de la gazmoñería pura” (Serna, “Teresa”). The magazine’s self-presentation, even in the 1950s as shown here, reinforces the idea that there are stereotypically feminine qualities, which cannot be left behind, no matter how modern she becomes: “Todos los meses, TERESA llamará a vuestra puerta y gritará su alegre saludo. Tened preparados vuestros brazos y vuestro corazón para recibirla. Ella, que os habrá visto a todas, os contará cosas de todas para todas. Un poco de barullo se armará siempre, porque para eso es mujer, es charlatana y es de una rara habladora y viva. No importa. Cuando haya que ser grave y seria (que tiempo habrá, si las cosas vienen mal), también acertará a callar, a sufrir y a trabajar” (Serna, “Teresa”). The woman depicted here actually has much in common with the woman depicted in earlier examples, but the publication has reframed her so that she at least *seems* more modern. There is an emphasis on how her world has grown and on the behaviors and attitudes that are now available to her, but certain feminine elements remain unchanged.

In analyzing these representations of women in Francoist propaganda, we have seen a pattern of abnegation and service embodied in the youthful and purposeful wife and mother who gracefully combined traditional values with a modern sensibility. Time and time again, explicitly and implicitly, in various media and formats, the regime promoted and encouraged these traits, among others, and upheld them as the standard for women.

### Andrea’s Critical Passivity

Returning now to Laforet’s *Nada*, I would like to suggest a new reading, one which also allows for a new interpretation of the Francoist rhetoric and stance on women. Throughout the novel, Andrea—perhaps even Laforet as the author—finds it impossible to strike the right balance between passive and active, echoing a paradox in the Francoist expectations of women, and perhaps foreshadowing the debate among scholars of the book. Andrea’s confusion at what is expected of her can be illuminated now as a critique: instead of continuing along one of the paths presented to her, instead of attempting to maintain the impossible balance between service and selflessness, Andrea simply opts out. And this is more than just passive and apathetic; rather, it evidences a choice, a criticism.

At the same time that she continually renews this choosing of *nada*, Andrea also convinces her family—as well as her readers—that there is actually nothing special about it by cloaking herself and her experience in affectations of antipathy. And she is successful in this charade, fooling many a critic: Jordan has written that

With a lack of drive in Andrea, we thus have psychological and to some extent narrative paralysis. Andrea’s growth as a character is almost inadvertent. Like a child, she learns through listening, overhearing, and spying. And given the fact that, as a character she is almost lacking in personality traits (only slowly and randomly does the odd indication emerge), she comes over as a rather formless sensibility, which only takes on a rudimentary shape in heated situations and through reactions to the initiatives of others. (“Female *Bildung*” 113)

Collins has also ascribed indifference to Andrea, claiming that “Andrea’s passive, spectatorlike nature contributes to her inability to forge her own being.... At crucial moments Andrea cannot

act” (303). Andrea’s indifference and her refusal to participate completely in her family’s universe lead Collins and Jordan—and many others—to assume that she is passive and not much else. In reality, our deeper investigation into the expectations of women as depicted in the regime’s propaganda can allow us to see the subtle ways that Laforet’s novel undermines those expectations.

First, there are indeed moments where Andrea *can* act, and Jordan’s analysis seems to cast them aside: Andrea’s brave solitary arrival in Barcelona (Laforet 13-18); her rebellion against Angustias, including taking her room when she leaves, “Sin consultarlo a nadie” (Laforet 62); standing up to Román after he goes through her belongings (Laforet 68-69); capitalizing on Angustias’ departure so she can excuse herself from family meals and instead spend her money as she wishes (though, admittedly, quite immaturely) (Laforet 96). Her resistance also crops up at small moments, such as when her bohemian friends criticize Ena’s romantic interest, Jaime, for being wealthy and pampered (just as they are). When Iturdiaga says pejoratively that Jaime quit his architecture studies when he was short only two classes, Andrea asks him, “Y, ¿cuándo vas a empezar a estudiar para el examen de Estado, Iturdiaga?” (Laforet 140); when Iturdiaga pokes fun at Jaime for hiding, bored, in the corner of a cabaret, she asks, “Y tú, ¿qué hacías?” (Laforet 140). Without overtly criticizing Iturdiaga, she echoes Iturdiaga’s own criticisms back onto himself through her pointed questions.

Critics who seek to prove Andrea’s continued passivity and lack of progress often focus on the chase scene in *Nada*. At her grandmother’s request, Andrea follows a furious Juan through Barcelona as he looks for Gloria. As they submerge further and further into one of the most dangerous parts of the city, the Barrio Chino, Andrea says, “la peregrinación se convirtió en una caza entre las sombras cada vez más oscuras,” and admits, “Yo estaba llena de terror y procuraba permanecer invisible” (Laforet 129). Jordan signals this scene as an example of when Andrea “finds it extraordinarily difficult to act or to be active” (Jordan, “Female *Bildung*” 108). He draws attention to her line, “No hice nada” (Laforet 129) when she is “presented with the opportunity of reassuring an enraged Juan about Gloria’s fidelity” (Jordan, “Female *Bildung*” 108)—though, after this first missed opportunity to confront him, she indeed tries to talk him out of his pursuit. Even though she says, “No me salió la voz,” she later overcomes her fear, urging Juan, “¡Vamos a casa!” and explaining Gloria’s innocence (Laforet 130). He pushes onward and into Gloria’s sister’s apartment, leaving Andrea sitting on the doorstep and waiting until someone tells her to enter, where she falls back to her role of spectator for the rest of the night.

In Jordan’s interpretation, Andrea simply remains impotent, and not much else. But her vacillations reveal a more complex situation. Feeling and acknowledging her fear—and a legitimate one, at that, based on previous incidences of violence by Juan, harsh warnings about the unfamiliar neighborhood, the presence of possibly nefarious strangers in that neighborhood, and the darkness of its narrow and winding streets—in fact do not prevent her from attempting to carry out the difficult task given to her. If anything, this scene demonstrates an ability to spring to action when needed, despite the fact that she is unable to carry out the task; her attempt at action is not cancelled out when she does not succeed.

Furthermore, if we step back from this imposed reading and incorporate an understanding of the importance of women’s service toward others, Andrea’s inability to act becomes instead an unwillingness to sacrifice herself for her family. She has in fact thrown herself deep into the heart of the dangerous and illicit neighborhood that she has repeatedly been told to avoid, a neighborhood where decent girls would never step foot, and one that will change her reputation immediately upon entrance—at least according to Angustias. Caught up in the moment, excited

by the chase and by her grandmother's urging, and perhaps in some ways lured by this forbidden place, she initially tries to shake off these warnings and run after Juan so she can help prevent the impending violence. She is unsuccessful at achieving this act of service at the end of the winding and carnivalesque chase scene, effectively erasing any sense of purpose or excuse for being in this neighborhood at night. Here she sits, seemingly passive and powerless, outside the realm of the socially acceptable, with no real function. This portrait of Andrea, still and stoic amidst chaos, is the culmination of an image that has been repeatedly suggested inside the apartment, where she has coldly witnessed terrifically violent outbursts and fights—now, in a public place, the stakes are higher and her inaction perhaps even more surprising. While Jordan and others interpret this image as evidence of her passivity, I see it as a sidestepping of or an alternative to the ideal woman promoted in Francoist propaganda. Messages regarding women's obligations to serve others but also to remain out of certain spaces end up competing with each other: it is, in this scenario, impossible for Andrea to follow both. Thus, her inaction lays bare the contradictions and impossibilities of the desired behaviors.

What to make, then, when Andrea *is* able to act on behalf of another? The climax of the novel, when Andrea saves Ena from Román, has also drawn sustained attention by critics arguing both for and against Andrea's progress. Many see this as the moment when Andrea is finally able to act, after a year of inaction—and finally shows evidence of growth, of a coming of age. Sandra Schumm, for example, writes that Andrea's ability to act now "is inconsistent with the more passive character Andrea has exhibited up to this point and is indicative of a change" (35), which she describes as "a degree of autonomy, responding to the forces that represent liberty to her, rather than drifting through an otherwise male-controlled society" (Schumm 35-36). For Emilie Bergmann, Andrea becomes "the knight in her own book of chivalry" as she rescues Ena and herself ("Reshaping" 143). According to Thomas, Andrea is no longer a spectator but "an independent person whose behavior is motivated by altruistic values" (*Coming of Age* 66).<sup>8</sup> This means that Andrea has acted to change the course of her own life and has liberated herself from the stifling family life that she found so nightmarish in the beginning of the novel. Andrea herself seems to believe this narrative, that after passivity, she is finally spurred to act, saying "A mí, acostumbrada a dejar que la corriente de los acontecimientos me arrastrase por sí misma, me emocionaba un poco aquel actuar mío que parecía iba a forzarla" (Laforet 237).

For Jordan, however, the scene continues to manifest an inherent passivity and inability to act: she only intervenes because Ena's mother asks her to, and then, "during her attempt to save Ena, it is only after considerable hesitation... that she knocks on Roman's door" ("Female *Bildung*" 108-109). His argument again emphasizes that Andrea does not take the initiative. Partly in response to Jordan, Thomas argues that Andrea does show progress and that the novel "ends strongly suggesting a positive future for its protagonist" (*Coming of Age* 53). In fact, answering Jordan's questions about Andrea as narrator, "is Andrea writing from a position of plenitude and fulfillment? Is everything going smoothly? Is she happy? Has she really developed into a mature, self-confident, compassionate adult?" (Jordan, "Female *Bildung*" 108), Thomas maintains that "The text itself gives some affirmative answers to these questions" and that the "ultimate message is positive and that whatever happened to her after her departure yielded a far better result for her than if she had stayed" (*Coming of Age* 54).

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas draws on Paul Ricoeur's writings on intervention in his discussion of Andrea's actions on behalf of others.

Thomas signals an evolution in Andrea's own understanding of her identity as his analysis moves through the novel. Initially, he writes, "her identity depended on her family, and in the *Segunda parte*, on her friends" (Thomas, *Coming of Age* 63). Later, as she leaves Pons' party feeling dejected, she thinks, "Me parecía de que nada vale correr si siempre ha de irse por el mismo camino, cerrador, de nuestra personalidad. Unos seres nacen para vivir, otros para trabajar, otros para mirar la vida" (Laforet 224). After this point, in the *Tercera parte* of the novel, Andrea suffers an identity crisis that allows her to finally synthesize her two worlds (family and friends) and gain a clearer idea of her own identity (Thomas, *Coming of Age* 65). After the rescue, Thomas reads Andrea's escape with Ena's family to Madrid as extremely positive, explaining, "Andrea returns to her starting point but is going in reverse. She is not a prisoner of an unbreakable cycle as are the residents of the house" (Thomas, *Coming of Age* 69). For Thomas, then, *Nada* is about breaking cycles of dysfunction. While Thomas' reading skews perhaps too far into idealism—and the novel in fact maintains more of its power when we acknowledge its ambiguity, uncertainty, even mystery—I tend toward his views on Andrea's growth. Jordan accuses feminist scholars of imposing their anachronistic views onto what was possible for a young woman in the 1940s (meaning either Andrea or Laforet herself), but in that gesture he commits a similar error, in expecting too much of Andrea and in discarding the reality of the fascist State's views on women.

Within this interplay between action and inaction, progress and stagnation, positivity and negativity, I locate what I call Andrea's critical passivity, which defines her repeated attempts to escape from her family and the stifling apartment. She searches for a refuge—and I believe this search is absolutely active, even when it appears less so—all the while feigning passive indifference and emotional detachment. In fact, appearing to float through her year is a survival mechanism, a way to maintain distance from her oppressive situation and to deflect attention, and (perhaps inadvertently) a way to undermine prescribed norms and avoid adhering to them.

Andrea's arrival in Barcelona, typically emphasized for creating a sharp contrast between her first impressions of Barcelona and the dark, depressing reality of her family's apartment, as evidenced by the oft-cited line, "Luego me pareció todo una pesadilla" (Laforet 14)<sup>9</sup>, establishes some of the characteristics that will illuminate this active passivity. The book opens, "Por dificultades en el último minuto para adquirir billetes, llegué a Barcelona a medianoche, en un tren distinto del que había anunciado, y no me esperaba nadie" (Laforet 13). Andrea never elaborates on what these difficulties were, deflecting responsibility, so that, while such difficulties in catching trains would have been common at the time, she still emphasizes that this was just something that happened to her. But the consequences turn out to be fortuitous for her as she enjoys a newfound sense of freedom: "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). Despite feeling a bit of a misfit—"Debía parecer una figura extraña con mi aspecto risueño y mi viejo abrigo" (Laforet 13)—Andrea takes action. Her suitcase is heavily laden with books, but "yo llevaba yo misma con toda la fuerza de mi juventud y de mi ansiosa expectación" (Laforet 13), and she catches a carriage by cutting off a man who wanted the same one, the antithesis of demure service to others. Later, at the eerie apartment, Andrea advocates for herself despite feeling overwhelmed and disgusted, insisting that she take a shower and thus finding relief and solitude. This arrival scene already reveals aspects of Andrea's character that have, surprisingly, often been ignored: she indeed has a sense of self

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<sup>9</sup> See Marsha Collins, Barry Jordan, Mariana Petrea, and Thomas, among others.



from the beginning, but she is almost coy in the way she keeps it partially obscured from her family and also from us as readers.

The appearance of innocence and passivity is undermined further when Andrea first visits her uncle Román's attic apartment. Here she fluctuates between wanting to appear a naïve spectator and wanting him to know that she is more than just that image. When Román admits to Andrea that he has read the letter from her cousin explaining why she was sent to Barcelona, Andrea then tells him that she never really liked smoking and only did it to scandalize her family so they *would* send her. Suddenly, however, she realizes that revealing her secret manipulation causes Román to see her in a new way. She says, "Yo me daba cuenta de que él me creía una persona distinta; mucho más formada, y tal vez más inteligente y desde luego hipócrita y llena de extraños anhelos" (Laforet 32), and as soon as she realizes this, she feels a need to backtrack and again cover up her awareness in a cloak of feigned naïveté, which is why she insists that she feels "nada" in response to Román's playing the violin. When he asks, "¿Qué te dice la música?" she thinks to herself, "Inmediatamente se me cerraban las manos y el alma" and says, "Nada, no sé, sólo me gusta..." (Laforet 34). For a reason she does not explain to readers, there is a desire to cover up her real reaction to the moving music.

In these scenes of concealing and revealing her emotions, knowledge, and characteristics, Andrea shows an emotional and social awareness that many critics have neglected to see. When we pay closer attention, Andrea's repetitive insistence on "nada," here and at other moments—the book is titled *Nada*, she feels nothing, she has learned nothing, there is nothing to see here—almost turns into an obsession, suggesting ironically that there is more below the surface. She also insists that, "Yo era neciamente ingenua en aquel tiempo—a pesar de mi pretendido cinismo" (Laforet 107). Andrea is playing with the perceptions of those around her: in her desire for privacy, liberation, and independence, she seems to have an understanding that one promising way to achieve it is to make herself less noticeable and to deflect attention away from herself.

The scene in Román's apartment has given us a glimpse of the manipulation behind her façade of passivity: while it appears she was sent to Barcelona (something happened to her), she was in reality the impetus behind the move, and it was a battle she fought over an extended period of time. Later on, Andrea reveals even more, not aloud to other characters but in her narration as she reflects on Angustias leaving for the convent, that it was in fact quite a long process of finally being "sent" to Barcelona: "Recordaba la lucha sorda que tuve con mi prima Isabel para que al fin me permitiera marchar de su lado y seguir una carrera universitaria" (Laforet 80). With the experiences of battling her cousin then and Angustias now, Andrea says, "me acostumbré al juego de esconderme, de resistirme" (Laforet 80). While hiding might seem passive, when it is contextualized as resisting we see more of its power. Angustias acknowledges this spirit of rebellion, too, saying "Hubo un tiempo (cuando llegaste) en que me pareció que mi obligación era hacerte de madre. Quedarme a tu lado, protegerte. Tú me has fallado, me has decepcionado. Creí encontrar una huerfanita ansiosa de cariño y he visto un demonio de rebeldía, un ser que se ponía rígido si yo lo acariciaba. Tú has sido mi última ilusión y mi último desengaño, hija" (Laforet 75). Andrea's undercover resistance has become such a habit that she admits she does not know what she will do with her newfound independence, which has been her main goal until now, without an enemy.

According to Collins, "Learning to distinguish between surface appearance and underlying reality and to formulate a more subtle, nuanced appreciation of her fellow man forms a major part of the protagonist's education process" (299); following this idea, we can see that Andrea makes great strides in this alternation between appearance and reality, even using it to

her advantage. While we might be tempted to base our analysis on Andrea's projected cool disinterest—the surface that she presents so that we will fail to really see her at all—we can instead probe into the deeper reality shows more complexity to this character. At the same time that she gains knowledge and understanding of human nature, she uses that newfound awareness to simulate a continued naïveté that functions to deflect unwanted attention from the family she tries to escape: her feigned passiveness in reality requires much attention and action under the surface.

### **Telling Her Story: Andrea's Strength as Narrator**

Further complicating simple claims that Andrea remains passive (as exemplified by Jordan), or that Andrea shows straightforward growth and progress (Thomas, among others), Andrea is not only the protagonist of *Nada* but also the narrator. In fact, for Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Nada* explores questions of female artistic vocation and authorship because it

has less to do with any incidents in the plot than with the effect that these incidents have on the developing sensibility of the eighteen-year-old protagonist. The focus of the narration never shifts away from Andrea, who records and reacts to the strange events that take place around her. In this respect the novel is both 'egographic' and 'egocentric': Andrea is both the medium and the subject of the story. (Pérez Firmat 28)

Again, her actions—or lack thereof—are not the most important evidence of her growth; rather, her social-emotional progress happens under the surface, and is perceptible to close readers who look beyond her façade of apathy.

*Nada*'s commentary on women's writing is complex. On the most basic level, the simple fact of Andrea narrating her own development and dwelling on the self, instead of sacrificing herself for others, contradicts official messaging on a woman's inherent traits (subservient, demure, self-sacrificing) and desired role (serving, nurturing, caring for others). While it can be easy to forget, her act of writing undermines critiques that she is passive. Even Jordan admits that "The main thrust of the narrative... is backward, responding to a desire to relive and re-elaborate the past" ("Female *Bildung*" 110), though his conclusion is that this backward thrust is evidence against a forward progress. Contextually, though, revealing the past was in itself anti-regime, as shown by David Herzberger in his book *Narrating the Past*, which claims, "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" (2). Martín Gaité writes in her *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* that it was generally "Prohibido mirar hacia atrás" (13) during the postwar period, as the regime wanted people to forget the horrors of the war and move forward.<sup>10</sup> She continues, parodying State rhetoric, "La guerra había terminado. Se censuraba cualquier comentario que pusiera de manifiesto su huella, de por sí bien evidente, en tantas familias mutiladas, tantos suburbios miserables, pueblos arrasados, prisioneros abarrotando las cárceles, exilio, represalias y economía maltrecha" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 13). Many Francoist articles, writings, and speeches supply evidence for this claim, as they encourage Spaniards to look to the future with

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<sup>10</sup> Referring to Franco's declaration in April 1939, with posters plastered throughout the cities.

optimism and a can-do attitude. Recall, for example, the active, modern TERESA who looked always forward (“Teresa”). Andrea’s reminiscing, then, is inherently subversive simply by performing this backward glance. In the words of Bergmann, “This self-chronicling is a breathtakingly bold act, as Laforet appropriates male-identified literary traditions that serve as models: the chivalric tales of heroism, the Quixotic parody, and the *Kunstlerroman*, all generally having male protagonists” (“Reshaping” 145).

Andrea’s telling of her story, regardless of what that story may be, is a move that has historically been challenging for women, and therefore also a repeated element in canonical feminist theory. Hélène Cixous has emphasized the difficulties in finding one’s voice and being able to write, urging women to write their bodies: “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” (27). Her charge to women is that they write, so that they inspire other women to write and to relate to each other and “might exclaim: I, too, overflow... And I, too, said nothing, showed nothing; I didn’t open my mouth, and I swallowed my shame and fear” (Cixous 28). She continues, “I know why you haven’t written. (And why I didn’t write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it’s reserved for the great—that is, for ‘great men;’ and it’s ‘silly’” (Cixous 28-29). Cixous has given words to precisely the obstacles that have prevented women from putting their thoughts into words.

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have also analyzed this difficulty, calling it an anxiety of authorship that results from a lack of role models, or “foremothers,” for women who wish to write (whereas men have too many forefathers). This is not just a fear of one’s predecessors<sup>11</sup> but rather “a radical fear that she cannot create” (Gilbert and Gubar 49), which becomes “profoundly debilitating” (Gilbert and Gubar 51). As women are conditioned to be beautiful objects, and never the creators of such objects, they also learn an anxiety or hatred of their own bodies. This anxiety, along with the angel or monster stereotypes between which women are forced to choose, leads to various women’s illnesses such as hysteria and anorexia. Gilbert and Gubar write, “Whether she is a passive angel or an active monster, in other words, the woman writer feels herself to be literally or figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives her culture offers her, and the crippling effects of her conditioning sometimes seem to ‘breed’ like sentences of death in the bloody shoes she inherits from her literary foremothers” (57).

With Andrea, Laforet has created a self-conscious narrator who acknowledges the difficulty of finding her voice at certain moments in the text. When she is upset with Román for snooping through her belongings and tries to confront him, Andrea writes, “Las ideas me apretaban la garganta sin poderlas expresar” (Laforet 66); despite this obstacle she does succeed in expressing herself. With this description of Andrea’s trouble speaking, Laforet almost prefigures Cixous’ description: “Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away—that’s how daring a feat, how great a transgression it is for a woman to speak—even just open her mouth—in public” (Cixous 33). In trying to stand up for herself in this particular scene, Andrea is on the brink of paralysis, but overcomes it. This becomes an analogy for writing, even perhaps for artistic production more generally.

There is a further contradiction in Andrea the narrator: despite her insistence that she has not learned from her experiences and has nothing to say, she has produced this body of writing. The paradox becomes evident especially at the end of the novel, when she prepares to leave

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<sup>11</sup> Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar reference and adapt Harold Bloom’s anxiety of influence, formulating an equivalent for women in the term “anxiety of authorship.”

Barcelona, coming full circle from her arrival a year ago. She says, “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 ahora 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” (Laforet 213). She remembers coming up this staircase at the beginning of her journey, and this circularity tempts us as readers to agree with her that nothing has changed. But in spite of her insistence that she has not learned or taken away anything from this year, the simple existence of this narration proves otherwise. Why write about the experiences if there was truly nothing to tell about them? In shaping a narrator who claims to have nothing to say, Laforet comments on the status of women’s writing: difficult but necessary. So, despite societal pressure against women writing, despite contemporary governmental pressure against looking back and remembering, despite even her own assertion that she has nothing to say, Andrea tells her story. This gesture cannot be overlooked. Laforet draws attention to Andrea’s precarious claim through various references to this key word “nada,” most obviously as the title thought also peppered throughout the book, and through the qualifying statement, “Al menos, así creía yo entonces” (Laforet 213).

This fundamental line from the novel is one of only a few moments that Andrea reminds us that time has passed since her experiences in Barcelona, which shows reflection and growth since then. It also raises questions of authorship, authority, fiction, and art that circulate throughout *Nada*. Many of the characters have artistic vocations: Juan is an aspiring though failing artist; Román plays piano and violin, and is the true artist; Gloria weaves stories and lies, often referring to her own life as a novel; Andrea befriends a bohemian group of privileged artists. The household is defined by spying, secrets, lies, and the reliving of memories—the art of storytelling.

These questions and repetitions circle back to the Cixousian claim that “By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display” (Cixous 32). Ironically, alongside Andrea, it is the infantile and frivolous Gloria who makes the greatest strides in this endeavor. Andrea is initially drawn to her because of the beauty and sensuality of her body in Juan’s cluttered and dingy studio, where Gloria poses for him, “desnuda y en una postura incómoda” (Laforet 30), but later in the book Gloria attempts to tell her own story by sharing secrets, telling Andrea the family’s history, and writing a new future by earning money. In doing so, she is writing her self, which is also “An act that will also be marked by woman’s *seizing* the occasion to *speak*, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based *on her suppression*” (Cixous 32).

Laforet emphasizes the absurdity of the confiscation and suppression of female bodies when Gloria sits as a model and Juan attempts to paint her. Andrea writes, “A mí me parecía una tarea inútil. En el lienzo iba apareciendo un acartonado muñeco tan estúpido como la misma expresión de la cara de Gloria al escuchar cualquier conversación de Román conmigo. Gloria, enfrente de nosotros, sin su desastrado vestido, aparecía increíblemente bella y blanca entre la fealdad de todas las cosas” (Laforet 30), signaling a profound disconnect between a beautiful reality and a diminished reproduction. Juan’s ineptitude at painting reduces the image of Gloria into a mediocre and ultimately failed attempt at capturing her beauty. In devaluing the art at hand, Laforet disrupts the male gaze<sup>12</sup> at its core while Andrea usurps the gaze, performing her own female gaze, a gaze that contemplates the reality and the art, a gaze that critiques. Andrea is not simply a spectator, but a critic.

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<sup>12</sup> From Laura Mulvey’s term in “Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema.”

Surveying the studio and the art in progress, Andrea is an observer of the muse, the artist, the art produced, and the process of its creation—and in many others. Throughout the novel, she shifts among different roles: oftentimes she is a spectator, listener, or observer who witnesses fights, listens to monologues and secrets, notices the subtle behaviors of others, and contemplates the streets and architecture of the city;<sup>13</sup> at other times she is an object under observation, especially by those who wish to shape or control her behavior (Román, Angustias, Ena, the maid Antonia); and throughout it all she is the creator and storyteller of the narrative at hand. These interconnected roles suggest a fluidity of authorship and deal with questions of the validity and purpose of art.

There is no shortage of analyses on Andrea as a narrator. Jordan, in “Narrators, Readers and Writers in Laforet’s *Nada*,” highlights the fact that Andrea is an exradiegetic (external) but homodiegetic (participatory) narrator. In general, he explains, because these narrators are “participating agents in the story, their reliability as authorities becomes suspect” (Jordan, “Narrators” 90). He also investigates the connection between Andrea as she experiences her year in Barcelona and the older, supposedly more mature Andrea as she remembers it. Laforet draws attention to this connection—or really, this gap—only rarely and partially, leaving many questions unanswered. There is a lot that we do not know about Andrea after her departure for Madrid, or about who she is at the time of writing. While Andrea’s narration says just enough to demonstrate that time has passed, she omits any further details, thus blurring a comprehensive understanding of the situation. This echoes the fragmented revelation of other pieces of the stories that unfolded around her: overheard whispers, feverish memories of conversations, interrupted secrets. Andrea’s role as narrator, then, emphasizes the inherent power in telling and in controlling a story. In other words, we must remember that in this seemingly simple act of recording her story, Andrea assumes a powerful role, the role of building the story, and of providing—or not—the relevant details. While she is a spectator in many, if not most, scenes in *Nada*, finding her voice and telling her story show, as stated, quite a rebellious move.

### **Andrea’s *Flâneuse*-Like Wanderings**

Part of Andrea’s rebellion within the narration can be found in her wanderings through the streets of Barcelona, which provide a refuge from the claustrophobic apartment and from her family. Again, while these walks might appear pointless and passive, it is precisely in their non-productivity that the walks take on a more covert meaning. As she meanders with no destination and no purpose, Andrea refuses to be productive or to serve others, which we have highlighted as a key concept of femininity according to Francoist models. The street becomes a “cobijo,” as theorized by Martín Gaité, who explains that the *chicas raras* of her study “no aguantan el encierro ni las ataduras al bloque familiar que las impide lanzarse a la calle” (*Desde la ventana* 101). Instead of the house providing an ambiance of peace, refuge, and rest—as it would according to the depictions in Falangist propaganda—it is the street that fills this role. Instead of being a place to escape to, it is now a place to escape from. Martín Gaité continues, “Sueñan con perderse en una calle donde nadie las conozca, donde, convertidas en seres anónimos, puedan dejar de sentir la servidumbre de unos lazos agobiantes y caducos” (*Desde la ventana* 101).

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<sup>13</sup> In my opinion, observing is not a purely passive role, especially when we take into consideration the authorial emphasis on spying and on the power that can be gained through the knowledge gained by spying. This is another element to the critical female gaze being performed by Andrea.

Andrea fits this characterization, and Angustias reinforces just how *rara* the regime would have considered such a young woman. For example, Angustias expresses her concern that Andrea had arrived the night before alone to such a big city, which is why she claims that, facing the dangers of Barcelona, “Una joven en Barcelona debe ser como una fortaleza” (Laforet 23), touching on an architectural metaphor for the female body. Andrea says she does not understand this warning, prompting Angustias to explain that being her niece implies she is a proper Catholic girl, an image which must be protected. This is why, she says, “no te dejaré dar un paso sin mi permiso” (Laforet 23). Here Francoist control over female behavior is vocalized by the traditional and authoritarian Angustias, whose warnings about the dangers of the city and the possibility of ruining one’s reputation by walking in the wrong part of town elevate Andrea’s *flâneuse*-like wanderings<sup>14</sup> from a seemingly harmless hobby to a dismissal of the prescribed norms. In other words, while it appears that Andrea is passively meandering, her walks are a decision she makes, and one which flouts expectations.

In fact, Angustias chastises Andrea for exactly these walks, saying upon noticing her worn shoes, “es necesario cuidar más las prendas personales. Tienes que andar menos y pisar con más cuidado” (Laforet 45). She suggests, as does the Francoist propaganda, that a woman’s place is in the home, that it is improper for her to wander the streets, and that she must be conscious of her appearances and belongings. Andrea’s walks are especially problematic in the eyes of Angustias because “te gusta ir sola, hija mía, como si fueras un golfo” (Laforet 45). Drawing attention to the worn out shoes also recalls the connotation of sexual promiscuity.<sup>15</sup> Later in this conversation, Angustias also refers back to her own upbringing, reinforcing antiquated notions of proper female behavior and paralleling the reactionary rhetoric of Franco’s fascist regime. Her reprimands further emphasize that a young woman is beholden to her family, whose honor depends on society’s opinions of her.

While Angustias is the most obvious manifestation of the regime’s doctrine, her departure is not the end of Andrea’s need to search for liberty. Her solitary walks through Barcelona continue to provide a respite from the drama and violence of her household, and some of the only peace she can find. While contemporary views of the home held that it should be a space of rest, recovery, and protection from the commotion and stress of the outside world, particularly for men when they arrive home from work,<sup>16</sup> Laforet turns this model upside down: home is the stressor, and the outside world is the relief. This reversal displays the disruption and disintegration of the family home that has been destroyed by the war and postwar.

Interruptions to Andrea’s walks prove extremely frustrating for her, as when she is walking home after a party at her friend Ena’s house, meandering because, “quería ver la Catedral envuelta en el encanto y el misterio de la noche” (Laforet 86). When she gets there, she feels “una soledad impresionante” and elaborates, “Una paz, una imponente claridad, se derramaba de la arquitectura maravillosa. En derredor de sus trazos oscuros resaltaba la noche brillante” (Laforet 86). Suddenly, though, that peace is punctured by Gerardo, who was at the

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<sup>14</sup> Walter Benjamin’s *flâneur* is emblematic of a modern man of leisure, who has the luxury of time at his disposal. He wanders or strolls without purpose, except that of being a spectator, an observer. But he is always male. In adopting the term *flâneuse* I deliberately draw attention to Andrea’s status as an urban, modern wanderer and also to the ongoing polemical nature of these actions when carried out by a woman (evidenced in Angustias’ reactions to Andrea’s worn out shoes or to Gloria’s nighttime escapades, for example).

<sup>15</sup> This connotation dates back at least to the sexual implications of the friar in *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

<sup>16</sup> Examples abound in *Y, Teresa, Medina*, and other publications, reflecting a more generalized view of the home as a refuge in the modern western world.

same party, and Andrea thinks to herself, “¡Maldito!... me has quitado toda la felicidad que me iba a llevar de aquí” (Laforet 87). In an infantilizing and paternalistic tone, he asks, “¿No te da miedo andar tan solita por las calles? ¿Y si viene el lobito y te come?...” (Laforet 87).<sup>17</sup> Despite her direct statement, “Prefiero ir sola” (Laforet 88), he insists on walking her home.

Linda Chown, in her article “American Critics and Spanish Women Novelists, 1942-1980,” has written on key differences between Anglo-American feminism and Spanish feminism, particularly with regards to their interpretation of Spanish novels written by women, which have caused misreadings and misunderstandings over the years. Among these distinctions, one is their view of “solitude, time, and the right to progress” (Chown 98). According to Chown, the Anglo-Americans critics, in general, “believe that solitude is a sign of loneliness” (98), and that time and progress will lead us out of it and into a more liberated state; “in contrast, the Spanish authors conceive of solitude as a necessary and potentially productive given of the human condition” (Chown 99). Clearly, Andrea desires the solitude she sought in wandering and gazing at the cathedral, which makes Gerardo’s disruption even more invasive. Andrea’s solitude is linked in this scene to her independence and progress: it is one of only a few instances where she decides where she wants to go, and goes there. Being alone allowed her to make that decision and then act on it. Gerardo’s interruption of that solitude parallels the other instances in the novel when Andrea’s attempts at isolation are punctured by those around her, such as taking Angustias’ room and then discovering that she wouldn’t be able to lock the door in order to give her uncles access to the phone.

After Angustias’ departure, Andrea does gain more independence by opting out of family meals and choosing instead to take a pension to pay for her own meals, which brings her immense pleasure. She narrates an example, “Había cobrado aquel día mi paga de febrero y poseída de las delicias de poderla gastar, me lancé a la calle” and admits that “Este placer” of spending and eating becomes “una obsesión (Laforet 89). She spends all her money at the beginning of each month and ends up hungry by the end, but she says, “La verdad es que me sentía más feliz desde que estaba desligada de aquel nudo de las comidas en la casa” (Laforet 93).

Now less beholden to her family and their destructive habits, she is instead freer than ever to wander the streets, conspicuously consuming luxuries. Her spending power, miniscule as it may be, also buys her more time, more liberty, more frivolities, and more opportunity to behave as she wishes (as a *flâneuse*). Her walks, now injected with this new sense of leisure and amusement, take on a new element of rebellion against Francoist expectations of women. Andrea’s complete disinterest in budgeting brazenly contradicts messaging on the importance of sacrifice for others. For example, articles in women’s magazines emphasize the importance of budgeting and economic self-sufficiency. As the war’s end approached in 1939, *Y* encouraged, “¡Gastad, mujeres, gastad!” (Sanz, “Gastad” 30) in order to help to heal the economy, with Hitler’s encouragement to spend as a model (Sanz, “Gastad” 31). Later that year, the tone had become congratulatory in an article “Valor espiritual del dinero,” which reads:

Sin formación económica profunda, pero sí con el profundo sentimiento de vuestros corazones de mujer, habéis sabido crear, administrar y gastar el dinero

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<sup>17</sup> Gerardo’s words obviously refer to the fairy tale of *Caperucita Roja* (Little Red Riding Hood). Connections between the female *Bildungsroman* and the fairy tale have interested such scholars as Christopher Anderson and Lynne Vespe Sheay, Kathleen Glenn, Janet Pérez, as well as Martín Gaité herself, and will be referenced in future chapters.

más espiritual que jamás circuló. Lo creasteis con esfuerzo, dolor y muerte. Lo administrasteis con ilusión y con temor. Lo gastasteis con derroche de amor. (Sanz, “Valor espiritual” 13)

By October 1939 the messaging had shifted to the encouragement of self-sufficiency, as evidenced in the article “Autarquía y vosotras,” defined as the “objeto de evitar las importaciones” (Sanz, “Autarquía” 20); for this, women were now told: “Comprad nuestros productos” (Sanz, “Autarquía” 21). Throughout *Y*'s run, references to saving, making do, and specific spending dominate Sanz's articles on money and show a desire to harness the power of women's spending. These same words are echoed by Martín Gaité in her *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*: “lo más importante era el ahorro, tanto de dinero como de energías: guardarlo todo, no desperdiciar, no exhibir, no gastar saliva en protestas ni críticas baldías, reservarse, tragar” (13). Andrea's frivolity does the exact opposite: neglecting her own physical needs, she instead buys such luxuries as flowers for Ena's mother, sweet treats for herself, or meals in restaurants. Her lack of forethought, evident in her starvation, differentiates her spending from the budgeted, thoughtful spending women were supposed to do for their families; her independence has come at a cost.

### Subverting Models of Womanhood

I have now shown how Andrea's wandering and spending are important elements of her critical passivity. Laforet reinforces her development of a seemingly passive Andrea who is actually making an active and meaningful choice when she sets Andrea against other female characters in the novel. Andrea's status as an orphan means her mother cannot serve as a role model,<sup>18</sup> and she then chooses not to emulate any of the women in her family: she despises her cousin and maneuvers her way out of her small town, she rebels against Angustias, she pities her grandmother, and she maintains a disgust toward Gloria despite a strange fascination. Laforet's novel highlights, then, a fundamental *lack* where in the Francoist propaganda we see an overabundance: there is no “real” role model for Andrea, there is *nada* for her to emulate—at least not in her family, returning us to Baudrillard's theory of a lack of a referent.<sup>19</sup>

This is perhaps most evident in Laforet's subversion of the authoritative figure of Angustias, a woman who most ascribes to Francoist expectations, or at least attempts to. Angustias “no sólo se veía a sí misma fuerte y capaz de conducir multitudes, sino también dulce, desdichada y perseguida” (Laforet 28). With this description, Laforet draws attention to the qualities in Angustias that are depicted as ideal in Francoist literature. She feels compelled to shape Andrea into a decent young lady, echoing the task presented to readers of the magazine *Y* as they raise their children. Angustias says, “Es muy difícil la tarea que se me ha venido a las manos. La tarea de cuidar de ti, de moldearte en la obediencia” (Laforet 22).

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea is certainly not the only postwar example of an adolescent protagonist with an absent mother. See Christine Arkinstall's “Towards a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughters in Contemporary Spanish Narrative by Women.”

<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth Ordóñez, in “The Double Voices of Youth: Writing Within and Beyond the Lines of Demarcation in Laforet's *Nada*,” has also analyzed another interconnected absence: that of the ideal male figure, signaling “an historical degeneration of patriarchal authority” (37).



Despite her endeavors, Angustias is in fact unable to control Andrea's behavior or movement about the city. She is further unable to control the rest of the family or manage their conflicts. Her affair with her boss, a covert sin, reveals itself despite her attempts to create a façade of perfect dignity. And in the end, her family's awareness of her secret pushes her to escape to a cloister, clinging to the idea that "sólo hay dos caminos para la mujer. Dos únicos caminos honrosos" (Laforet 75). The demise of this character suggests that her model of womanhood—her prudish insistence on antiquated values such as obedience, purity, and self-sacrifice—is an impossible goal. Angustias' attempts at authoritarianism have caused a reverse reaction in Andrea, who even early on thinks, "pensé que tal vez no me iba a resultar desagradable disgustarla un poco" (Laforet 24). Her attempts at being a proper lady are, ultimately, nothing more than a façade. And her attempts at being a caring and maternal figure are also rebuked by Andrea, who explains that when Angustias tries to be sweet, "yo experimentaba dentro de mí la sensación de que algo iba torcido y mal en la marcha de las cosas. De que no era natural aquello" (Laforet 27). Instead of the regime's glorified mother modeled after the Virgin Mary, Laforet gives us a poor substitute in the cold, strange, adulterous aunt Angustias. Throughout the novel, Andrea becomes more emboldened in her rejection of Angustias' surveillance and control: while Andrea doesn't quite comprehend why, there is something especially off-putting to her about Angustias, about this sad attempt at perfect womanhood, about the control exerted over her.

Angustias is not the only failed example: Andrea's grandmother "fills the familiar folktale role of the 'helper'" (Bergmann, "Reshaping" 144); in the specific context of postwar Spain, she embodies perfectly the female abnegation expected by the regime—she starves herself to be able to give extra food to her grandson and defends her sons even as they verbally abuse her and are physically violent toward each other—she becomes a pathetic figure, a profound illustration of the problems with this model, forgotten and discarded by those she has served. Below the surface, then, this prototype simply does not stand up. And who else might Andrea emulate? Gloria breaks her family's rules, scandalously escaping at night, which means she is presumed to be a prostitute. In reality, she is sneaking away to visit her sister's apartment and gambling den, where she earns money for her family. While gambling is far from a "legitimate" career, especially for a woman at this time, this is no prostitution, and her goal is ultimately noble. Furthermore, she becomes, like Angustias, a breadwinner for her family, a working mother—in contrast to the expectation of a mother who remains tied to the home. Ironically, Bergmann has pointed out, Angustias "is invisible to herself as a single working woman who, like Gloria with her clandestine gambling, helps support her family" ("Reshaping" 144).

The closest approximation to a role model for Andrea, then, is external to the family on Calle Aribau. Ena and her mother provide two other models for Andrea—ultimately, the models that she chooses—but they, too, have their secrets and shortcomings. Both are at some point ensnared in Román's seduction, and Ena's mother is aloof and possibly unhappy in a marriage that from the outside appears perfect. Furthermore, this family is also problematic to our reading because it so closely fulfills (or at least appears to fulfill) the Francoist model of an ideal, traditional one. Still, it is significant that Andrea opts out of her own family and opts into a new one based in friendship, fulfilling sentiments she had expressed early in the novel: "a veces pienso que es mejor la amistad que la familia. Puede uno, en ocasiones, unirse más a un extraño a su sangre" (Laforet 65). Katherine Payant has observed that "one of the most pervasive motifs in more recent *Bildungsromane* is the role of female friendship in the maturation of the central character" (151), which distinguishes it from traditional (male) *Bildungsromane*, where

individualism instead of friendship is a key characteristic. In *Nada*, the rejection of her family is a rejection of failed Francoist models, but her selection of Ena's family as a replacement can also be seen as an opting *into* a model family that achieves more proximity to the one desired by the regime.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Despite Jordan's reading that "Andrea's escape from Aribau and her independence are achieved through absolutely no effort on her part. Her salvation is the product of a *deus ex machina*, an external agent, a providential, fairy godmother figure played by Ena and it is triggered by her letter of invitation to Madrid" ("Female *Bildung*" 108), I see Andrea's rejection of the models of womanhood available in her household as more than a simple, passive coincidence. Indeed, as Bergmann has shown, Andrea is refusing what has been offered to her, even if her ability to physically carry out this rejection requires some luck and outside benevolence. Her choice to accept Ena's family's offer demonstrates at least some kind of agency, and an ultimate repudiation of her own family. With this escape, Laforet demonstrates the inadequacy of the ideal family and ideal woman promoted by Franco's Spain, and perhaps even signals the nonexistence of a reality behind this promoted image. Returning to Baudrillard's procession of simulacra, we can again sense the lack of a referent for the promoted image. Whereas the magazines and other Francoist propaganda place great value on the visual and textual construction of a model home and family, promoting this image as a representation of reality, it is actually "its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard 11). In showcasing a variety of different models of womanhood in *Nada*, all of which are rejected by Andrea, and none of which correspond to the model so vehemently promoted by the regime, Laforet undermines the credibility of the reality purportedly behind the image.

## Chapter 2

### Destabilizing Dichotomies in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*

Central to any discussion of the female *Bildungsroman* in twentieth-century Spain is the work of Ana María Matute, best known for the themes of children and childhood. Her 1960 novel *Primera memoria*, the first of her Mercaderes trilogy and winner of the 1959 Premio Nadal, traces a year in the life of young protagonist Matia, who moves in with her grandmother, her aunt Emilia, and her cousin Borja on an unnamed island, where they live physically removed from the war raging on mainland Spain. Borja, jealous of Matia's friend Manuel for being the purported son of his idol Jorge de Son Major, frames Manuel for theft—and Matia fails to defend Manuel as he is sent to a correctional institution at the end of the book. The novel, narrated by an older and arguably wiser Matia, reflects back on the disgust she felt for an adult world she was afraid to enter as well as the shame she continues to feel about her betrayal of Manuel.

The book can be read as anti-regime not just for its oblique mentions of the cruelties of wartime and the postwar period or for its creation of a microcosm of war-torn Spain,<sup>1</sup> but also for its deconstruction of the contrasts that various critics have identified in the novel: childhood and adulthood, naïveté and maturity, good and evil, light and dark, right and wrong, wealthy and poor, Republican and Nationalist.<sup>2</sup> As she establishes dichotomies within the novel, Matute also breaks them down by showing a complex world in which it is not one or the other, but rather both at the same time—suggesting that dualities can, and do, coexist. This chapter will show how Matute's leveraging of these ambiguities within dualities allow her to resist, in particular, two of the regime's ideals: first, its representation of girls and adolescents as future mothers, and, second, its emphasis on a bucolic rural Spain connected to the nurturing qualities they desired in women. By closely analyzing these prescriptive presentations of womanhood and the natural world in Francoist propaganda, I turn to *Primera memoria* to show Matute's subversive power in presenting a young girl acutely aware of and resistant to her place in society, but also fascinated by it, both before adolescence and as a grown woman. Further, Matute's protagonist displays an ambivalent attitude toward the "green" or natural world that both threatens and protects, which in turn serves as a metaphor for the hostile adult world she foreshadows. Additionally, these dichotomies are layered over the book's central theme of growing up; my approach highlights the conventional tropes of the *Bildung* genre (emphasis on progress, narration via reflection and the prohibited backward glance), which already give the book an anti-regime backdrop and allow for Matute's more nuanced resistance to shine through.

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Jordan has written of the 1950s social realist novel in Spain that, "in repressive conditions and under the vigilant gaze of censorship, writers could only deal with Spain's hidden realities indirectly, adopting writing strategies which, as far as possible, avoided editorial comment in favour of direct, objective reporting. It was then left up to the reader to read between the lines and to raise questions concerning the responsibilities for the situations and conditions portrayed" (*Writing and Politics in Franco's Spain* ix). Sara Brenneis and many other scholars share this view.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Christopher Anderson and Lynne Vespe Sheay, Emilie Cannon, Emily Eaton, Margaret Jones, Nanette Pascal, María Luisa Pérez Bernardo, or Michael Thomas.

## From Girl to Woman and From Girlhood to Womanhood

Much has already been said about *Primera memoria* as a novel of development. The book's emphasis on the tensions of adolescence as a central drama brings these questions to the forefront, and critics have debated whether Matute wishes to contrast childhood and adulthood or to demonstrate continuity between them. Over the course of one summer on the island, Matia changes, learns, and grows: of this there is no doubt. But I would like to evaluate the degree to which the adult world into which she enters actually differs from the child world she leaves behind, as well as the degree to which children fundamentally change as they become adults. Noticing the subtleties of Matute's representation of adolescence will allow us to parse a new understanding of the book's message on the importance of adolescence in a person's life. In considering also Francoist propaganda, especially produced by the Sección Femenina, we can see how Matute emphasizes that central theme of adolescence in order to question the regime's established models of reality.

On the one hand, critics of *Primera memoria* have often emphasized the sharp divide between childhood and adulthood, marked by a short but intense adolescence, in this case even more specifically the single summer narrated. For example, Victor Fuentes has written in "Notas sobre el mundo novelesco de Ana María Matute," "Sus protagonistas adolescentes que viven en «su mundo de ilusión e idealismo» despiertan a la realidad de la vida solo cuando un golpe fatídico les arrebatara su efímera felicidad" (107). It is over the course of this one summer that "la vida se les presenta en toda su pavorosa realidad," and the reality of the adult world is "una atmósfera envenenada por el odio y la venganza" in which the adults are continuously "perseguidos por sus recuerdos," always looking back at the past, with nothing more to look forward to than death (Fuentes 107-108). This pessimistic interpretation of the book has become widely accepted and seems almost a shorthand for understanding all of Matute's oeuvre.

Similarly, in his article "The Rite of Initiation in Matute's *Primera memoria*," Michael Thomas explains how Matia's growth is a modern rite of passage. He outlines two plotlines: "first, the passage to adulthood of a young girl, who, with no mother or clear-cut adult model, is confused and ambivalent as she faces irrational external forces which draw her into a hostile adult world; second, a narrator, the protagonist in later years, who attempts to reconstruct the painful period of her life" (Thomas, "Rite of Initiation" 153). The narration of her past "brings the chaos of memory under control and enables her to communicate her experience to an unlimited audience. The final result is that young Matia is initiated involuntarily into the world she most abhors" (Thomas, "Rite of Initiation" 153). In this paradigm, the difference between childhood and adulthood is crucial for defining the growth that Matia has undertaken.

María Luisa Pérez Bernardo echoes this idea in her conceptualization of the novel, in which she explains, "*Primera memoria* se centra en el mundo de los niños, en un universo donde al final los más pequeños serán contaminados por lo cruel, absurdo y grotesco de los adultos" (48). Her article arrives at a rather pessimistic conclusion, as do many of Matute's critics, summed up at the end of her article:

Matia se encuentra que tiene que luchar entre dos mundos, el de sus parientes, colmado de restricciones y de hipocresía, y su propio universo, abierto a nuevos caminos y anclado en la infancia, y por consiguiente, en la inocencia. La novela refleja así la rebelión frustrada de la adolescente, el descubrimiento gradual de la falsedad del mundo adulto y, finalmente, la incorporación a este ambiente de

opresión y restricciones. De esta manera, la joven se convierte en víctima, pues la sociedad caótica de la posguerra le trunca la posibilidad de una infancia normal, convirtiéndose en imitadora de la crueldad que advierte en los adultos. (Pérez Bernardo 55)

Nanette Pascal, too, claims that the adult characters remain “alejados, distantes, ajenos al mundo infantil” (78). In many of these fatalistic readings of *Primera memoria*, there is a sense of hopelessness, of a predetermined outcome.

Emilie Cannon, in a different kind of pessimism, highlights the parallels between the children’s world and the adults’ world in the book, showing that, “Throughout the novel, children are drawn into the rampant intrigue, conflict, and evil of the adult characters. Borja manipulates children as Tía Emilia manipulates adults, Matia acquiesces in Borja’s crime, and war and class conflict are grotesquely repeated in child’s play” (41). With these and other examples, she proves that “the myth of childhood as a halcyon, idyllic state” is, precisely, a myth; instead she sees that both childhood and adulthood are full of “dishonesty, self-interest, and treachery” (Cannon 41). Now it is not just adults who are doomed; it is children themselves who start out that way and simply reach the fullest potential of those negative qualities as they grow up. Cannon’s claims reinforce those of Pascal, who writes, “Matute no idealiza a sus niños. Muy al contrario, expone, con resultados, en ocasiones, inesperadas y grotescos (como en sus cuentos), la maldad inconsciente, la inocencia perversa del niño. Los personajes niños de Matute son idealistas y soñadores pero, también, crueles y propensos a la violencia” (Pascal viii). These critics have shown, then, that instead of a contrast between innocent childhood and corrupted adulthood, the former simply foreshadows the latter in a continuum of cruelties. The adult world that Matia so fears is actually an extension of the one she already inhabits, and adults are no more mature than children. The rejection of a sense of growth or change offers a different perspective from that of Thomas cited above. Again there is a certain determinism present in these evaluations of the novel as they point out that there is an inevitable negative future for the children in Matute’s works.<sup>3</sup>

Can we say, then, that Matia has grown in these pessimistic readings of *Primera memoria* and of Matute’s worldview? I would like to show, in this chapter, a different way of interpreting the book; if not optimistically, then at least acknowledging the sense of purpose and agency in the book, the drive not only to respond to the loss of innocence but to protest it and signal a problem. For example, Emilie Bergmann has shown that “Matute gives moral dignity to her female protagonist and to the process of female development in her cultural context” (“Reshaping” 148). Janet Pérez examines how Matute, among other authors, adapts the coming-of-age novel by “incorporating fairy-tale motifs and references, subverting traditional endings, or emphasizing unconventional attitudes,” which “deliberately exposes the truth/reality interface and the negative consequences for feminine socialization of internalizing fairy-tale social codes” (Pérez 60), thus emphasizing the critical nature of Matute’s depictions of life in postwar Spain. While Matute certainly displays the difficulties of that life, it is not in a prescriptive manner, but rather in a questioning one—and even then, Matia *is* able to reflect on her experiences and progress as a thinking, feeling individual. In order to understand precisely how Matute uses her

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term determinism here in order to reconsider its tension with Spain’s Catholicism (free will), as explored by Emilia Pardo Bazán in her essays in *La cuestión palpitante* as well as novels such as *Los pazos de Ulloa* and *La madre naturaleza*. A deterministic reading of the novel might signal a rejection of Francoist ideology, in particular its Catholic underpinnings.

presentation of adolescence to respond to the regime's, it is necessary to analyze the state-sanctioned publications alongside the novel, which allows us to consider the text in its context.

### **Woman Anesthetized and Estheticized: The Adolescent Body**

How were childhood and adolescence being portrayed in Sección Femenina publications, and how does Matute subtly respond to this representation in *Primera memoria*? In both media, the development from girl to woman is a central conflict, but Matute problematizes the messaging of the propaganda circulating before and during the novel's publication. In some ways, references to adolescence in *Primera memoria* follow the Sección Femenina's pattern of emphasizing societal expectations, including the detailed policing of the young female body, while referring only obliquely to the emotional realities of puberty, in particular via Matia's grandmother and, to some extent, via her aunt Emilia.<sup>4</sup> The body of the young girl becomes an object of utmost interest to both the older generations in the family, who monitor her appearance, hygiene, and habits. However, Matute then destabilizes these prevailing attitudes about adolescent bodies through Matia's existence as a "chica rara"<sup>5</sup> and through her contrarian reactions to the surveillance and control attempted by her older relatives, which reveal the absurdity of the systemic beliefs about a woman's role. At the same time, while Matia attempts to resist the control imposed upon her, she struggles to avoid internalizing it, parallel to her greater struggle to avoid the evils she sees in adulthood, all while inevitably growing up.

While many propagandistic articles on children and youth featured a tone of empathy, warmth, and care that acknowledges the fragility and innocence of childhood, this view was coupled with a certain condescension as well. For example, *Teresa* ran an article titled "Hablemos con el niño," in which author Francis Bartolozzi writes, "lo que es difícil, difícilísimo, es hablar con un niño, con nuestros hijos o con sus amigos" (34), highlighting the split between children and adults and assuming they do not have much in common. Bartolozzi continues, "Al niño no se le debe hablar en sentido de humor porque carecen de él, y cuando os digan cosas que os parecen absurdas no debéis dárselo a entender" (34). With this statement he strips children of their intelligence, humor, and humanity—almost provoking or encouraging misunderstandings between adults and children. It is this devaluing of children that leads to the feeling of necessity for correction, shaping, molding, and educating them, which is what characterizes the representation of adolescence in Sección Femenina publications. Coupled with the insistence on raising good future Falangists, this attitude explained the purported importance of women's role.

For example, in magazines such as *Y* and *Teresa*, adolescence is often described from the point of view of the mother and emphasizing her role in guiding her daughter through that

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<sup>4</sup> Catherine Davies has explored how, in *Primera memoria* and other contemporary novels of female development, "the female protagonists are often orphans; their fathers are away or dead, and many are motherless, but the figure of the grandmother (usually representing pre-1930s traditional Spain) looms large" (189). Guadalupe María Cabedo has also examined the absent mother in her book *La madre ausente en la novela femenina de la posguerra española: pérdida y liberación*, claiming that "es más conveniente retratar la rebeldía de sus protagonistas femeninas contra la madre-sustituta que contra la propia madre, dada la idealización que se tiene de la madre, en España, en esta época, y a causa del inconformismo que sentían estas escritoras, y muchísimas más mujeres de la posguerra española, ante el gobierno patriarcal y androcéntrico del franquismo" (9).

<sup>5</sup> This term comes from Carmen Martín Gaité's essay "La chica rara" in *Desde la ventana*.

development. At times it was a superficial engagement with the transition of adolescence, as in the fashion article titled “Entre niña y mujer” in *Y*. The two-page spread features drawings of outfits recommended for the reader’s daughter as she grows up. The suggestions never progress beyond the practical: demonstrating what she should wear and how to achieve the look “sin gastar mucho” (“Entre niña y mujer” 38). The focus on dress, though, is not to be dismissed: it is part of a pattern of emphasis on young women’s physical appearance, which becomes almost an obsession of Matia’s grandmother in *Primera memoria*, to be explored further below.

Other references to adolescence in women’s magazines delve deeper into the biological and reproductive importance of adolescence. In “Futuras madres,” a recurring column in the magazine *Y* throughout 1938,<sup>6</sup> author Dr. Luque of the Real Academia de Medicina addresses mothers and attempts to coach them at helping their own daughters become the best mothers of tomorrow, medically speaking.<sup>7</sup> Puberty takes on importance not for the individual girl’s experience, be that emotional or physical, but as the biological process that allows her to bear children—in other words, it is a focus on her future function and how best to complete it, as suggested in the column’s title. In the first of the series, he establishes his goals for the column: “queremos ayudar con una serie de consejos a las futuras madres” (Luque, Feb. 17), suggesting that it is important to pay attention to a girl’s puberty because it is the “momento en que la niña se transforma en mujer” (Luque, Feb. 17).

Luque’s discussions of puberty are an incongruent mix of common tropes and euphemisms to refer to adolescent growth and grandiose goals for the expansion of future generations of Francoists, with a few medically or biologically based explanations peppered into the text. So while he tells mothers that, with a daughter’s puberty “hay que atacar este problema de frente, tanto en su aspecto biológico como en el psíquico” (Luque, Feb. 17), he also resorts to referring to a girls’ first menstruation as her “primeras flores rojas” (Luque, Mar. 63). His first column in the series uses the image of a fruit-bearing tree to represent fertility, as he reminds the mothers reading the article, “entiéndase bien que la cosecha además de numerosa ha de ser sana, y para que el fruto no esté contaminado hay que empezar por el árbol” (Luque, Feb. 17). Continuing with this metaphor, he reveals that the goal of these articles is “obtener un niño alegre y sano que sea la felicidad del hogar y la promesa de que después será un sujeto fuerte, inteligente, optimista, trabajador, fisiológicamente perfecto, con un sentido religioso y militar de la vida, es decir, un ser que biológica y moralmente sea orgullo de España” (Luque, Feb. 17). Yet again he emphasizes the future: the mothers reading the magazine should follow these instructions in order to mold their daughters into better mothers, and the role of those mothers will be to then mold their own children into better Spaniards. The cyclical nature of this line of thinking reveals a constant underlying preoccupation of the regime, which is to promote its own continuity and bolster its support in future generations.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Luque shifts the focus from the mother-daughter relationship involving first menstruation to a generic “niño,” who

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<sup>6</sup> Since Dr. Luque’s recurring column always has the same title and author, in-text citations will refer to the month of publication and the page number.

<sup>7</sup> Kathleen Richmond has shown how the emphasis on women’s bodies and health was in fact a point of contention between Sección Femenina (with its promoted dynamic woman) and the Catholic Church (with its desire for a demure woman). She writes that “equipping women to be good mothers and become physically fitter was controversial. Women were being invited to emerge from the home—even if only to return there as better domestic managers” (Richmond 28). This is one example of the complex ideological differences between Falangism and Francoism.

<sup>8</sup> In my next chapter, on Martín Gaité’s *El cuarto de atrás*, I examine her deconstruction and reappropriation of such circularity.

turns out to be obviously male, and with a clear connection to Francoist military and religious ideology. In this way we can see how Spanish women, especially, are endowed with the important role of shaping tomorrow's Spain. Mary Nash has explained that in the early twentieth century, "The definition of the social role of women through maternalism redefined motherhood as a common good, thus transcending women's individual rights as persons" ("Un/Contested Identities" 35); here with Luque we see a continuation of that system.

Along with the metaphorical language and explanation of lofty goals, Luque also gives practical information and advice on reaching the goals he outlines. He identifies the major problems at puberty as all related to "la falta de higiene naturista" (Luque, Feb. 17), for which he suggests as much time as possible outside in the sun.<sup>9</sup> These practical suggestions, however, quickly devolve into more of the same proselytizing. He reminds mothers again that

de una pubertad médicamente bien dirigida depende muchas veces todo el porvenir de una mujer; es la edad en que pone en juego toda la complicada red hormonal y un buen funcionar hará de ella la persona inteligente, hacendosa, femenina que culminará en una madre fuerte que dará la alegría de muchos hijos sanos, en los que se tenga la garantía de que no enfermarán, de que no morirán y de que, a su vez, serán los hijos sanos y fuertes que el Imperio<sup>10</sup> necesita. (Luque, Feb. 17)

Puberty is important because it is the pathway to becoming a woman, and being a healthy woman is the pathway to becoming a fertile mother. Childhood and puberty are also times of great responsibility for the mother guiding her child, he implies, since her child's life depends on her knowledge and ability to *dirigir*.

The next month, Luque comes back to these same ideas, saying, "no es extrañar la importancia que tiene el que en este momento la niña esté vigilada y cuidada en el aspecto tanto material como moral, para que una desviación de la normalidad no tenga como consecuencia ningún defecto para el niño que un día vendrá al mundo" (Luque, Mar. 63), emphasizing her destiny and duty to prepare her youthful body and mind for its inevitable role later in her life. Luque does give some practical, specific recommendations to the mothers reading the magazine so that they can raise tomorrow's mothers—on preventing diseases, eating well, dressing appropriately, and performing proper hygiene and bathing rituals. Even here, though, emphasizing the young girl's body and its future purpose effectively erases other elements of her as a thinking, feeling human. The journey from childhood to adulthood, while purportedly important and deserving of celebratory metaphors, still boils down to the creation of a future mother, as proclaimed in the title of the series.

In *Primera memoria*, Matia's grandmother and aunt perform this surveillance of the young adolescent body by monitoring her. Their attention makes Matia more aware of her own identity and then develops into feelings of shame at her body, as well as resistance to the supervision performed by her relatives. Matia's shame is explicit when she explains, "Una de las cosas más humillantes de aquel tiempo, recuerdo, era la preocupación constante de mi abuela por mi posible futura belleza" because, her grandmother continues, beauty is so important to how a woman ends up (Matute 119). "Sin embargo," Matia thinks, "aquella belleza era todavía algo

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<sup>9</sup> Both the connection between woman and nature, as well as the advice about sunshine, will be addressed further, in the section "A Menacing Refuge: Matia's Ambivalent Green World" below.

<sup>10</sup> The reference here to Franco's Spain as "Imperio" is common in Sección Femenina literature.



inexistente y remoto,” since she often resists her transition to adulthood (Matute 119). The main concern about Matia’s body and beauty centers around her frailty, which would potentially prohibit fertility, mentioned quite a few times. Matia herself tells us, “Para empezar, me encontraba escandalosamente alta y delgada” (Matute 120). Emilia voices this worry by going so far as questioning Matia’s health, calling her “pobrecita, está enferma. Hemos de vigilarla” (Matute 77) and later repeating, “Esta niña tiene algo, no es una niña como las otras” (Matute 205), thus reminding readers that Matia is a *chica rara*. Evaluations of Matia’s body are often tied to her status as almost a woman, and to the changes her body will undergo. When she goes down to breakfast disheveled, her grandmother’s response clearly marks the connection between femininity, age, and beauty: “Vas hacia los quince años. ¡Parece increíble, Matia, cómo te presentas!” (Matute 209). This echoes her grandmother’s previous comment, “Hay que esperar que te vayas transformando, poco a poco” (Matute 120).

The drive to mold children into contributing members of society, while not a strictly Spanish or even strictly Francoist ideal, became an important aspect of the teachings of the Sección Femenina, who strove to educate not only children and adolescents but also their mothers; this education for young women had to be “safe,” meaning that it should not threaten men’s status. Kathleen Richmond highlights this dilemma in her book *Women and Spanish Fascism: The Women’s Section of the Falange 1934-1959*. She describes “the creation of an ideal of femininity that would place women above criticism, allowing them to be educationally and professionally fulfilled and yet not a challenge to male authority. For the masses, this was translated into textbooks of social behaviour, outlining etiquette and dress code” (Richmond 10). For children as well, publications such as textbooks and other guides or manuals were designed to usher them into adulthood, albeit a very specific kind of adulthood that would allow for the continued transmission and reinforcement of Francoist values. Throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and even 1960s, the Sección Femenina published a huge variety of such textbooks and manuals on proper behavior coined “convivencia social” for children, especially young girls. The sheer volume of this kind of prescriptive literature suggests a societal obsession with shaping young girls into the kinds of women desired by the regime; the emphasis on conforming one’s behavior to societal expectations also repeats the regime’s continuous messaging that the individual is less important than the community, which was a mechanism for tamping down individualism.

The Sección Femenina published a textbook with seven grade levels’ worth of lessons entitled *Formación Familiar y Social*, which provides detailed guidelines on appropriate behavior in many settings: at home, with friends, at a dinner, in the library, on public transportation, etc. The series attempts to cover every aspect of a young girl’s life—and whether she was out in public, at home with her family, or even alone, she should always focus on how her behavior would affect others. This idea is summed up in the very first lesson of the first year:

La buena educación es para todos los momentos; no únicamente para aquellas personas a quienes conocemos poco, sino para el seno de la confianza y la intimidad. La persona correcta oculta su vida animal (su miedo, su frío, su calor), oculta sus preocupaciones íntimas (su excesiva alegría, su excesivo dolor) en beneficio del bienestar general, y oculta, además, sus preferencias y antipatías. Es la persona que en todo tiene equilibrio, discreción y serenidad, junto con un aspecto correcto, tranquilo y afable. (*Formación Familiar y Social* 9)

The repetition of the verb *ocultar* signals a profound interest in creating an outward appearance that negates the inner reality, which is associated with animal urges and frivolous emotions. In the interest of the greater public good, both men and women were expected to control those urges; women especially had to project discretion and pleasantness.

Carmen Werner Bolín,<sup>11</sup> a close friend of José Antonio appointed by Pilar to numerous government positions—*jefe provincial* in Malagá and later *regidora central* of the Sección de Jerarquía y Cultura of the Sección Femenina (Bowen 46)—also published this type of material in many contexts. Her 1938 article in *Y* magazine outlines the goals of the kind of teaching the Sección Femenina is doing:

lo que la Sección Femenina pretende y quiere y está decidida a conseguir (por medio de la Organización Juvenil), es un tipo de mujer que a los dieciocho o veinte años esté capacitada para crearse una cultura propia, para leer y pensar, llena de inquietudes ascensionales en todos los órdenes, particularmente en el orden nacional y en el orden moral. Y fundamentalmente queremos conseguir un tipo de mujer para su casa, considerando la casa como depositaria de todos los valores espirituales. (Werner Bolín, “Santificación” 40)

She emphasizes that a woman’s relationship to the world is to be informed, cultured, well-read—but only in the appropriate ways, as defined by the Sección Femenina.

Werner Bolín also wrote similar articles in *Medina*, a more specialized magazine for women aligned with the Falange, published for a few years in the 1940s. Alfonso Pinilla García describes *Medina* as a magazine that

cumple a la perfección las funciones de adoctrinamiento y socialización que el Régimen concede a la Sección Femenina. Dirigida fundamentalmente a las mujeres de la organización, y repartida mensualmente entre las jefes locales y provinciales, *Medina* se convierte en la guía de la mujer nacionalsindicalista que precisa el nuevo Régimen. Abnegada y fiel a la obra de Franco, responsable de su hogar, esposa y madre perfecta, el prototipo de ‘mujer Medina’ corresponde al modelo de mujer fascista que todo régimen totalitario desea construir. Lealtad y sumisión son los valores más destacados, y la función social idónea pasa por que la mujer se convierta en una esposa y madre perfectas. Éstas son las mujeres que Franco quiere para consolidar su régimen en el futuro. (156)

It is understandable, then, that *Medina* would feature the work and writing of Werner Bolín. A two-page spread in 1941 celebrates “La doctrina se cumple: Frente de Juventudes.” In it Werner Bolín writes, “hemos trabajado en el desenvolvimiento de las juventudes, en adivinar la manera de interpretar *la disciplina rigurosa* y los procedimientos de instalar en el alma de los jóvenes *la alegría y el orgullo de la Patria*” (“La doctrina,” no pagination). Her ideas on education and politeness are based in typical Falangist ideals: discipline, cheerfulness, and national pride. The article also emphasizes the need to expand the kind of training that Sección Femenina affiliates are receiving, in order to reach the entire generation.

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<sup>11</sup> In different articles, books, and other resources, Carmen Werner Bolín is also referred to as Carmen Werner. I will aim for consistency by referring to her by her full last name, Werner Bolín.

Werner Bolín's work culminates in her tome *Pequeñas Reglas de Convivencia Social o Tratado de educación para las alumnas de las escuelas de mandos de la Sección Femenina*. She opens by citing one of Pilar's speeches at the first Consejo Nacional, which reads in part, "La buena educación consiste en principio en no molestar a los demás sin un motivo fundamentado... Esto, que parece tan fácil, requiere una serie de pequeños detalles y de vencimientos continuos que necesitan de nuestra permanente vigilancia, hasta que ya la fuerza de la costumbre llega a crear en nosotros un hábito" (Werner Bolín, *Pequeñas Reglas* 6). The individual must be aware at all times of her effect on those around her; society comes before the individual. Pilar's speech concludes,

Este tema tan complejo de la educación, que a ojos superficiales podría parecer pueril al lado de los importantes que en este Consejo estáis tratando, tiene, como habéis visto, muy alta importancia, ya que se arraiga en uno de los postulados fundamentales de la Falange, que sólo conseguirá la Patria nueva, fuerte y gloriosa que ambiciona cuando en cada uno de sus hijos logre resucitar, armado con las armas del día, aquel compendio de virtudes cristianas y caballerescas que el Mundo envidió, bajo el nombre de un «hidalgo español». (qtd. in Werner Bolín, *Pequeñas Reglas* 8)

Werner Bolín establishes her own authority by referring first and foremost to Pilar, whose words justify the importance of the lessons that are to follow.

Werner Bolín's book then includes seven chapters on acceptable behavior, mostly in public settings but also extending into private settings as well. The second lesson, for example, is on hygiene or, as she refers to it, "disimulo de la vida animal" (Werner Bolín, *Pequeñas Reglas* 13), which urges that the reader should "respetar al prójimo y a ocultarle, por respeto y por higiene, cuanto de desagradable existe en las manifestaciones de nuestra fisiología" (Werner Bolín, *Pequeñas Reglas* 13) and covers in detail the presentation of the hair, hands, clothing, face, odor, and other minutiae for six pages, with an additional two-page spread of practical and written exercises to be completed at the end. While the instructions are practical, simple, and based in common sense, they also impose an overarching sense of shame about the body's natural state, which is referred to as its animal state. To give a specific example, Werner Bolín cautions against presenting oneself in public with body odor because "es una vergüenza la falta de higiene y civilización que estos olores suponen" (*Pequeñas Reglas* 15). Women's bodies are meant to be controlled, anesthetized, and aestheticized; part of adolescence is the training of this expectation and of the techniques for carrying it out.

In *Primera memoria*, as Matia's aunt and grandmother uphold some of the elements of the Sección Femenina's guidelines on the young female body, they perform an attempt at a Foucauldian control over her. Thomas considers the grandmother's use of opera glasses to spy on the town as a manifestation of Franco's "discipline and order" (*Coming of Age* 78). Indeed, Matia describes the grandmother's spying on her tenants: "Sus ojos, como largos tentáculos, entraban en las casas y lamían, barrían, dentro de las habitaciones, debajo de las camas y las mesas" (Matute 60). Her eyes are personified as a creepy and otherworldly creature with the capability to enter private spaces—and they are capable of something similar when it comes to monitoring Matia's appearance. Thus, while the panopticon is certainly an important figure for the grandmother's attempts at overseeing the town, it is also crucial to consider how she performs such machinations on a deeply personal level, with the surveillance and attempted

control of Matia. I would like to emphasize the genderedness of this act, since it is performed solely on Matia and not on her cousin Borja, who gets away with many behaviors that Matia cannot. Pérez Bernardo writes that Matia's grandmother has become an expert in this "deber femenino" that she understands and then imposes on Matia, elaborating, "Como mujer experimentada, entiende que cultivar el físico de su nieta constituye el primer paso para hacer de ella «una señora respetable» y «una esposa admirable», insistiendo en ello de forma continua" (Pérez Bernardo 54).

In other moments of the book, "odiando ser mujer" (Matute 90), Matia even calls herself a "pequeña histérica, pequeña tonta" (Matute 140), internalizing the scrutiny of her family members and her society, and beginning to loathe and reject her own changing body. Matute's choice of words in Matia's self-evaluation reflects some of the imposed judgments on women and young women who don't conform to societal expectations. Matia's own body is literally making her sick, following the pattern that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have identified in other female characters and even authors. According to Pérez Bernardo, "Frente a este modelo, Matia se resiste, su propia descripción denota la imagen de una adolescente despreocupada por su belleza, con el pelo suelto y fumando, simbolizando de nuevo, el ansia de autonomía al que aspira, frente a la opresión de la época" (54). While she resists, she is still being infected.

It becomes evident that the scrutiny of her body by others heightens Matia's own self-awareness, and her interest in other female bodies, such as her aunt Emilia's. The policing gaze of her grandmother and aunt is now not only one-directional; Matia returns the gaze as she evaluates Emilia's body. Her description and judgment highlight her fear of growing up: she finds the body of a grown woman grotesque and overwhelming. When she goes to Emilia's room during the *siesta*, she says, "Era espeso y obscuro aquel cuarto, como el gran vientre y los pechos de tía Emilia" (Matute 125).<sup>12</sup> When Matia looks in the mirror and compares her own body to Emilia's, she thinks, "No soy una mujer. Oh, no, no soy una mujer' y sentí como si un peso se me quitara de encima, pero me temblaban las rodillas" (Matute 129), thus creating a division between herself as a girl and Emilia as a woman. Matia's apprehension toward growing up is evident here, especially with regards to her sexuality.<sup>13</sup> Joan Lipman Brown captures this idea when she explains, "La soledad y enajenación de Matia, así como su separación del mundo adulto, hipócrita y amenazante, se sienten a través de las descripciones de su propia 'inocencia perversa' (Vilanova p. 58) que es la frase que utiliza la misma Matute explicando la preocupación central de la novela" (Brown, "Unidad y diversidad" 22). And Matia's shame only worsens; she "has become so adept at internalizing the destructive vigilance of others that it now inflects her every response in the narrative present" (Molinero 167). Perhaps in the novel's ending, when Matia is unable to speak (to control that part of her body), we can see the culmination of this control that she has absorbed into her core. Still, Matia's annoyance and impatience at the rules imposed by her grandmother and aunt epitomize the kind of covert resistance to the regime that is so fundamental to understanding *Primera memoria*. Matia struggles to resist her environment; while her struggle is not always successful (and some would argue ends in the ultimate failure, as she is unable to stand up for Manuel), it is an effort nonetheless.

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<sup>12</sup> Notice here the connection between home and the mature female body. Eaton has explored the topic of the womb in this novel in her essay "Asserting the Female Voice through Echo in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*."

<sup>13</sup> The discovery of sexuality, of course, plays a key role in representations of the coming-of-age process, and often manifests itself as a profound interest in one's own body and the bodies of others.

## Shifting Voices: Matia's Perceptive Backward Glance

As in other *Bildungsromane*, Matia's coming of age is painful and difficult, and especially so because of her gender. Part of deconstructing that pain is with her analytical and subversive backward glance,<sup>14</sup> a taking stock of what has happened during a crucial moment. Here her passage from childhood to adulthood is defined by an act of betrayal for which she continues to feel guilt. I have argued above that Matute is emphasizing *both* a continuity and a distinct break: while adulthood is a continuation of the cruelties of childhood, there are still great distinctions between a childish sensibility and that of the adult; and on the other side of the same coin, while being a woman is different from being a girl, it is also a continuation of the same kinds of repression.

My analysis of Matia's narrative voice and function will show *how* these dualities can coexist. Matute's lyrical, poetic narrative style and the novelistic world it creates have been thoroughly analyzed by scholars. My focus, however, is on the way Matute constructs Matia's unique voice as she performs the backward glance that is so central to the *Bildungsroman*, so subversive in David Herzberger's theoretical perspective,<sup>15</sup> and so interesting to scholars of Matute's work specifically. I will show that she achieves this complexity by harnessing the power of Matia's clumsy attempts at narrating her adolescence.

Emily Eaton in her article "Asserting the Female Voice through Echo in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*" uses the concept of an echo to show that, in some ways, both ideas of adolescence (as a connection between childhood and adulthood, or as a break between them) can coexist, so that we can see a continuity as well as a rupture. In her reading, "the narrative voice folds in upon itself, or echoes itself incessantly, such that it is impossible to differentiate between the thoughts of the adult narrator in the present and those of her fourteen-year-old self in the past, and Matute's strategy of the echo "lays claim to self-expression and constitutes Matia's awakening as a speaking subject" (Eaton 183).

While the interjections from an older Matia might appear to confuse and conflate the writing present from the experiencing past, I find that they also produce an emotional maturity that splits the subjectivity, reminding readers constantly of the psychological and socioemotional growth that accompanies Matia's physical growth. The ending of the book, which returns to the beginning, highlights just this point. Again, as in Carmen Laforet's *Nada*, there is a strong circularity that reminds us of the book's opening, but with a different tone. Matia writes, "Sólo sé que al alba, me desperté. Que, como el primer día de mi llegada a la isla, la luz gris perlada del amanecer acuchillaba las persianas verdes de mi ventana. Tenía los ojos abiertos. Por primera vez, no había soñado nada" (Matute 242). As she awakens, she remembers that she tried to speak up for Manuel but was unable to do so, returning to that culminating moment of inaction that continues to cause her guilt and shame.

This split in subjectivity, between the young Matia experiencing the summer on the island and the older Matia recounting those experiences, highlights the adulthood/childhood dichotomy while simultaneously destabilizing it. Building on this idea, I would like to emphasize

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<sup>14</sup> This backward glance, "mirar hacia atrás," prohibited during the postwar period and the dictatorship, comes from Martín Gaité's *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* and is further explored with the extended metaphor of *pulgarcito*'s breadcrumbs in her novel *El cuarto de atrás*, explained in my Introduction and utilized in the following chapter of the dissertation as well.

<sup>15</sup> In *Narrating the Past*, David Herzberger argues that certain conventions in fictional writing are able to undermine the prescribed conventions of State-sanctioned historiography.

Matute's control of Matia's voice and point of view as the central trope contributing to her resistance. In highlighting the older Matia's awareness and wisdom, Matute shows that her protagonist has grown, and that the adult is indeed different from the child, since she is more experienced and enlightened, more aware of her own past mistakes and cruelty. At the same time, Matute manipulates that separation between child and adult voice by playing with grammatical and thematic conventions in order to blur the very distinction she has set up. Matute's technique of establishing and also breaking down such dividing lines shows an awareness of the complexities that Franco's ideology and propaganda attempted to suppress in its emphasis on unity, as explored in the Introduction.

For Thomas, Matia "was initiated into the world she most abhorred and... became more like the negative and non-heroic role models that she despised," and the older Matia is looking back "in search of self-understanding; she has embarked on an identity quest to remember with adult perspective what went wrong and to attempt to expunge latent guilt" ("Rite of Initiation" 77). According to Daniela Omlor, Matia (and the title character and narrator of Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle* [1945]) are "mourning... an absence. [They] appear to grieve the fact that they can no longer be children, yet in both cases it is actually the loss of their pre-traumatic innocence that they are unable to overcome" (128). While these interpretations are compelling, and I agree that Matia looks back in order to better understand herself, I read the narrative perspective less pessimistically. The contrast between the two perspectives, young Matia and mature Matia, functions as a reminder of the growth that Matia has accomplished and of the nostalgia she feels for her lost innocence. Matute's emphasis on the older Matia's ability to analyze and reflect on the past is therefore a way to prove growth.<sup>16</sup>

One of the most obvious ways in which Matute makes this argument is, in fact, quite transparent: Matia explicitly comments, almost compulsively, on her own awareness and growth. She seems to be on alert, unable to notice anything without calling attention to her growing understanding of childhood, adulthood, adolescence, and gender roles. The deliberate repetition of such comments creates a rhythmic pattern that structures the narrative: "yo estaba a punto de crecer y de convertirme en una mujer. O lo era ya, acaso" (Matute 148); "¿Qué clase de monstruo que ya no tengo mi niñez y no soy, de ninguna manera, una mujer?" (Matute 148); "Y algo que no era exactamente miedo me recorrió la espalda. Algo como una extraña vergüenza, acordándome de las cosas que Borja y Juan Antonio contaban de los hombres y de las mujeres" (Matute 126). When she looks at the adults around her, she thinks, "Estábamos tan indefensos, tan obligados, tan—oh, sí—tan lejanos a ellos," elaborating: "Qué extranjera raza la de los

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<sup>16</sup> Matute's manipulation of the narrative voice in order to signal psychological growth touches also on the literary tradition of novels told from a prison or psychiatric hospital: in many mid-twentieth-century novels in both Spain (Camilo José Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaza del Diamante*) and the United States (J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*) the narrator speaks or writes to a doctor, judge, or other person of authority, attempting to expunge oneself of guilt or shame while also calling attention to the relationship between writing and authority. In Spain we can also trace this tradition back to Lazarillo's picaresque appeals to *vuestra merced*. But here, who is Matia's interlocutor? She speaks or writes to herself, contributing to the echo as theorized by Eaton, performing a critical inward gaze before being required by any figure of authority to do so. Catherine Bellver approaches this question indirectly in her analysis of Martín Gaité's novel *Entre visillos*, writing that it "showcases the home, the church, and the school as indoctrination centers that socialize girls in the values, attitudes, and activities authorized for them by the regime. Although girls are segregated from boys in these formative places, each one is headed by a male mentor (father, priest, and teacher) who monitors their social, moral, and intellectual development ("Gendered Spaces" 36).

adultos, la de los hombres y las mujeres. 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” (Matute 114). At another point, she admits, “No entiendo nada de lo que ocurre en la vida ni en el mundo, ni alrededor de mí: desde los pájaros a la tierra, desde el cielo al agua, no entiendo” (Matute 139). The world of adults holds no interest to her because it is associated with negativity, punishment, and oppression (Matute 139). This attitude is also exemplified when she says, “Yo sabía—porque siempre me lo estaban repitiendo—que el mundo era algo malo y grande” (Matute 106).

While many coming-of-age novels often feature some kind of split between protagonist and first-person narrator, usually in time, what makes Matia’s voice unique is Matute’s endless emphasis on that distancing that we only glimpse in works like Laforet’s *Nada*. In both novels, we cannot know all the details of the speaking/writing narrator, her context, her age, her location as she relates past events that happened to her (the way we do with, for example, Camilo José Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte*). But Matute’s narrator is much more present in the telling than Laforet’s. She inserts her subjectivity into the analysis of past events, evident with two major trends: the use of the verb *recordar* in the present tense, and the use of parentheses. Ironically, this more pronounced presence, while it suggests a more urgent necessity to tell and to process a transformative adolescence, also results in a greater distancing between the young Matia living on the island and the older Matia recalling that year. At the same time, Eaton argues, “Though there is clearly an outer, adult Matia who locates her voice in the present with lexical markers like ‘ahora,’ it is virtually impossible to untangle this voice from that of Matia’s adolescent self” (184). Other authors have also focused on Matia’s temporally destabilized voice. For example, Janet Diaz, in her book *Ana María Matute*, identifies not only two but three points of view at play in *Primera memoria*: “Matia’s narration of events from her adolescence; her random comments and evocations, also belonging to her adolescence, but not necessarily to the moment or events in the memoir; and present-tense comments by the older Matia at the moment of writing. Her comments and reflections, constituting a sort of interior monologue, are printed in parentheses to separate them from the retrospective action” (Diaz 133). Again, in all these instances, we are reminded of the way in which Matute both establishes and disrupts the dichotomy between childhood and adulthood, thus foregrounding the multiplicities and difficulties of the adolescence that Matia is living.

One of the foremost manners in which Matute creates distance between the younger and older Matia is through the verb *recordar*, especially in the opening chapter of the book. Through the repetition of the verb *recordar*, Matute distances herself as a remembering, narrating adult, distinct from the young girl who experienced the narrated events on the island. She establishes this technique early in the novel. For example, as she introduces Borja, it is by saying “Recuerdo el maquinal movimiento de Borja” (Matute 11), keeping her narrating voice far removed. Later, to describe the climate (“Recuerdo un viento caliente y bajo,”) and the setting (“Y recuerdo la tierra cobriza del declive”), she again reminds us of that distance, that she is now removed from the island and is remembering it (Matute 23). The use of the verb *recordar*, in many forms, punctuates the entire text: “siempre recordaré” (Matute 34), “recuerdo bien” (Matute 37), or “recuerdo—tan claramente como si sucediese ahora mismo a mi lado” (Matute 133).

On the other hand, there are also moments when Matia’s memory falters—making it both more realistic and less reliable. For example, after an uncomfortable conversation with her brother’s friend, Juan Antonio, about her mother, she wonders, “(Acaso, sólo deseaba que alguien me amara alguna vez. No lo recuerdo bien.)” (Matute 83). Matute emphasizes Matia’s

self-doubt with the parentheses and with the qualifiers “Acaso” and “No lo recuerdo bien,” suggesting that she can’t—or does not want to—remember accurately. She sounds less credible and less authoritative, even when she is telling her own story. Her inability to remember serves a similar defensive role when she responds to Manuel about earlier family drama: “Pena, ¿por qué? yo no me acuerdo de nada... de casi nada...” (Matute 141). Again Matute highlights the gaps in Matia’s knowledge or comprehension of her own story, reminding readers that her memory is imperfect.

Beyond the usage of the verb *recordar*, the older Matia also frames many of her observations through the extensive use of parentheses. Eaton has shown in her article that while the parentheses often serve as containers for the older Matia to reflect and comment on what she is telling, this containment is not their sole purpose. The use of parentheses has a dual effect: by setting the context textually apart, she can at once call attention while also diminishing. Again, the first example comes early in the novel, when Matia writes, “(Aquí estoy ahora, delante de este vaso tan verde, y el corazón pesándome. ¿Será verdad que la vida arranca de escenas como aquélla? Será verdad que de niños vivimos la vida entera, de un sorbo, para repetirnos después estúpidamente, ciegamente, sin sentido alguno?)” (Matute 20). Shortly thereafter, this older Matia looks back at the young, brazen Borja of her memory and reflects parenthetically, “(Tal vez, pienso ahora, con toda tu bravuconería, con tu soberbio y duro corazón, pobre hermano mío, ¿no eras acaso un animal solitario como yo, como casi todos los muchachos del mundo?)” (Matute 35). Later, “(Acaso, sólo deseaba que alguien me amara alguna vez. No lo recuerdo bien.)” (Matute 83). And later again, “(Oh qué cruel, qué impio, qué incauto, su puede ser a los catorce años.)” (Matute 233). In this list of examples, it becomes evident that the contents of the parentheses are indeed important—crucial to the understanding of Matia’s maturation and emotional growth. The parentheses help clarify that these interjections come from an older Matia, separated in time and place from the young Matia on the island.

And this holds true even at the end of the book, as she realizes that Borja is framing Manuel, and that perhaps she will be unable to defend him. She says to herself, “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.)” (Matute 239). The parentheses here serve almost to hide her true feelings, the real awareness of her status that she wishes she could reject.

As previously mentioned, though, reflections are not the only contents of the parentheses, a fact which makes their role in the text more complex. When introducing Borja’s father, for example, the parentheses are used simply to provide more clarifying background information: “(Borja lo decía: ‘Mi padre es coronel y puede mandar fusilar a quien le parezca.’)” (Matute 65). These are not Matia’s interior thoughts, nor are they the thoughts of an older, reflective Matia—rather, these parentheses are used in their mere grammatical function to include more information. Curiously, the contents might seem to readers to be quite important, as it explains the background of the family, and the reasons for the divide between Borja’s Nationalist father and Matia’s Republican father. In a similar fashion, Matute uses parentheses for emphasis when she complains about being excluded from an activity, “desterrada por ser muchacha (ni siquiera una mujer, ni siquiera) de la excursión al Naranjal” (Matute 117). The repetition here emphasizes Matia’s gender but also her age: she is emphatically not yet a grown woman, but just her status as a young girl means she is already subject to the rules that govern her gender. Further, it is difficult to place Matia’s voice: as she insists she is not yet a woman, is this the voice of a young Matia demonstrating her trepidation at becoming one as well as her indignation that she is



already being treated as one, or is this the voice of an older Matia looking back at the childishness and naïveté of her younger self? Again Matute highlights adolescence and its literary representation as liminal and confusing, returning to the book's central theme.

At other moments of the novel, the use of parentheses is further confused when the narrator inserts reflections and ruminations *without* placing them between parentheses, preventing us even more from codifying a uniform use of the grammatical structure. Matia reflects, for example, about Manuel's father's corpse, "No recuerdo si tuvimos miedo. Es ahora, quizá, cuando lo siento como un soplo, al acordarme de cómo nos habló" (Matute 43). Here she uses the verb *recordar* and speaks in a present tense looking backward to try to interpret her own emotions in the past, but *not* parenthetically. Later, as she describes Borja's admiration of Jorge de Son Major, she interjects, "y no sabía aún cuánto, ni a qué precio" (Matute 100), foreshadowing the ending of the book and again highlighting the additional knowledge that the older narrator has over the young Matia—but *without* parentheses.

In still other places, all these uses and misuses of parentheses come jumbled together within a single passage or scene, as Matia narrates, analyzes, and reflects on her experiences. And these passages often attempt to deal with the emotions connected to those experiences. On the one hand, the inconsistent use of parentheses can cause confusion for the perceptive reader, since it becomes almost impossible to gauge exactly what the parenthetical asides mean or when they take place: it is challenging to know whether it is an older or younger Matia speaking, as Eaton has shown. On the other hand, it is precisely this confusion that functions to complicate the processes of telling, remembering, and reflecting; to remind readers that they are inherently imperfect processes; and to force us to slow down and pay attention. As such, close readings of a few key scenes will illuminate how Matute's nuanced utilization of parentheses contributes to the book's overall message that growing up is messy, and remembering can be even messier.

For example, in remembering interactions with their ineffectual tutor Lauro el Chino, who pleads with them to behave since he is the one who will be chastised by their grandmother, Matia narrates that she spoke to him "con rabia, con una rabia que me sorprendía. ¿O acaso era miedo? ¿O era una sensación desusada, como la tristeza? ¡Yo qué sé!" (Matute 90). While it is reminiscent of many of Matia's other emotional ruminations, this one is not enclosed in parentheses. Her doubt at interpreting her own emotions has continued into the time of narrating; further justification for this interpretation comes from the use of the present tense of *saber*, indicating that she still does not understand. Even the older Matia is not quite able to label or categorize the emotion. Then, later in the text, she processes a bit more, asking in parentheses, "(¿Y por qué, por qué me reía yo y estaba tan triste, diciéndole aquello al Chino? ¿Por qué aquella amargura que notaba hasta en la lengua?)" and then answering in a separate set of parentheses, "(Porque había algo allí, en el sol, en las flores y en todas las hojas, que empujaba mi lengua ácidamente, y no me podía callar.)" (Matute 91).<sup>17</sup> Here the older Matia more explicitly tries to understand her younger self, to understand the cruelty she inflicted upon her tutor, but is not really able to do so. Her explanation for harsh words comes from the harsh environment around her.<sup>18</sup> This paragraph, then, displays the irregular use of parentheses: at times they indicate the older Matia inserting her attempts at interpretation of the past, but at other

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<sup>17</sup> Ironically, while Matia is unable to quiet herself in this scene, it is her inability to speak that will cause her to betray Manuel, showing that a kind of silencing has taken place. See Donna Janine McGiboney for a Lacanian interpretation of Matia's silence.

<sup>18</sup> See below for more discussion on the role of the natural world on Matia's growth.

times that insertion comes without parentheses. In both cases, we see evidence for the process of emotional growth and understanding, though still incomplete.

At an important turning point in the story, Matia approaches Manuel, who has been rejected by the society represented by Matia's grandmother. She narrates, "recuerdo—tan claramente como si sucediese ahora mismo a mi lado" (Matute 133), again using the conspicuous verb *recordar* and reiterating the strength and vividness of her memory, that she felt "ridícula, insignificante" (Matute 135). The memory stands out to her even later in her life perhaps because it is the first real kindness she affords Manuel: she says to him, "Me parece una cosa horrible lo que os han hecho" (Matute 136), and then proceeds to open up to him in an emotional catharsis that brings her relief while also signaling to her how little she understands about the world. The scene culminates with yet another internal monologue in which she attempts to reflect on her feelings, with and without parentheses:

Con desolación por mis catorce años y por todo lo que acababa de decirle a aquel muchacho que nos pidió la barca para llevar el cuerpo de su padre (asesinado por los amigos o, a lo menos, partidarios de mi abuela). Había tanta confusión en mí, estaban tan torpes mis ideas, que sentí un gran pesar. Recuerdo el zumbido de una abeja, los mil chasquidos de entre las hojas, allí al lado, en las varas del huerto. (Matute 136)

Here the narrating voice seems quite removed from the fourteen-year-old Matia, due to the mention of her age; the utilization of the verb *recordar* to create distance; and the ensemble of emotional words such as "desolación," "confusión," "torpes," and "gran pesar." The parenthetical aside provides information, not emotional reflection.

The preliminary act of kindness analyzed above leads to a deeper relationship between Manuel and Matia, who find solace in each other. Later in the book, they simply sit together and hold hands. Matia's narration of the scene contains description as well as analysis of her own emotions, seemingly from the point of view of the older narrator—yet here she uses *no* parentheses to do so, even though the reflections are reminiscent of others that *were* enclosed in parentheses. Now, the voices of Matia as narrator and Matia as protagonist are somewhat conflated and linked, instead of divided by parentheses. She continues, telling of their holding hands, "Como si con él, con su mano, con mi infancia que se perdía, con nuestra ignorancia y bondad, quisiera hundir nuestras manos para siempre, clavarlas en la tierra aún limpia, vieja y sabia" (Matute 144). Matia understands that her *infancia* is slipping away and wishes she could hold onto it by securing it to the earth, her safe refuge. In reflecting on this moment with Manuel, she admits to feeling afraid of the new way in which she "entendía el desconocido mundo: el pavoroso, aterrador mundo con que nos amenazaban a Borja y a mí, del que huía desesperadamente el Chino" (Matute 146). Here she is aware of the fear she feels at slowly understanding the adult world she has been trying to avoid: does the absence of parentheses mean she was aware of it at that time, at fourteen years old as she held Manuel's hand? In this case, abstaining from a parenthetical seems consistent. But later, her reflections change in tone, without being offset in parentheses. Matia writes, "Si no hubiera tenido catorce años, tal vez hubiese sentido ganas de llorar" (Matute 147). She also seems to realize the significance of this summer in her life, writing, "Me dije: 'Él está con los hombres: con las feas cosas de los hombres y de las mujeres'. Y yo estaba a punto de crecer y de convertirme en una mujer. O lo

era ya, acaso” (Matute 148). She knows that she is at a tipping point; and this point of view shows an evolution from her previous, parenthetical negation that she was a woman.

As the chapter progresses, Matia’s reflections take on greater significance and she asks existential questions that transcend the moment. Desperate for answers, her questions fly out with no real answer, evidencing a shift from childlike security to adult uncertainty. She craves moral absolutes, but can’t seem to find them, as she asks, “Pero, ¿era él bueno, realmente? ¿Era yo mala? ¿Eran malos Borja o el Chino? ¡Qué confusión!” (Matute 147). Her own status as a young woman causes self-doubt, as she wonders, “¿Qué clase de monstruo que ya no tengo mi niñez y no soy, de ninguna manera, una mujer?” (Matute 148). And she continues, incessantly, with the questions: “Qué dolor tan grande me llenaba. ¿Cómo es posible sentir tanto dolor a los catorce años? Era un dolor sin gastar” (Matute 149). These are the kinds of ruminations that, earlier in the book, were enclosed in parentheses, differentiated by the grammatical marker as thoughts that happened elsewhere, at another time—now, the narration of the reflections blends more seamlessly into the narration of the events. This, I argue, is evidence for the growth and change that Matia is making. As her summer progresses, so does her emotional intelligence, even as she resists puberty.

Of course, this progress is not linear, and Matute’s use of parentheses is not consistent. For Eaton, this highly irregular use of the parentheses in some ways negates their reflective power, instead conflating the younger and older Matia. She writes, “With such inconsistency of function, the parentheses blur rather than maintain the distinction between the two temporalities or levels of diegesis, such that it is nearly impossible to determine whether the thoughts and feelings mentioned by Matia have arisen in retrospect during the narrative present, or whether she in fact experienced them as an adolescent” (Eaton 184). In fact, Eaton’s points help reinforce the more overarching pattern I have signaled as central to *Primera memoria*: there are contrasts and dichotomies set up and seemingly upheld—but there are also ruptures and blurrings of those distinctions. Eaton’s nuanced reading of Matia’s voice emphasizes the irregularity and inexplicability of Matute’s parentheses, so that just as we begin to identify and comprehend patterns, a new example shatters the conclusions we have begun to make. I would argue, then, that there is a purpose to what seems to be a lack of a pattern or method: to reflect what Matute says about the complexities of adolescence and adulthood. Growing up is nonlinear, start-and-stop, and full of complications and awkwardness—these are qualities that she attempts to reflect in the inconsistent narrative voice of a multifaceted Matia, and the emphasis on this irregularity and complexity brings us back to the destabilization of Francoist representations of how growth should occur. In other words, maneuvering puberty cannot be taught in a magazine or textbook.

Furthermore, after studying two stylistic patterns that complicate the relationship between the older and younger Matia (the verb *recordar* and the use of parentheses), we can now also emphasize the thematic content of the passages, in which Matia’s descriptions of emotions serve to also distance her adult awareness from the lack thereof during her childhood. In particular, Matute’s complex treatment of the green world, an important aspect of the female *Bildungsroman*, reinforces the exploitation of contradictory opinions that I find so central to the book’s anti-Francoist messaging.

### **A Menacing Refuge: Matia’s Ambivalent Green World**

An element of *Primera memoria* that stands apart, both from the social realism popular in Spain at the time and from the female *Bildungsroman* tradition, is Matute's treatment of nature, which she presents in a contradictory way: while at times hostile, violent, and almost evil (as it is often presented in her other works), the natural world can also serve as a space for rest, peace, and liberation for Matia. This oxymoronic depiction serves dual purposes. On the one hand, as other critics have commented, the ambivalence in the representation of the natural world reflects Matia's own ambivalence with regards to the horrors and possibilities of the adult world; on the other hand, we can also read it as covertly anti-regime, undermining the simplistic celebration of a rural and pastoral Spain in Francoist publications by questioning the purity of the green world. Furthermore, I interpret Matute's courting of complexity (here, in her presentation of nature as *both* idealized and ominous; elsewhere, in her exploration of childhood and adulthood) as a key strategy in the more general critique of Franco's hegemonic representation of Spain as a unified entity.

I will first explore Annis Pratt's archetype of the green world, as established in the chapter on novels of female development in her book *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, and then consider Matute's use of nature as epitomizing but also distinguishing itself from those patterns. In establishing her archetypal pattern of the green world, Pratt cites Simone de Beauvoir, who claims that the adolescent girl will have a special love for nature, more than boys: "it is her kingdom as a whole; when she takes possession of it, she also proudly takes possession of herself" (Beauvoir, qtd. in Pratt 17). Pratt sees evidence for this claim in the coming-of-age stories by women that she has studied, in which a woman's desire for selfhood runs contrary to cultural and social expectations; as such, "nature for the young hero remains a refuge throughout life" (Pratt 17).

Delving more deeply into this refuge, Pratt signals adolescence as a pivotal point in the young girl's relationship to nature, saying that at this stage, "her appreciation of nature is retrospective, **a look backwards over her shoulder** as she confronts her present placelessness and her future submission within a male culture. Visions of her own world within the natural world, or naturistic epiphanies, channel the young girls' protests into a fantasy where her imprisoned energies can be released" (Pratt 17, Pratt's own emphasis).<sup>19</sup> Already in adolescence, young Matia is beginning to perform a retrospective glance, one which will prove distinct from that of the older narrating Matia. This idea suggests an understanding of the emotionally complex explanations that Matia offers at some points of the book. Pratt continues, "Later, the mature woman hero tends to look back to moments of naturistic epiphany as touchstones in a quest for her lost selfhood so that when she readies herself for her midlife rebirth journey, images of the green world remembered once more come to the fore. The importance of this identification with nature is illustrated by its persistent recurrence in women's fiction" (17). Here is the backward glance that Matia certainly performs as one of the central drives of the book: her attempt to recover and comprehend her lost self, to overcome her guilt.

Viktoria Hackbarth, in her dissertation *Novels of Female Development in Postwar Spain*, sees Pratt's archetype as highly applicable to Matia's story, claiming that "Throughout the novel, Matia displays a great affection for nature and clings to it without respite" (Hackbarth 128). Hackbarth highlights the idylls of the *decrive* (where Matia spends much of her free time on the island), and the orchard (where she used to interact with her nurturing caregiver Mauricia, before moving to the island), using them to corroborate Pratt's archetype of the green space as a place of refuge (Hackbarth 128-129). Indeed, in many ways, Pratt's archetype illuminates important

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<sup>19</sup> The idea of a backward glance brings us back, once again, to Martín Gaité.

aspects of *Primera memoria*: there are natural elements of the island that, when represented in this way as lush paradises, represent metaphorically the innocence and purity of childhood; “Here, nature represents the idyllic and worry-free existence attributed to childhood, epitomized by her experience on her father’s estate with Mauricia” (Hackbarth 129).

In particular, the countryside where Matia spent time with her nanny Mauricia before moving in with her grandmother, is depicted in a romantic, almost pastoral style. On her first night on the island, sleeping in a hotel with her grandmother and feeling rather lonely and afraid, Matia finds comfort remembering the “imágenes cotidianas” of her life with Mauricia, in particular “(las manzanas que Mauri colocaba cuidadosamente sobre las maderas, en el sobrado de la casa, y su aroma que lo invadía todo, hasta el punto de que, tonta de mí, acerqué la nariz a las paredes por si se habían impregnado de aquel perfume)” (Matute 15). She describes the “huerto, la casa de mi padre, el bosque y el río, con sus álamos” (Matute 15). Matia as a mature narrator is now twice removed from the description of the orchard: she is remembering the beginning of her summer on the island, and then describes that during that memory she remembers the previous green world. The parentheses here serve to enhance that double separation. Then, she writes again in parentheses, “(Y me callé y me vino de golpe todo, los bosques y el río, y un nudo en la garganta... Y aquellas flores amarillas, con forma de sol...)” (Matute 143). She is remembering the experience of remembering a memory, thus returning us to Pratt’s idea that adolescence is a time of looking back on the idealized green world.

Paradoxically, there are some parallels here between the green world of *Primera memoria* and the Falange’s and Sección Femenina’s depictions and glorification of rural life. The Sección Femenina’s publications celebrate farming and working on the land, the simplicity of rural life, and the beauty of traditional artisanship—much of which was considered part of a woman’s realm, as reflected in the creation of a “rural regeneration program” in 1938, which “promised protection for artisans and land to peasant families [and] courses to train women in rural industries” such as “forgotten local crafts” (Richmond 76). Promoting rural activities like this both “fitted well with SF’s idealized view of rural society” as well as encouraged a more positive public image (Richmond 76). Ironically, the programs to support rural Spain were in reality a response to problems created by Franco’s own government, designed to “cushion families from the worst of Francoist agricultural policies” (Richmond 78).

The Sección Femenina’s publications promoted and reinforced the policies of rural regeneration. For example, the first issue of *Y* establishes the importance of both rural farmland as well as gardens in more than one article. In a feature on La Hermandad de la Ciudad y el Campo, a subsection of the Sección Femenina, Angelita Plá sings the praises of “La mujer de la Falange en el Campo, y su voz en medio de las eras”: “Su cuerpo no sabe de fatigas y sus manos de mujer de la Ciudad trabajan... trabajan... porque en el alma siente toda la responsabilidad de hacer la recolección del primer año Imperial” (Plá 24). The glorification of a strong body capable of hard work as it draws upon moral strength is a repeated trope in Francoist publications.<sup>20</sup> Urging a return from the city to the country, Plá’s article also exaggerates the beauty of the agricultural products collected, writing that “Las espigas tienen este año oro de sol y de Victoria” (Plá 24). The bounty of the land is also connected to the sacrifices made during the war, and Plá urges women to also keep that fact in mind when she advises them, “esa amapola que luces en el pelo mujer, mientras trabajas, bésala con unción, que brotó tal vez de la sangre de tu mejor

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<sup>20</sup> As illustrated in the previous chapter of the dissertation, the regime’s emphasis on hard work and service, especially for women in the home, contributes to my interpretation of Andrea’s apathy as subversive in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*.

camarada” (Plá 24). The land, she writes, “es doblemente nuestra por España y por conquistada” (Plá 24). And finally, the article ties back to the symbolism of the letter Y itself and the yoke it represents: “El yugo Labrador, que Isabel y Fernando tornaron glorioso y guerrero, sabe de nuevas Victorias en nuestro siglo también. El [sic] une a todos los hombres, y a todas las tierras de España, y de ellas brotarán el pan de amor y de justicia que tu [sic], mujer de la Falange, debes a todos dar” (Plá 24). Plá emphasizes a symbiotic relationship between men, women, and the land: each plays its role.

In the article “Jardines” of the same issue, Gabriel Bornas writes, “¡Jardines! Afirmación de la espiritualidad, satisfacción de las más puras sensaciones humanas, belleza básica de la urbanización, descanso inigualable para las fatigas cotidianas” (25). The exclamatory tone exaggerates the importance and benefits of the gardens. Those benefits, again, are linked not only to the individual but also to the lush countryside: “Enfrentaremos batalla, a nuestro estilo, en esos momentos difíciles y definitivos de la primera paz próxima, hacia una exaltación de la vegetación de nuestro país” (Bornas 25). Here Bornas also appeals to readers’ sense of nationalism and patriotism.

In a two-page spread in *Y* later that year, the article “La Falange y el campo” (no author listed) advertised “Cursillos de agricultura para mujeres campesinas” with a variety of photos showcasing young women in clean uniforms milking cows, attending outdoor religious ceremonies, and performing other rural activities. The course is described as “una preparación agrícola y doméstica que las eleve sobre el nivel ordinario de la vida rural” (“La Falange y el campo” 6), but it does not shy away from promoting itself as a way to “llevar al campo toda la justicia de nuestro credo nacionalsindicalista” (“La Falange y el campo” 7). Another stated goal is “una formación completa para que dentro de lo social y económico de la vida de los pueblos de España, ocupen ese lugar preferente de la mujer como fundadora del hogar, origen de la sociedad” (“La Falange y el campo” 6). The smiling faces and starched white aprons conceal the reality of agricultural work; the descriptions too mention just a few hours of work, singing, flag waving, and camaraderie.

The rural question appears several times in the magazine *Teresa* as well, where contributors find every opportunity to extol the virtues of life in the countryside and the joys of working the land, and also suggest that it is Franco’s government who has made such opportunities available. For example, Victor de la Serna’s article “España 1955” (3) highlights the changes that Franco’s government has made for Spain during its fifteen-year reign, beginning with its remote villages and towns, moving on to its morals and values, and finally returning back to the woman—thus linking these three distinct elements. He opens the article emphasizing all that has been accomplished in the fifteen years since Franco took over Spain: “En quince años—bonita edad—, muchas cosas han cambiado en España, patria de TERESA. Ha cambiado hasta el perfil de las ciudades. Es decir, se ha completado” (Serna, “España 1955” 3). In the context of this study of coming-of-age novels, it is quite striking to see Serna invoke the idea of adolescence to personify Spain, implying that it is an age of change. Here the optimistic view of Spain’s advances requires an appreciation of adolescence, labeled as “bonita edad.”

As Serna continues, he specifies the kinds of improvements he has seen in those fifteen years, such as “las residencias sanitarias para obreros, los barrios modernos, los bloques de viviendas nuevas, donde el hombre español hace una vida más digna” (“España 1955” 3). Life, he claims, has gotten better for Spain’s working class because of the modernizations that Franco has provided. Furthermore, as he continues, he shifts his focus of attention from the urban to the rural, to suggest that the land itself has been changed: “En quince años, los cerros pálidos que se

desmigaban al sol y al viento se han cubierto con millones de arboles. Los secanos estériles se han convertido en huertas providentes, y España empieza a ser, donde era un cárdeno desierto, una verde esperanza” (“España 1955” 3). All these changes are presented as positive progress, a shift from barren desert to the life-giving energy of trees and gardens. Together with the initial presentation of Spain’s fifteen years of growth, the emphasis on the fecundity of the land implicitly relates to the biological processes of puberty, recalling Luque’s imagery in *Y*.

From this praise Serna moves to his next topic, “la conciencia nacional, la manera de ser y de pensar socialmente” (“España 1955” 3). Just as Franco has managed to overhaul the natural landscape of Spain, so too have his policies encouraged “la sencillez y la modestia, la elegancia y el fasto, el éxito y el prestigio... la piedad y la mojigatería. O el deporte y el descoco también, que todo hay que decirlo” (Serna, “España 1955” 3). While the tone is laudatory and the qualities of this national consciousness are presented in a positive light, there is an underlying expectation that the individual must conform to society’s expectations—much in line with the prevailing attitude presented in other Sección Femenina publications. With the flowering of the land (the body) comes a need to control society (the self). Serna is tireless in his suggestion that all these changes are for the better, explicitly pointing out that, “Con los mismos ingredientes del alma nacional el panorama es distinto, es y es distinto el paso del ser humano sobre la tierra española. Distinto y, evidentemente, mejor” (Serna, “España 1955” 3).

Finally, the article reaches its culminating claim: “de todo cuanto ha cambiado, nada ha cambiado ni ha mejorado lo que ha cambiado y mejorado la mujer. Y esto no se percibe en las grandes ciudades tanto como se percibe en el campo” (Serna, “España 1955” 3). He honors what he sees as an almost sacred communion between woman and land, writing, “Como si hubiera soplado un viento juvenil, casto y alegre, un viento virginal, angélico y musical, la mujer española ha incorporado su figura a su paisaje” (Serna, “España 1955” 3). Unsurprisingly, he paints this ideal Spanish woman as cheerful, virgin, and angelic. He simultaneously adopts the Francoist regime’s appropriation of the idea of modernity to re-define what it means to be a modern woman:

también ha cambiado la estructura interior de una criatura a la que para mantener su elegante limpieza ya no le hacen falta ni la reja de la ventana, ni las tocas monjiles, ni la dueña chismosa. Le basta con un devocionario, una ducha y un corazón cristiano y puro para edificar en su torno el castillo inexpugnable que defenderá a la estirpe de toda contaminación en todo el ancho mundo donde se llama al pan pan y al vino vino. Así creo que hace TERESA. (Serna, “España 1955” 3)

Invoking literary love stories in which men and women would converse through the *reja*, he now claims that women no longer need physical barriers to maintain their modesty. Instead they can police themselves by internalizing patriarchal norms.

Returning to Matute’s *Primera memoria*, her questioning of that communion between woman and land now takes on a new significance. Her depictions of Matia’s green world are not uniformly positive, as suggested by Pratt; while nature can represent a young girl’s innocence and serve as her refuge, there is also a simultaneous grotesque nature represented in *Primera memoria*, which has interested many scholars. I read Matute’s decision to include these more sinister elements of nature as an oblique resistance to the regime’s physical and metaphorical attempts to exploit Spain’s landscape. She resists the inherent connection between female and

land without disposing of nature's importance altogether, which explains the ambivalent presentation of nature as benevolent but also ominous. She performs a subtle and nuanced revision of Pratt's green world, which is alternately celebrated and destroyed.

Although the reminiscing gaze is positive in the earlier example (Matia's first night on the island, spent remembering the orchard and Mauricia), the separation that Matute creates between the natural world associated with Mauricia and the reality of Matia on the island signals an important break, which will foreshadow the negative aspects of nature that creep into the text and eventually take over. As such, while Pratt claims that "women find solace, companionship, and independence in nature," which "becomes an ally of the woman hero, keeping her in touch with her selfhood, a kind of talisman that enables her to make her way through the alienations of male society" (21), Matia's experience with nature is more complex. On the island, Matute's descriptions of nature fluctuate from lyrical to realist, from picturesque to ominous. The complexity of the natural world forms yet another construction/deconstruction of a simplistic dichotomy, enhancing Matute's overall project of questioning Francoist extremes by pointing to their nuances: instead of simply bucolic and pure, the natural world is multifaceted.

For example, the hillside behind her grandmother's house, the *declive*, is an important element of Matia's green space on the island, serving as an escape from the suffocating house but also failing to provide completely the needed respite. Its existence behind the house is surprising, with its "oscuros cerezos y su higuera de brazos plateados" (Matute 17), and it is "el único refugio en la desesperante casa" (Matute 19). As with the memory of Mauricia, the *declive* is linked to the bearing of fruit, the giving of life. While the *declive* does suggest liberation and escape, as Hackbarth claims, it has its limitations. Matute writes, "quizás no lo supe entonces, pero la sorpresa del declive fue punzante y unida al presentimiento de un gran bien y de un dolor unidos" (17). And in some ways, the *declive* is nothing more than a passage to the rocky shore, suggesting yet again how temporary the value of nature can be in the context of a fleeting childhood. Beyond the *declive* at the shore, Borja's boat *Leontina* allows for further exploration of the natural world: the sea, though more specifically a cove they claim as their own, where they hide illicit "tesoros" like cigarettes and alcohol (Matute 33). Again the green world is exploited by the intrusion of grotesque adulthood, an adulthood at once feared and desired.

Nature, then, is not just a safe refuge for young Matia. It is also a threatening and dangerous aspect of life on the island. Margaret Jones sums up the seemingly contradictory peculiarities of Matute's novelistic representations of nature: "Lush and poetic in one passage, harsh and realistically detailed in another, grotesque and fantastic in still another, these apparently tentative stabs at literary experimentation are, in fact, an intentional effort to fuse the manner of expression with the development of the material" (6). The article goes on to show how Matute distorts elements of nature in order to comment on Matia's emotional state. Matia's own overarching understanding of the danger of nature, and even perhaps its cause, surfaces when she says, "Yo sabía—porque siempre me lo estaban repitiendo—que el mundo era algo malo y grande" because "vivíamos encima de los muertos" (Matute 106). While Matute does not explicitly mention the war or the dictatorship here, her emphasis on death as disruptive to the natural state of things and on the lingering presence of the dead amongst the living invokes the tragedies of lives lost.

Jones' article focuses on the dark and twisted aspects of the natural world in *Primera memoria*, claiming, "The very amount of nature symbolism and the progressively increased attention given to this strange interpretation of nature suggest a deliberate effort on the part of Matute to give these elements a functional value" (Jones 15), and I would add a critical, almost



cautionary value as well. The disruption of nature as purely refuge, when read in the context of the propaganda above, also indirectly disrupts State messaging. Jones continues, “Through the inversion of conventional symbols, Matute reinforces the disharmony which the character senses between his own emotions and the impressions he receives from the surroundings” (15). In the disconnect between the purported beauty of nature and Matia’s perception of it as dangerous, we can read a disconnect between State discourse and individual experiences.

Jones studies two key examples, flowers and the sun, which are the same examples given in Brown’s essay, in which she explains more generally of Matute’s presentation of the natural world, “Sus descripciones transforman los símbolos corrientes de la naturaleza, particularmente las flores y el sol, en símbolos de la discordia grotesca entre la protagonista y el mundo,” creating “una atmósfera de tensión y miedo” (Brown, “Unidad y diversidad” 22). Jones writes, “It is a generally accepted tradition that flowers are identified with joyous occasions. However, in *Primera memoria*, this concept has been drastically deformed to provide a symbol of anger, violence, and hatred” (13). Indeed, Matia is afraid of the flowers because they grow everywhere and almost appear to take over: “surgían inesperadas... como denunciando algún misterio de bajo la isla, algún reino, quizá, bello y malvado” (Matute 88). Their contrasting qualities of beauty and evil converge. She describes these flowers on the island as “de un rojo encendido, con forma de cáliz, y tenían algo violento” (Matute 29). At other times, “las flores, como el estupor de la tierra, encarnadas y vivas, curvadas como una piel, como un temblor del sol, gritando en medio del silencio” (Matute 38). The flowers are strange to Matia, who says, “Las flores de la isla eran algo insólito. Nunca vi flores tan grandes ni de tan vivo color,” and they are pervasive because “lo dominaban todo: el aire, la luz, la atmósfera. Me parecía tan raro que nacieran allí, de aquel suelo, en todas partes: en el sendero, en el declive, junto al pozo de nuestra casa” (Matute 89). These flowers are quite distinct from the “amapola” and the “jardines” previously cited in the Sección Femenina magazine *Y*, which celebrates them as lush and vibrant—now these qualities become exaggerated to their fullest expression, overgrown and wild. Matute creates a lacuna between what flowers *should* represent, according to State discourse, and how they actually seem to Matia’s individual experience.

In “Fictions of the Self in *La función Delta* and *Primera memoria*,” Kathleen Glenn also reads the landscape in a more suspicious manner, claiming that it expresses interrelated questions around guilt, repentance, and absolution. She attributes “a sense of lurking menace and violence” to the natural landscape of the island (Glenn 202). Her examples include Matute’s “viento abrasado y húmedo desgarrándose en las pitas” (Glenn 202). Glenn explains, “These intensely subjective and distorted descriptions convey the idea that hostile forces are allied against her,” which the critic sees repeated at other moments, such as when Matia expresses that she is unable to think or act of her own volition (Glenn 202). Again this brings up the question of whether narrator Matia, feeling guilty and shameful, wishes to repent or to excuse herself. Glenn explains, “With one breath she laments her actions, figuratively wrapping herself in sackcloth and sprinkling her head with ashes, but with the next breath she undercuts the idea of her responsibility by suggesting she was powerless to act otherwise” (202). This is, she continues, “a rhetoric of self-condemnation, but on closer examination it proves ambiguous. Proclamations of guilt coexist with protestations of innocence. Surface text and subtext send different messages, and at the heart of the narrative we find an unresolved tension” (Glenn 202). Glenn’s idea of conflicting ideas coexisting reflects the greater trend of *Primera memoria* that I am showing. In this case, the unresolved tension is reflected in the landscape.

To consider another specific example, Santa Catalina is a small cove that illustrates the interplay between refuge and danger, which I read as the driving thrust of Matute's presentation of nature. Borja and Matia consider Santa Catalina their own private place. Accessible most easily by boat, it serves as an escape from the house and their family's imposing restrictions. Before anything happens there, Matia simply describes it: "Santa Catalina tenía una playa muy pequeña, con una franja de conchas como de oro, al borde del agua" (Matute 32). Her simile emphasizes the land's beauty and worth, which is later echoed in the presence of their box of treasures hidden in Santa Catalina. Matia's description continues, "De la arena dura, en la que apenas se marcaban las pisadas, brotaban pitas y juncos verdes. Siempre me pareció que había en la cala algo irremediable, como si un viento de catástrofe la sacudiera" (Matute 32). Now there is a counterpoint to the treasures, with a more windswept landscape that is, in some ways, untouchable by humans but disrupted by some mysterious force. This threat is then confirmed by the washing up of the dead body of Manuel's father. The scene opens, "Aquella tarde la playita estaba como encendida. Había un latido de luz en el aire o dentro de nosotros" (Matute 36), reestablishing the connection between body and land, as if the beach is issuing a kind of warning that they already sense. As they comprehend further that something is amiss, they stop, and Matia's description intensifies, "La arena despedía un vaho dulzón que se pegaba a la piel. A través de las nubes hinchadas, color humo, se intensificaba por minutos, como una úlcera, el globo encarnado del sol" (Matute 37). As Matia pieces together the history of the family, she realizes this murder was politically motivated, and she says, "El odio estallaba en medio del silencio, como el sol, como un ojo congestionado y sangriento a través de la bruma" (Matute 37), linking once more the actions and sentiments of humans with the nature that surrounds and somehow becomes imbued with their worst characteristics.

Then, as Borja and Matia wait in Santa Catalina for Manuel to return their boat and as Matute gives background information about Manuel's family on the island, the heat and the sun become stronger and seem more malicious. After Borja claims that the man had to be killed, expressing a cruelty with which Matia disagrees, she writes, "Todo el cielo parecía meterse dentro de los ojos, con su brillo de cristal esmerilado, dejando caer el gran calor sobre nuestros cuerpos" (Matute 51). Borja exclaims, "Me va a dar una insolación..." (Matute 51), one of the common dangers that the sun can inflict on humans. Matia continues narrating, "Lo tenía tan metido dentro, que todo: yo, las barcas muertas, la arena, las chumberas, parecíamos sumergidas en el fondo de una luz grande y doliente. Oía el mar como si las olas fueran algo abrasador que me inundara de sed" (Matute 51). Later she remembers the island as "algo de prisión, de honda tristeza" (Matute 56). Nature and human are converging in an ominous way.

Seeing the dead body of Manuel's father and loaning their boat to Manuel is, in many ways, the complication or incident that sets off the rest of the novel's action. As they return home that night, the *declive* is different:

El declive tenía algo solemne en la noche. Las piedras de los muros de contención blanqueaban como hileras de siniestros cabezas en acecho. Había algo humano en los troncos de los olivos, y los almendros, a punto de ser vareados, proyectaban una sombra plena. Más allá de los árboles, se adivinaba el resplandor de los habitáculos de los colonos. Al final del declive la silueta de la casa de la abuela era una sombra más densa. El cielo tenía un tinte verdoso y malva. (Matute 59)

The realities of the adult world, epitomized by that most serious topic of death, are beginning to invade the natural world. According to Fuentes, “La tierra y el tiempo, ajenos al dolor del hombre, presiden su tragedia” (108); in the above example, however, Matia projects her emotions onto the landscape, which then appears to reflect it back to her. I would also add that the relationship between young woman and land, so celebrated by the Sección Femenina, has been corrupted here.

The complex intercommunication between human and nature appears at other moments as well, and contributes to the complexities of Matia’s relationship with the green world, which can read be as an alternative to the Sección Femenina’s teachings on women’s relationship to the land. For example, Matia narrates, “Recuerdo un viento valiente y bajo, un cielo hinchado como una infección gris, las chumberas pálidas apenas verdeantes, y la tierra toda que venía desde lo alto, desde las crestas de las montañas donde los bosques de robles y de hayas habitados por los carboneos, para abrirse en el valle, con el pueblo, y precipitándose por el declive, detrás de nuestra casa, hasta el mar” (Matute 23). Here the almost sacred communion between earth and humankind alludes to Francoist thought, while developing a tension between life (green) and death (a grey infection), and thus complicating the glorified Francoist version of this connection. Over the next few pages, Matia mentions repeatedly that the wind has suddenly stopped, giving way to a brief mention of the war, which people still assumed would end quickly, just as the fleeting weather can change quickly. And later she admits, “al viento le temía” (Matute 88).

As part of the continuous emphasis on the conflicted natural world, descriptions of the sun and its light abound throughout *Primera memoria*, not only in the section “Escuela del Sol,” and I would like to spend time analyzing how Matute reappropriates this symbol, which was so central to the Sección Femenina’s creation of womanhood and motherhood. Over and over, Matia describes the sun, mentions its heat, and emphasizes its malicious ability to burn the skin or eyes. The sun is a central aspect of her life on the island: she says, “En la isla conocí el sol” (Matute 89). After her first night sleeping at her grandmother’s house, Matia is surprised to wake up “con el sol” (Matute 16), and she describes the beginning of her time there as “(Días de oro, nunca repetidos, el velo del sol prendido entre los troncos negros de los almendros, abajo, precipitadamente hacia el mar.)” (Matute 17).

Initially these mentions of the sun are not threatening, though the repetition calls our attention, and the imagery evolves. According to Jones, “the sun is a deliberate symbol of violence. The calculated persistence with which this element is mentioned transforms it into an omnipresent being with definitely evil characteristics,” reinforced by “the insistence on the color red and its association with the color of blood” (Jones 14). She cites many examples of words that express pain and violence that Matute uses to describe the sun: “The words *dañino, rojo y feroz, violencia, luz negra, hinchada quemazón* confer on the sun a power of its own, capable of inflicting harm and inciting violence” (Jones 15). Glenn compiles a similar list of adjectives that are used to describe the sun: “siniestro” (Matute 37), “feroz y maligno” (Matute 40), “rabioso” (Matute 85), “hiriente” (Matute 94), “acechando algo” (Matute 108) (Glenn 202). In addition to these adjectives, a variety of metaphors and similes are also used: Matute describes the sun as a “globo encarnado” (37), “como un ojo congestionado y sangriento” (37), and “como un león” (108). The sun also “abría una brecha en las nubes. Se sentía su dominio rojo y furioso contra la arena y el agua” (Matute 43) and “brillaba fieramente” (Matute 74). At another point, “el oro furioso y rojo del gran sol parecía acecharnos” (Matute 142). At still another, Matia notices the sun taking on mystical qualities: “El sol, muy cerca de mí, levantaba un fuego extraño del árbol,

de las hojas, de las redondas pupilas del gallo. Alcé los ojos y el cielo no era rojo, como parecía, sino, más bien como un techo de hojalata mojado por la lluvia” (Matute 76).

In this repetitive, almost obsessive imagery, the sun is personified, glaring down at Matia, threatening her. However, as previously mentioned, natural elements in the book are never simple. When Matia and Manuel are talking, and she feels for the first time that someone is able to understand her, she describes the scene, “Un verde resplandeciente nos bañaba, y allá arriba, el oro furioso y rojo del gran sol parecía acecharnos. Sabíamos que el sol no podía con nosotros, mientras estuviéramos así, echados uno junto a otro y sin atrevernos casi a mirarnos” (Matute 142). At this highly emotional moment, a moment in which their friendship truly flourishes, we see a contradiction in the description of the sun, which is at once both dazzling and threatening. Against its strength, though, the two are together, resisting, so that the sun cannot touch them.

Matute also gives the sun a power to penetrate interior spaces, such as through the stained glass windows of the church. Initially, the description focuses on their resplendent beauty, “ávidamente lamidas por el sol” (Matute 80). As the paragraph progresses, Matute’s lyrical descriptions take advantage of similes to emphasize the multi-layeredness of the light shining through. She explains, “Un rayo de luminoso rojo caía al suelo, como una mancha de sangre. Y un destello del sol, igual que una mariposa de oro, voló de un lado a otro de la bóveda” (Matute 80). A bit later, however, the sun has become once again a powerful and silencing force: “El sol lucía fuera como un rojo trueno de silencio, mucho más fuerte que cualquier estampido” (Matute 80). As Matia endures the mass, she is distracted by her own physical and mental sensations: hunger, her leg falling asleep, boredom—all the needs that the Sección Femenina’s textbook *Formación Familiar y Social* would have encouraged her to *ocultar*. The function of the sun continues to shift, responding to the rituals of the mass: “Todas las voces se levantaron. El sol reverberaba en los cristales de colores, como si quisiera entrar a través de las vidrieras” (Matute 81). As the parishioners’ singing voices escape their bodies and rise up, the penetrating sun performs the opposite movement, attempting to penetrate through the windows.

Sun imagery in *Primera memoria* has captured the attention of many critics. Thomas analyzes the importance of the sun in the novel, claiming, “The image of the sun is used to embody irrational feelings, the pains of passage to adulthood, and to reflect a hidden but painful level of guilt on the part of the narrator as she subconsciously remembers that she did indeed betray a friend” (“Rite of Initiation” 162). Indeed, many of Matute’s descriptions of the sun are accompanied by Matia’s emotional reflections, and an especially frequent emotion is that of *vergüenza*. Thomas also connects the sun’s function with “the island’s grapes: they seem to be mature on the outside, but their substance is bitter. External transformation is easy, nature provides us with all the changes; but maturation of the spirit, as the narrator learns, must come from within” (“Rite of Initiation” 162-163). In his book, though, Thomas gives a different explanation of the sun, explaining its role in Matia’s “awakening to altruism” (*Coming of Age in Franco’s Spain* 83). As Matia begins to befriend Manuel, Thomas explains, she realizes that her grandmother was complicit in the murder of his father and the treatment of his family. When she says to Manuel, “Me parece una cosa horrible lo que os han hecho,” her face gets flushed, which she describes as “como si todo el sol se me hubiera metido dentro” (Matute 135). Thomas explains: “The sun is figuratively ‘inside’ Matia at this moment. Before, it seemed to burn her skin, but now it has penetrated her completely” (*Coming of Age in Franco’s Spain* 84). As she affords Manuel a gesture of kindness, her interior has begun to be transformed beyond the physical exterior of her body.

Matute's complex presentation of the sun and its changing light is more than just a lyrical representation of the island's climate; in fact, it moves beyond the metaphorical function of commenting on the difficulties of maturation—if we place *Primera memoria* in the context of the Francoist propaganda about nature, we can understand how Matute's questioning of the sun is a subtle questioning of the ideals the regime perpetuated because, in addition to the continued celebration of rural life, Francoist propaganda and contemporary conventional wisdom emphasized the importance of the sun, especially for children. This thread runs throughout many issues of the magazines *Y* and *Teresa*, as well as in published advice for mothers.

For example, in the magazine *Y*, Dr. Blanco Soler writes in an article about encouraging children's nutrition that “hay algo más para hacer una digestión perfecta. El comedor habrá de ser la habitación mejor y más soleada de la casa,” and, in addition, the table should be set with a tablecloth and flowers; in other words, “Hay que comer con alegría” (Soler 83). Later that year, *Y* also ran an article titled “Cuidados del niño,” which featured a series of questions from mothers and answers provided by an unnamed expert. Before advising on the details of how babies should sleep, whether to carry them in a certain way, or what to do if a child swallows something, the article sets up one of its most basic premises: that the sun is the “mejor amigo de los niños” (“Cuidados del niño” 28). Access to sunlight would have prevented rickets in children by providing them with Vitamin D, so this medical advice was not without merit. Indeed, over and over, articles about parenting featured the sun and fresh air as integral to children's growth and development, and photographs of children and families were often outdoors or in sunny rooms with open windows; in contrast, Matute's evolving descriptions of the sun as menacing, harsh, dangerous, and colorful question the validity of such advice—showing what happens with too much of a good thing.

Of course in analyzing the details of the natural world in *Primera memoria*, it is also central to consider the location: an unnamed island.<sup>21</sup> Matia describes many facets of the ocean and the shore and suggests the metaphorical importance of being contained on an insular land. At times the sea is menacing and unpredictable, as when she writes, “el mar producía una sensación de terror, de inestabilidad” (Matute 112). In this sense, it is the island against the world, as Matia explains, “tenía yo formada otra isla, sólo mía. Nos dábamos cuenta de algo: Borja y yo estábamos solos” (Matute 113). And the island is suffocating in many ways—one element that surprises Matia is that it has no rivers (Matute 88), which can be associated with stagnation. As Pascal explains, “El aislamiento de la isla separa físicamente a los niños de la guerra peninsular. Desde este punto de vista, es un refugio de los peligros del frente. Sin embargo, para los protagonistas infantiles, más que refugio es una trampa en la que han quedado atrapados y de la que no pueden escapar” (75).

Matia also describes the Taronjé brothers and their land, which is a humming, lively, and green area in the middle of her grandmother's land: “Ellos eran como otra isla, sí, en la tierra de mi abuela; una isla con su casa, su pozo, la verdura con que alimentarse y las flores moradas, amarillas, negras, donde zumbaban los mosquitos y las abejas y la luz parecía de miel” (Matute 39). This vivid description puts focus on the life-giving properties of the land, for humans and plants alike, thanks to the “verde exultante, las hojas frescas y tupidas de las verduras de que se alimentaban” (Matute 39). These are the kind of lush, celebratory adjectives and imagery we might expect of a girl's green-world refuge as defined by Pratt, or that we have seen in *Sección Femenina* magazines. The irony is that this is not a space accessible to Matia at this point in the story; it is blocked off by walls (though it does have an open gate, suggesting a possibility of

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<sup>21</sup> Critics have often identified it as Mallorca (Janet Diaz 133).

entrance) and is inhabited by a family that has been “othered” by her grandmother. This inaccessibility makes it an island.

Matia extends the island metaphor and finds safe spaces not only in nature, as with the *declive* or Santa Catalina; she finds an interior safe place inside a wardrobe, with a metaphor of an island. She describes it as “mi isla: aquel rincón de mi armario donde vivía, bajo los pañuelos, los calcetines y el Atlas, mi pequeño muñeco negro” (Matute 114-115). The wardrobe is defined by the comforting items she stores in it (much as the treasures of Santa Catalina are hidden inside a boat): “(Dentro del armario, estaba mi pequeño bagaje de memorias: el negro y retorcido hilo del teléfono, con su voz, como una sorprendente sangre sonora. Las manzanas del sobrado, la Isla de Nunca Jamás, con sus limpiezas de primavera)... Pero vivíamos en otra isla” (Matute 116). Again Matute uses parentheses, which here highlight the interiority of the wardrobe as distinct, distant, and hidden from the outside world. She creates for herself a Bachelardian felicitous space, for “In the wardrobe there exists a center of order that protects the entire house against uncurbed disorder” (Bachelard 79), where she can “resume contact with the unfathomable store of daydreams of intimacy” (Bachelard 78). It is here that she can think about her (Republican-affiliated) father, look at an atlas and imagine travel, and daydream about the books and fairytales she has read. Just as the Taronjí land was an inaccessible island, its lushness available only to the family living on it, this island is privately enjoyed only by Matia and cut off from the outside world.

Matia’s wardrobe refuge also houses her doll Gorogó, a central piece of Matia’s childhood, which connects again to Pratt’s theory on the green world:

In most women’s novels the green world is present in retrospect, something left behind or about to be left behind as one backs into the enclosure—a state of innocence that becomes most poignant as one is initiated into experience. The intensity of these moments seems to increase in direct proportion to the imminence of the hero’s young womanhood, comprehended as a submission to the patriarchy. In such cases the young woman turns away from ‘appropriate’ males toward fantasies of a figure, projected from within her own personality, more suitable to her needs. Such figures appear often in women’s fiction, correspond to the role played by Pan, Dionysus, etc., in mythology, and constitute an archetype that I have termed the green-world lover. This figure is closely associated with the naturistic epiphany, a vision of the green world that calls up from the feminine unconscious the image of an ideal lover and almost always includes a rejection of social expectations concerning engagement and marriage. (Pratt 22-23)

In *Primera memoria*, this figure for Matia is Gorogó, “mi muñeco negro vestido de arlequín, estropeado y sucio, que nadie conocía” (Matute 113), who serves as a physical reminder of her youth. As outlined by Pratt, Matia’s fluctuating relationship with Gorogó signals her evolving feelings about growth. On the one hand, he serves as a comfort to her and makes up part of her self-created safe space, her “isla.” On the other hand, she knows that dolls are associated with childhood and keeps Gorogó hidden from others,<sup>22</sup> feeling shameful at her aunt Emilia’s response to the doll: “Siempre me pides cigarrillos, y ahora resulta que aún juegas con muñecos”

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<sup>22</sup> In Gaston Bachelard’s words, “The action of the secret passes continually from the hider of things to the hider of self” (88).

(Matute 127). Matia's maturation culminates when she is able to give the doll to her friend Manuel, in an important scene in which she opens up emotionally—again Matia's relationship with the doll serves as a physical symbol of the inner changes occurring.

Y's May 1940 edition features an article, "Muñecas," which gives an abbreviated history of the making and use of dolls. Federico de Madrid writes, "La muñeca ha sido y es universal, como universal es el instinto [sic] femenino de ternura, el de forjarse un pequeño mundo artificial, de fantasía, a gusto propio" (26). He connects dolls to the imaginative qualities that he calls inherently feminine. Ironically, this is just the kind of imagining that Matia does in her wardrobe refuge—and that Matute performs in her writing—fulfilling the Bachelardian ideal of allowing the imagination to soar in a safe, cozy, interior space.

In summary, Hackbarth's interpretation of Pratt's green world archetype (including other elements of the green world such as dolls), while perceptive and central to Matia's relationship to nature at some key moments of the novel, neglects the bleaker descriptions of an oppressive sun and other elements of nature in many other parts. But, if Hackbarth leans toward an overly optimistic or naïve view of nature in the book, other critics have swung in the opposite direction in identifying only the horrific elements of that nature, ignoring the pastoral scenes and the natural refuges analyzed by Hackbarth. Thus, in building upon but moving away from Pratt's original archetype, I have considered both of these seemingly contradictory elements of nature as depicted in *Primera memoria*—the natural world is not only an escape for young Matia, but also a threat. This duality questions the archetypal green world and undermines Francoist representations of an idealized rural life. Matute's reappropriation of symbols such as flowers, the sun, and a doll—and her exploration of all their facets—opens space for a veiled critique of the regime's insistence on the singularity of their meaning.

## Concluding Thoughts

The previous sections have shown the conflicting and complex representations of the natural world around Matia: while a refuge, it is also a danger. This brings more nuances to Pratt's archetypal green world while also questioning the celebrations of rural life in Francoist propaganda. And Matute's fluctuating characterizations of nature aid further in understanding Matia's ambivalent feelings about her entry into the adult world—she is both disgusted and fascinated by adulthood—which returns us to the driving thematic thrust of *Primera memoria*. For Cannon, the atrocities of nature echo Matia's fear of growing up. She shows how the development of characters is intrinsically linked to the world around them: "The chaotic world surrounding Matute's child characters becomes the chaos within the self, which drives them towards self-discovery" (Cannon 37). Gonzalo Sobejano also sees a parallel between outside forces and interior development, noting the repeated isolation of the protagonist and also of the family unit. He writes, "This lyrical, emotional emphasis on withdrawal reflected the deprivations of war and isolation" (Sobejano 177).

In *Primera memoria*, Matia's unique backward glance through the use of parentheses and the verb *recordar* allows her to both separate and conflate the older narrating Matia from her fourteen-year-old self on the island. As such, she can both desire and fear adulthood, which becomes the central tension of the novel, and of adolescence itself. Similarly, as Matute describes and exaggerates differing functions of nature—as refuge but also as threat, as beautiful background but also as a reflection of the emotional pain of its inhabitants—she again creates a

new realm of reality that allows for the coexistence of opposites. This emphasis on dualities and their coexistence undermines the Francoist regime, both specifically, by destabilizing its elevation of rural life, but also more generally, by destabilizing its representation of a unified Spain with a singular history and existence.



## Chapter 3

### In Search of Breadcrumbs:

#### Circling Back Through the Past in Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás*

“me fugué hacia atrás, a los orígenes”  
Carmen Martín Gaité, *El cuarto de atrás*

In Carmen Martín Gaité's canonical *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), during the protagonist C.'s overnight conversation with the mysterious interviewer Alejandro, she laments her inability to finish a project she has started on courtship customs of the postwar period, a project sparked by her viewing of Franco's funeral on television just before her fiftieth birthday. As she watches the funeral, C. says, “caí en la cuenta de que estaba a punto de cerrarse un ciclo de cincuenta años; de que, entre aquellos entierros que no vi y éste que estaba viendo, se había desarrollado mi vida entera, la sentí enmarcada por ese círculo que giraba en torno mío, teniendo por polos dos mañanas de sol” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 118). She reflects back on the fact that she was born during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, on the same day that socialist labor leader Pablo Iglesias and conservative former prime minister Antonio Maura died, initially calling this nothing more than a coincidence (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 113) but now realizing that these funerals serve as bookends to her life, causing her to backtrack through it.

C. continues reminiscing, and as she watches the funeral and has this realization, she also becomes aware of Carmencita Franco, the dictator's daughter, whose life, while so different, also uncannily parallels the narrator C.'s, due simply to the fact of growing up at the same time. Throughout the novel, her reflections clarify in meticulous detail the thought processes, the experience of everyday life, and the messages that she wants her interlocutor Alejandro (and readers) to understand about coming of age as a woman during the Franco dictatorship. Meditating aloud, she says, “hemos crecido y vivido en los mismo años, ella era hija de un militar de provincias, hemos sido víctimas de las mismas modas y costumbres, hemos leído las mismas revistas y visto el mismo cine, nuestros hijos puede que sean distintos, pero nuestros sueños seguro que han sido semejantes, con la seguridad de todo aquello que jamás podrá tener comprobación” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 119). As C. contemplates her own daughter and the bar where they are watching the funeral, she simultaneously reflects on what is happening and is unable to explain, even to herself, all the feelings she is experiencing at the end of the Franco era. So she turns, of course, to writing. She explains, “Fue cuando me di cuenta de que yo, de esa época, lo sabía todo, subí a casa y me puse a tomar notas en un cuaderno” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 120). Her awareness of the monumentality of the moment motivates her to look back over Franco's regime—on its effects on her own life but also the lives of others.

For this project, she continues explaining, she starts in the archives: “Al principio, me pasé varios meses yendo a la hemeroteca a consultar periódicos, luego comprendí que no era eso, que lo que yo quería rescatar era algo más inaprensible, eran las miguitas, no las piedrecitas blancas” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 120). As she searches through the historical artifacts, she realizes they don't provide what she is actually searching for, using a previously mentioned metaphor of looking for breadcrumbs and little white pebbles. Here she is returning to one of the book's most

important leitmotifs, the fairy tale of *Pulgarcito*, in which the young boy leaves bread crumbs as he ventures out into the forest so that he can find his way home, only to discover that birds have eaten the crumbs, leading him to use white pebbles the next time. The first mention of *Pulgarcito* in the book is made by Alejandro, who explains, “Cuando dejé un reguero de migas de pan para hallar el camino de vuelta, se las comieron los pájaros. A la vez siguiente, ya resabiado, dejé piedrecitas blancas, y así no se extravió, vamos, es lo que creyó Perrault, que no se extraviaba, pero yo no estoy seguro” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 93). From this point forward, C. adopts the terms as a kind of shorthand for talking about the act of remembering and revisiting the past. In Martín Gaité’s literary process of remembering, while the white pebbles stand for the documented events of an official History, the breadcrumbs stand for the ephemeral details “eaten” by time: the personal details that don’t find their way into history books (often associated, not coincidentally, with women’s experiences). The quotidian minutiae interest her precisely because they are most likely to be dismissed and forgotten.

This backward glance via breadcrumbs and white pebbles, this journey into and back from the past, is exactly the kind of gesture that, according to Martín Gaité in her historical inquiry *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987), was not allowed during the Francoist years; she explains that it was “Prohibido mirar hacia atrás. La guerra había terminado. Se censuraba cualquier comentario que pusiera de manifiesto su huella, de por sí bien evidente, en tantas familias mutiladas, tantos suburbios miserables, pueblos arrasados, prisioneros abarrotando las cárceles, exilio, represalias y economía maltrecha” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 13). With the death of Franco in 1975, however, there was suddenly an aperture, a new opportunity to remember that which could not previously be remembered and to say that which could not previously be said. Joan Lipman Brown, in her book *Secrets From the Back Room: The Fiction of Carmen Martín Gaité*, has explained of Martín Gaité’s novel:

For the first time, she is not obliged to obscure or ignore the most important influence of her time: the Spanish Civil War. Because her life is inseparable from her writing, the narrator analyzes her literary career as honestly as her personal experience, and the two are intertwined throughout the novel. *The Back Room* introduces the political events and overtones which always were behind the social realities depicted in Martín Gaité’s previous fiction. (Brown, *Secrets* 155)

Sara Brenneis echoes a similar interpretation of *El cuarto de atrás* by using her model of genre fusion to see *El cuarto de atrás* and *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* as the two sides of the same coin. For Brenneis, distinctions between history and fiction have become antiquated, and her model of genre fusion “recognizes the taxonomy of these two traditional genre categories but works to break down the barrier between them” (3). In the case of Martín Gaité, she explains, “When the figurehead of Francoist historiography disappeared, the possibilities of expression greatly expanded. Martín Gaité pulled away from the social realist project, but not from the fearless dedication to history that characterized it” (Brenneis 91).

Suddenly, then, after Franco’s death, Martín Gaité can indeed circle back through the twentieth century, through her childhood and adolescence, to her back room and all its related memories. What previously could only be alluded to can now be said aloud. She does this through the character C., who has a parallel revelation, as discussed above. The metaphor of *Pulgarcito* shows how C. is now permitted to go back in time and pick up the little white pebbles and—more intriguing still—the breadcrumbs left behind. This is exactly what C. means when

she says that “a veces las piedrecitas blancas no sólo sirven para marcar el camino, sino para hacernos retroceder, se pueden combinar de un modo mágico” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 118). Following the little records and reminders of the past, via songs, flashbacks, scribbled notes, and photographs, helps recuperate other memories on a winding path through the back spaces of the mind. This backward glance, I will argue in this chapter, takes on a circularity that frames the story as well as the themes of the book. In fact, I would like to utilize the idea of circularity to guide a discussion of this novel and also consider how *El cuarto de atrás* additionally circles back through the other novels I have studied.

Theorizing the temporalities in this novel is not a new endeavor, though previous studies have done so through different lenses.<sup>1</sup> What sets the current study apart is its use of circularity to think beyond the temporal realm. By utilizing the circularity inherent in the flashback style of narrating the past, *El cuarto de atrás* illuminates other spatial and thematic circles, which in turn reflect back on the centrality of boldly circling into the past. I read *El cuarto de atrás* as an experiment in writing as well as a kind of guidebook for how that writing should be done: with the endlessly circular presentation of C.’s story, Martín Gaité is encouraging a very specific kind of storytelling, reading, writing, investigating, and conversing. As she writes the novel, she also promotes a theory of narrative that bases its storytelling in conversation; as she theorizes this kind of novel, she also writes it; and through it all, she writes about writing. In this constant circling between fiction and theory, Martín Gaité breaks down the boundaries that often separate them. So I propose following her lead in deconstructing the many layers of the book—and also in investigating the historical artifacts she mentions, especially the political publications of the Sección Femenina of the Falange. The circles, loops, and spirals in *El cuarto de atrás* are multi-dimensional, multi-faceted, and ever changing. Building on David Herzberger’s work on how the narrative strategies in fictional works can subvert State historiography, this chapter will also show that Martín Gaité, with the circles drawn in her novel, also parodies and thus subverts the repetitive circularity imposed on women by the Sección Femenina’s propaganda. *El cuarto de atrás* manages to reclaim the circular temporality that has been co-opted by such propaganda, rejecting the suffocating realm of the home assigned to women and instead using circles to explore a lost past.

## The Subversive Backward Glance

In his 1995 book, *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain*, Herzberger has shown how realist novels, novels of memory, and other twentieth-century fiction can be read against the official state historiography of Franco’s regime, which promoted a mythic view of time. Like Martín Gaité, he calls attention to the prohibition to look back, and

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Craig Bergeson in “Time in ‘El cuarto de atrás’” demonstrates that temporal gaps and stagnation “reflect the atemporal world of imagination where Carmen Martín Gaité goes to write, a world engendered by the repression she experiences during the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing dictatorship” (137). Even Martín Gaité herself has shown her interest in the never-ending story, particularly evident in the title of her collection of essays, *El cuento de nunca acabar*. Critics have used this title as a point of departure as well. Perhaps the most comprehensive article on the novel is Debra Castillo’s “Never-Ending Story: Carmen Martín Gaité’s *The Back Room*.” Additionally, Kathleen Glenn and Lissette Rolón Collazo edited a collection of essays that they titled *Carmen Martín Gaité: Cuento de nunca acabar / Never-ending Story*. In that collection, Ofelia Ferrán’s essay “Mitos y mentiras, historia(s) y ficciones: Scheherazade en *El cuarto de atrás*” analyzes the influence of *The Thousand and One Nights* on storytelling in *El cuarto de atrás*.

claims that, in narrative, “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” (Herzberger 2). In these works, he says, truth, meaning, and time are all questioned. More specifically, the novel of memory “works consistently to decenter the paradigms of mythic discourse used by the State” since

the historical past of Spain is explored as time filtered through the consciousness of a self at once in history (the present) and open to the multiple meanings of history made available through the necessary process of interpretation. In other words, the center of historical inquiry becomes a movable construct that is always framed by an individual whose subjectivity determines the contingency of historical meanings and whose dissent is born from the hermeneutics of memory and narration. (Herzberger 12)

Herzberger defends his combinatory exploration of both history and fiction by destabilizing these metacategories. In quoting E. L. Doctorow, “There’s no more fiction or nonfiction, there’s only narrative,” Herzberger adopts and defends the postmodern view that there is no one single truth and that “Pluralism and difference thus become the markers of all discourse” (Herzberger 5).

But before Herzberger’s theorization, Martín Gaité was already hinting at many of these same tensions in narrating the past. More importantly, she was doing so in a novel, as a novelist who was also a historian<sup>2</sup>—these guiding principles are what Herzberger will pick up on later. In *El cuarto de atrás*, the constant questioning of how to tell stories and of which stories to tell creates a repetitive circularity, haunting the narrative with its echoes, which in turn haunt readers. As we finish the book, we are taken back to the start by C. herself, who discovers 182 pages of writing, titled *El cuarto de atrás* and beginning with the opening lines of the novel we just read: “. . . Y sin embargo, yo juraría que la postura era la misma” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 11, 181). In this way, she creates a circular and never-ending story, just as she has theorized in her aptly named collection of essays, *El cuento de nunca acabar*. This circular impulse is, I would argue, even more complex than the prohibited backward glance that she mentions and Herzberger analyzes. In a way, Martín Gaité prefigures Herzberger’s “remembering subject” as she heads back into the past and brings those memories into the present. But the circularity of Martín Gaité’s gesture means that the retrieval of the memory continues happening, almost as if the past events themselves continues happening—a never-ending story, like the book. In *El cuarto de atrás*, her returns to the past are repeated, disordered, and looping. While both Herzberger’s and Martín Gaité’s models head back into the past to bring it into the present, hers does so repeatedly, continually.<sup>3</sup>

Through it all, though, as Herzberger has shown in other fictional works, the dictatorial prohibition against looking back has left a lasting mark on the fictional C., even in her drive to remember, since she struggles to circle back, to organize her memories, or to write them down. Part of the hesitation to remember comes from a culture that repressed its historical memory<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>2</sup> See Sara Brenneis’ *Genre Fusion* for more on the interplay between history and fiction.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Heike Scharm has even argued that “the focus of Martín Gaité’s novel is directed towards the future, much more so than towards the past” (260).

<sup>4</sup> Historical memory is, of course, a loaded term in the Spanish context, due in part to the Amnesty Law of 1977, or *pacto del olvido*, which granted amnesty to perpetrators on both sides, essentially “forgetting” the atrocities of the war and dictatorship. It wasn’t until 2007 that Spain passed the Ley de Memoria Histórica,

instead favored forgetting or keeping quiet. This reluctance is amplified by another doubt, that of how to best tell the story, a question with which Martín Gaité has also grappled in her historical and critical works, and with which C. grapples here inside the novelistic world of *El cuarto de atrás*. In her introduction to *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, in which she briefly narrates her process of writing the scholarly study of social history as well as of writing the fictional *El cuarto de atrás*, Martín Gaité remembers:

empecé a reflexionar sobre la relación que tiene la historia con las historias y a pensar que, si había conseguido dar un tratamiento de novela a aquel material extraído de los archivos, también podía intentar un experimento al revés: es decir, aplicar un criterio de monografía histórica al material que, por proceder del archivo de mi propia memoria, otras veces había elaborado en forma de novela. (*Usos amorosos* 11-12)

This same question is reflected back in *El cuarto de atrás*, in what many have argued is the fictional version of that work.<sup>5</sup> C. explains to Alejandro that she has been trying to write “un libro que tengo en la cabeza sobre las costumbres y los amores de esa época,” but she has felt discouraged by the sudden proliferation of disappointing memoirs and books of memory about the Franco regime, now allowed after his death, calling it “una peste,” and is concerned that, if she is bored by reading someone else’s memory “por qué no le van a aburrir a los demás las mías” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 111). It is Alejandro who suggests, “No lo escriba en plan de libro de memorias”—to which C. responds, “Ya, ahí está la cuestión, estoy esperando a ver si se me ocurre una forma divertida de enhebrar los recuerdos” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 111).

This central tension, the question of how to deal with memories, in *El cuarto de atrás* is both narratological and thematic. C. is unable to write her book because she struggles with *how* to write it, with this question of genre—“es que no sé por dónde empezar, tengo tanto lío con ese libro...” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 112). But she’s also unable to write it because she often gets confused, and her memories blend together. She says, “Yo es que la guerra y la posguerra las recuerdo siempre confundidas. Por eso me resulta difícil escribir el libro” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 111). A bit later she says again, “no soy capaz de discernir el paso del tiempo a lo largo de ese período, ni diferenciar la guerra de la posguerra, pensé que Franco había paralizado el tiempo, y precisamente el día que iban a enterrarlo me desperté pensando eso con una particular intensidad” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 116). Franco’s regime froze time into a homogenous block, and now that time has recommenced, Martín Gaité can write for the future. But as the past

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officially condemning Franco’s dictatorship and honoring victims of the Civil War and his regime, and even this was still problematic. Historian Carolyn Boyd’s article “The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain” gives a concise overview of the debates surrounding history and memory, both theoretically and with specific reference to Spain. Mary Hartson explores how Martín Gaité enters the debate in her article “The False-Bottomed Suitcase: Historical Memory and Textual Masochism in Carmen Martín Gaité’s *El cuarto de atrás*.”

<sup>5</sup> Nearly every article or book on *El cuarto de atrás* mentions the autobiographical slant to the novel. Indeed, Carmen Martín Gaité herself has often conflated her own autobiography with the story of C. For example, she wrote for Joan Lipman Brown’s *Secrets from the Back Room*, “From the time I married, I have lived in Madrid, on the seventh floor of an apartment house on Doctor Esquerdo Street, which my father gave to us, and which has a large terrace. (I have described it in great detail in my last novel *The Back Room*, during the conversation with the man dressed in black who visited me one night)” (30), implying that it is the same setting for her fiction and her life—one of many other similarities.

becomes accessible, it is as though the flood gates have opened, and she is overwhelmed by the deluge of memories that surge in, all at once, jumbled together and disordered. In the novel, then, instead of a systematic view of the past and a chronological recollection of it, the reader gets snippets of memories, scattered throughout the book, sometimes in her interior monologue and sometimes in her conversation with the man in black, which we must then piece together. In this way, Martín Gaité dances in circles through her memory, courts uncertainty, and encourages individualized interpretations of the scraps of memories that she has compiled and that we must decipher.

### **Doubt and Uncertainty as a Way of Life**

Doubt courses through the novel, taking on a central role and causing the necessity for its circles and repetitions. Martín Gaité plays with readers as she returns again and again to the leitmotifs that emphasize this doubt: dreams, drugs, the pages appearing out of and near the typewriter, mysterious letters, the gold box, the cockroach, and the image of “Luther’s Discussion with the Devil.” Perhaps most blatantly, we get tripped up by the idea of uncertainty in the fantasy genre, just as C. trips physically on Todorov’s book. She thinks to herself:

Ahí está el libro que me hizo perder pie: *Introducción a la literatura fantástica* de Todorov, vaya, a buenas horas, lo estuve buscando antes no sé cuánto rato, habla de los desdoblamientos de personalidad, de la ruptura de límites entre tiempo y espacio, de la ambigüedad y la incertidumbre; es de esos libros que te espabilan y te disparan a tomar notas, cuando lo acabé, escribí en un cuaderno: “Palabra que voy a escribir una novela fantástica,” supongo que se lo prometía a Todorov. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 19-20)

Martín Gaité makes clear her authorial fascination with ambiguity in the conversations between C. and Alejandro. For example, Alejandro criticizes C.’s book *El balneario* for revealing in the second part that its first part was a dream, calling that narrative choice “fruto del miedo” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 51). In response, C. thinks to herself, “Posiblemente mis trabajos posteriores de investigación histórica los considere una traición todavía más grave a la ambigüedad; yo misma, al emprenderlos, notaba que me estaba desviando, desertaba de los sueños para pactar con la historia, me esforzaba en ordenar las cosas, en entenderlas una por una, por miedo a naufragar” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 51). Alejandro’s next statement claims, “La literatura es un desafío a la lógica...no un refugio contra la incertidumbre” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 51). Alejandro’s explicit defense of ambiguity, especially in literature, then begs the question, why make this ambiguity so clear? Why draw such attention to fantasy, doubt, and uncertainty?

Martín Gaité’s dedication to the uncertain in constructing this novel parallels and complements C.’s own distrust of certainty. This also has echoes in what we might call C.’s *culto al desorden*, which she stages from a young age as a battle against the obsession with order (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 77-78) and which continues to define her outlook on housework and homemaking. In fact, she says, “Bajo el machaconeo de aquella propaganda ñoña y optimista de los años cuarenta, se perfiló mi desconfianza hacia los seres decididos y seguros, crecieron mis ansias de libertad y se afianzó la alianza con el desorden que había firmado secretamente en el piso tercero del número catorce de la calle Mayor” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 85). Resisting the

expectations placed on women to maintain a perfectly ordered home becomes a small way to resist the overarching power of the Franco regime. C.'s distrust of order is her distrust of the societal—and political—expectations for order. This parallel becomes explicit when C. narrates, “La alegría era un premio al deber cumplido y se oponía, fundamentalmente, a la duda” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 84), thus inverting the social values associated with cheerfulness and doubt.

Debra Castillo has adeptly pointed out how this tension causes even more circularity in the novel, with the memory pill that C. accepts from Alejandro. While the pill helps her remember certain things, it also disorders those memories:

She takes the pill (the written word) to remember and reconstruct the past, but the pill, like other such pills, contributes to her confusion, to the disorganization of pharmaceuticals, to the unmanageable conglomeration of the texts upon texts scattered throughout the apartment. Therefore, she requires the pill as she requires the scattered notes and books, as a corrective nudge to the memory that the pill has disordered. (Castillo 825)

The pill, of course, alludes to Jacques Derrida's *pharmakon*: it is at once the poison and the cure, just as the written word is both an aid to and a destroyer of memory.<sup>6</sup> And its reviving yet disordering effect on memory reiterates the fundamental problem in writing the novel and/or the historical account of the same theme: how to remember and how to narrate the memory. C. continues circling back to this constant struggle.

### **Circular Time, Mythic Time, Women's Time**

Though accessing and narrating her memories is a challenging endeavor, it is also an appealing one. Within her memories, C. draws other intersecting circles and meditates on the circularity of time. As she reminisces about some of her favorite games, she describes the setting of those games, the plaza outside her childhood home, which then functions as a space that marks circular time: C. becomes aware of the changing seasons based on which food vendor sets up on which side of the plaza. She tells Alejandro, “por la izquierda hacía su aparición el verano, con el puesto de helados, por la derecha, el invierno avisaba su llegada con aquel olor a castañas que empezaba, un buen día, a salir de la garita, entre remolinos de hojas amarillas; y el tiempo pasaba de un extremo a otro, sin sentir, un año y otro año” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 95). Certain markers, like the type of food being sold by the vendor, announce the change from one season to another. These changes, though, become a constant looping, so that the years blend together.

This passage of time, C. continues, occurs “de una manera tramposa, de puntillas,” which she then compares to the mystery of another childhood game, also played in that same plaza, of *el escondite inglés* (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 95). While certain rituals repeat in the plaza,

el tiempo transcurre a hurtadillas, disimulando, no le vemos andar. Pero de pronto volvemos la cabeza y encontramos imágenes que se han desplazado a nuestras espaldas, fotos fijas, sin referencia de fecha, como las figuras de los niños del escondite inglés, a los que nunca se pillaba en movimiento. Por eso es tan difícil

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<sup>6</sup> José Colmeiro explores the implications of the *pharmakon* in his essay “Conjurando los fantasmas del pasado en *El cuarto de atrás*.”

luego ordenar la memoria, entender lo que estaba antes y lo que estaba después.  
(Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 101)

The quick and secret passage of time becomes disorienting, prohibiting a clear recollection of events, which is one of C.'s major frustrations throughout the novel. When time passes in this secretive way, years are merged and time is flattened. Thus, circularity (the circling back through memories, through the past) is made more difficult, since the past is blurry; at the same time, circling back is also made more necessary, since it is the only way to reflect back on and be aware of the imperceptible passage of time.

In her seminal paper "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva has shown two distinct temporalities, both opposed to linear time, that are often associated with the feminine: the cyclical and the monumental. She explains,

female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of the biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature... On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits. (Kristeva 16)

In Kristeva's framework, both cyclical monumental temporalities correspond to women's time, or temporalities that are ascribed to women. Rhythms, repetitions, and cycles all cause a sensation of eternity and inescapability. But Franco's regime co-opts what she calls "the massive presence of monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape" to establish the mythic time theorized by Herzberger: a static, homogenous block of time. Within Herzberger's framework, narrative, by playing with time and temporalities, can be a way to oppose that homogenous block. It is in this paradox—the very distinct ideas of mythic time proposed by Kristeva and by Franco—that Martín Gaité explores and exposes both the power and the shortcomings of circularity.

Later in her essay, Kristeva shows that while circularity is often ascribed to women in particular, it is also a fact of life for all humans. She explains that "The fact that these two types of temporality (cyclical and monumental) are traditionally linked to female subjectivity insofar as the latter is thought of as necessarily maternal should not make us forget that this repetition and this eternity are found to be the fundamental, if not the sole, conceptions of time in numerous civilizations and experiences, particularly mystical ones" (Kristeva 17). With the food vendors in the plaza, rotating based on the seasons, Martín Gaité demonstrates, in a modern and secular way, that humans (both male and female) mark their existence and their lives with rituals and repetitions, with cycles. This is not just a women's question: we know the years pass because we witness the seasons passing. This is how we know that time has unfolded, even if it has done so furtively, while we had our backs turned.

Many of the memories highlighted by C. in the novel are themselves repetitive and circular in nature. With the backdrop to her childhood games, the plaza mentioned above, Martín Gaité makes explicit the circularity of time by signaling repetitiveness in the seasons. Other events she narrates are repetitive rather than singular. For example, before the war, she



remembers that her family made regular trips to Madrid; she dedicates a long section of the text to recounting three of their main stops: the theater, the movies, and the seamstress, opening by saying “A la calle salía siempre con mis padres para ir cumpliendo en su compañía un programa de actividades” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 71). Her use of the word “siempre” and the imperfect tense throughout this section emphasizes the habitual nature of the family’s trips to the city, making them, in a way, timeless. Instead of a particular, discreet memory, this is the conglomeration of many similar memories into one story. In addition to the theater, the movies, and the seamstress, she continues,

también salíamos a tomar el aperitivo en algún local que habían abierto nuevo, a la consulta de algún médico, al Museo del Prado, de compras a los grandes almacenes, a recorrer el Jueves Santo las estaciones donde se exponía el Santísimo Sacramento entre un alarde de velas encendidas, a la Plaza Mayor a comprar musgo para el belén, cuando las Navidades o a devolver alguna de aquellas visitas familiares que, a su vez, devolvían la sensación de encierro. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 75)

This long list, with its mixture of very specific and very *nonspecific* errands and places, reinforces the circularity and repetitiveness of the Madrid visits, related here in a long and breathless sentence that ends in feeling trapped by the circles being drawn. Here, seasons, years, people, places, and dates are all conflated and flattened. Of course, as is characteristic of the novel, these memories also lead into a fantasy, that of watching “aquella gente desconocida” and imagining walking alone in the streets, doing as she pleases (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 76).<sup>7</sup>

In contrast to the narration of her trips to Madrid, which C. flattens into one long burst, she dwells on a more linear representation of a trip to Burgos with her father, uncle, and cousin. C. tells the story, from start to finish, without any tangential thoughts or interruptions, so that it reads almost like a self-contained short story. While the trip to Burgos is actually to find an old car confiscated and destroyed by the regime, the young girls feel intoxicated at the sense of freedom and independence granted them when they stay in their own hotel room. In their excitement, they dress up, put on makeup, and leave the hotel to walk around the city—only to turn around shortly thereafter when C.’s cousin becomes too anxious to continue. Even in a linearly recounted memory, circularity dominates. C. has no problem navigating back to the hotel because, she says, “yo me orientaba perfectamente, por desgracia estábamos muy cerca, no había hecho falta dejar piedrecitas blancas” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 98). In this section of the novel, as C. shuffles back through her memories to select and share this one, she chooses one that includes a circular journey (heading out of the hotel and returning), and she then also loops back to the recurring metaphorical meaning of the breadcrumbs and the little white pebbles, the basis of the circular path of *Pulgarcito*. This time, though, the fact that it was unnecessary to leave any markers of their journey serves as a disappointment, suggesting, perhaps, that the journey lacked value or substance. It was so short, so tentative, so uneventful, that there is not much to recollect.

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<sup>7</sup> Martín Gaité adeptly alludes to the literary tradition of the solitary strolls of female protagonists, particularly in cities, as seen in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*, among others. In this way, this imaginary walk is not only a fantasy but also a literary escape. In the final two sections of this chapter, I will also address the circularity of Martín Gaité’s intertextual tools that carve a space for literary critique within the novel. Additionally, the young woman alone on an aimless walk serves as a counterpoint to the frequent image, theorized by Martín Gaité herself, of the *mujer ventanera*, so that this fantasy becomes a sociopolitical critique as well.

Similarly, there is nothing left of the car for her father to collect, so that the trip to Burgos also ends up lacking (physical) substance. Martín Gaité's omission of direct explanation reflects her naïveté at the time: while she notices that her father and uncle are distraught, she is unaware of the reason for the car's destruction while we as readers understand that the car was confiscated and destroyed by rebel forces. Of course, the older C. knows this as well, so that the choice not to explicitly explain it becomes a glaring omission, emphasizing her childlike view of the situation. Additionally, C. remembers that the amount of money mentioned sounds enormous to her child's ears, sending her on another fantastical escape of daydreaming what she might do with it. Even an anecdote narrated linearly contains within it circularities and fails to adhere to a linear progression of tension. Instead, the cousins' nighttime adventure is curtailed, and the fathers' quest results in an anticlimax, in the destroyed scraps left of the car. Paralleling C.'s defeated return to the hotel, her father will now return home with nothing to show for his trip. This will form a contrast with the souvenirs left behind by Alejandro's visit to C.'s apartment, the narrative premise of the book.

### **Questioning Reality: The Reflexive Function of Mirrors**

In addition to playing with time and temporalities, Martín Gaité also reinforces a reflexive, and in some ways circular, point of view through her use of mirrors in *El cuarto de atrás*. Mirrors appear multiple times, lending an atmosphere of an almost carnivalesque house of mirrors, bending perceptions. The mirrors force C. to take stock of her reality and her past, and encourage readers to further question the interplay between reality, fiction, and fantasy. As the mirrors reflect reality and provoke reflections of past and present, they become a tool that aids the circularity of the novel's themes. In "Mitos y mentiras, historia(s) y ficciones: Scheherazade en *El cuarto de atrás*," Ofelia Ferrán launches a brief yet perceptive inquiry into the appearance of mirrors in the novel, establishing their importance by reminding us of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's claims in *The Madwoman in the Attic* "que la mujer siempre ha estado atrapada, encerrada en el espejo del texto literario masculino, y que una de las misiones de la mujer creadora es la de quebrar ese espejo y crear su propia imagen autónoma. Como dicen ellas, de esta manera la mujer 'can journey through the looking glass toward literary autonomy' (16)" (Ferrán 98). For Ferrán, then, the mirrors serve a liberating purpose, a way of escaping the entrapment of male-created texts and creating one's own self image. I would argue that Martín Gaité takes this autonomy one step further, very self-consciously feeling a need to defend herself in front of her own reflection. The creation of the self involves envisioning the self that one has been in the past, and coming to terms with the changes that have happened since then. In this way, while the mirrors literally reflect the present reality, they also push C. to metaphorically reflect on her present, which implicates a circling through her past as well.

The first mirror that C. notices is a key turning point in her mysterious first chapter, as she tries to fall asleep. She remembers moments of insomnia during her childhood and begins to draw, pretending she is drawing with a stick on a sandy beach, as she tries to fall asleep. Eventually, though, it feels like a losing battle, so she gets out of bed. As she stands up, "la habitación se tuerce como el paisaje visto desde un avión que cabecea," with everything askew in her vision (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 16). But the mirror brings everything upright again, which is disappointing to C., who then says "la estancia se me aparece ficticia en su estática realidad" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 17). The mirror serves its mimetic duty and grounds her in reality,

paralleling the way that looking at the title of the image of Luther's discussion with the devil had reminded her of its status as art, but the return to reality is portrayed as boring and disheartening as it interrupts the possibility of a more thrilling fantasy. At the same time, the mirror's reflection of reality makes the room appear "fictitious" in its static reality by straightening out her previous off-kilter interpretation when she felt dizzy; in this sense, the mirror is too mimetic—so mimetic that it makes reality seem fictitious. With so many complex layers of reality and representation, Martín Gaité utilizes this mirror in the opening chapter to encourage us, early on, to focus on the reflexivity of it all, to question these complex relationships between art and reality, and to acknowledge that they very often overlap and bounce off each other. The relationship between reality and mimesis, then, is dialogic,<sup>8</sup> as will come to fruition the next time a mirror appears.

This next mirror stops C. in her tracks when she is in the kitchen preparing tea for Alejandro. In her reflection she sees her younger self, laughing at her for performing such a domestic task—she even imagines a conversation in which she feels the need to defend herself against the judgments she imagines her younger self making of her current domestic activities. In response to the younger's criticism, "Anda que también tú limpiando, vivir para ver" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 66), she responds, "No te apures, mujer, que en lo fundamental no he cambiado" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 78-79). Her past is so present that it takes on the form of a living, breathing, and talking person who questions the present. While C.'s view of the mirror conflates the past and present (she sees her younger self where she should see a reflection of her current self), this imagined conversation then ruptures the remembering self gazing into the mirror from the remembered self supposedly reflecting back. A conversation happens between two distinct people; therefore, if they can chat with each other, they must be different people.

According to Ferrán, the mirror in the kitchen "es una versión de ese espejo del que hablaban Gilbert y Gubar. C. rechaza el espejo oficial, ese mito que imponía el franquismo de la mujer eternamente inmutable en su sonrisa resignada, y afirma la capacidad de crearse a sí misma en la figura de muchas mujeres, de cambiar, de reinventarse constantemente" (99). Ferrán reads C. playing with her own image in the mirror, then, as "un acto de liberación" (101). Indeed, the simple presence of a mirror in a kitchen adds a playful aspect to the room, re-claiming it as a space not only for chores and cleanliness, but also for looking at oneself, for contemplation, for daydreaming. Furthermore, C.'s reflection leads to a fantasy that questions her current behavior (preparing tea), which is approaching the domesticity promoted by the regime. C. must reflect on—and defend—her present actions. Before the mirror can offer liberation, it makes C. hyperaware of herself, of her contradictions, of the way that she is in fact performing many of the behaviors expected of her, those very behaviors that she used to rebel against. The mirror forces her, in a way, to come full circle.

## Smiles and Cheerfulness

As C. moves away from the mirror and the memories it has evoked, she returns to the preparation and service of tea for her unexpected visitor. The chapter closes as she says, "Terminada la breve faena, miro al espejo, sonriendo... Salgo al pasillo, sujetando la bandeja con las dos manos. Pesa bastante" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 86). Martín Gaité adeptly cuts to the heart of the matter and finds a key paradox here in C.'s behavior—one that C. seems aware of as

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<sup>8</sup> Martín Gaité's exploration of the complex dialogue between reality and its representation is an overt allusion to Cervantes, whom she admired greatly.

well. Strangely, this is one of the few points in the book where C. does not elaborate, explain, or analyze her thought process, giving more suggestive power to the simple phrase that closes the chapter: the physical weight of the tray speaks to the metaphorical weight of the unfair expectations of women, especially that of the smile. In fact, her work in preparing the tea, and her optimism as she is about to present it to Alejandro, take on a polemical significance in this context.

During the *faena* in front of the mirror, just before the smile and the awareness of the tray's weight, C. has just analyzed two qualities of an ideal woman, according to Francoist rhetoric during the postwar period: hard work and happiness. It is no coincidence that she tackles these qualities during this particular *faena*, as they are precisely what she is performing as she makes tea. Yet Martín Gaité manages to criticize the regime's ideal by stretching out the narrative representation of the short duration of this chore and by giving it a hidden meaning: within this small structure ascribed to her (preparing tea in the kitchen), C.'s mind is allowed free rein. She can privately subvert from within, as theorized by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, in which he investigates "the ways in which users—commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules—operate," bringing those everyday practices out of "the obscure background of social activity" (Certeau xi). This is a focus on "manipulation by users who are not its makers" (Certeau xiii). He uses as an early example the questionable success of the Spanish colonizers "in imposing their culture on the indigenous Indians" (Certeau xiii). Certeau writes:

Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. (xiii)

We can see a strong parallel in the way C. uses the time spent preparing tea, in what she *makes of* this ritual that she performs.

This sheds new light on the contents of C.'s thoughts during this *faena*, setting us up to read the narration of those thoughts as a subversive strategy in and of itself. So when C. circles back to the question of cheerfulness, we must keep in mind that she is doing so while she is performing the cheerfulness she critiques. In her thoughts on the matter, while she prepares tea, she cites Carmen de Icaza's novel *Cristina Guzmán*, "La vida sonr e a quien le sonr e, no a quien le hace muecas," which meant this was a question of "sonre r por precepto, no porque se tuvieran ganas o se dejaran de tener" (Mart n Gait e, *Cuarto* 83). The protagonist remembers that after the war, despite the poverty and shortages, there was a demand that people, especially women, be happy, because "el dolor era una cucaracha despreciable y rid cula, bastaba con tener limpios todos los rincones de la casa para que huyera avergonzada de su banal existencia" (Mart n Gait e, *Cuarto* 83). While her ironic tone launches a clear criticism to this ideal, the emphasis on a cheerful demeanor still seems to have permeated C.'s psyche, evident in her thought process and her vocal answer to one of Alejandro's questions during the interview. He asks if she considered herself happier than Carmencita Franco during that time. First, she thinks to herself,

Podr a decirle que la felicidad en los a os de guerra y posguerra era inconcebible, que viv amos rodeados de ignorancia y represi n, hablarle de aquellos deficientes

libros de texto que bloquearon nuestra enseñanza, de los amigos de mis padres que morían fusilados o se exiliaban, de Unamuno, de la censura militar, superponer la amargura de mis opiniones actuales a las otras sensaciones que esta noche estoy recuperando, como un olor inesperado que irrumpiera en oleadas. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 63)

Withholding almost all of that thought, she then responds aloud a second later, “La verdad es que yo mi infancia y mi adolescencia las recuerdo, a pesar de todo, como una época muy feliz” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 63), contradicting what we have just read. Her private thoughts remain exactly that: private. So while she outwardly complies with the expectations of hospitality and cheerfulness, she inwardly rebels; she subverts from within.

Additionally, while this example implies that C. is complying, at least in a small way, with the idealized optimistic attitude promoted by the regime, she also parodies the emphasis on cheerfulness with her language. She describes the ideal in exaggerated detail: “Las mujeres optimistas madrugaban para abrir las ventanas y respirar el aire a pleno pulmón, mientras hacían flexiones de gimnasia, teniendo delante de los ojos, a modo de catecismo ilustrada para guiar sus respectivas posturas, los recuadros que mensualmente les suministraba, por cinco pesetas, la revista *Y*, editada por la Sección Femenina” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 83). Women’s optimism, she shows, allowed for efficiency and efficacy in pursuing the tasks that were designated as within their domain.

C.’s memory of this all-important smile has clear referents in the very magazines she mentions, and taking a closer look at them will also illuminate the effectiveness of Martín Gaité’s parody. In the Sección Femenina’s women’s magazine *Y*, Ana María Foronda’s article “Mientras nos hacemos la sonrisa nueva” promotes the importance of a women’s smile, especially, she says, while “salimos de la zona roja tan guiñapos y tan maltrechos, física y espiritualmente, que al entrar en la España Nacional nos sentimos un poco pavesas inofensivas y sin carácter” (11). They are coming back, she elaborates, from homelessness, improvised shelters, and jails and are in need of a home again. Anything is better than what they suffered in the red zone, even a hotel room or a tiny apartment. This introduction leads her to her main claim: “En cualquier sitio, por humilde, por modesto, por mezquino que sea, nuestra personalidad y nuestro buen gusto pueden impregnarlo de «algo» nuestro” (Foronda 11), and the way to do this was with a smile and attention to the details of the home. Just as C. narrates in *El cuarto de atrás*, an orderly house and a cheery demeanor were closely tied together in the expectations placed on women. Foronda alludes to the double standard when she clarifies, “Me refiero exclusivamente a las mujeres, porque los hombres tienen bastante con luchar en la primera línea” (11), equating the importance of the woman’s smile to the importance of the battles being fought by men. She drives home her point, that a woman can make a house a home simply by smiling and giving it a personal touch, by remembering the story of a woman who lived “en las cuadras” (Foronda 11)—in other words, in a horse stable—and was still able to imbue that setting with the warmth of a home for her husband and son. She continues, “No lo puedo olvidar. Me sirvió de lección y como ejemplo lo ofrezco a mis hermanas todas las refugiadas, y un poco también a las que tuvieron la suerte de encontrarse en la España Nacional desde el primer día del Movimiento. La gracias, la finura, la limpieza, son el todo en el hogar. Y un hogar bello y limpio atrae al esposo, al padre, al hermano” (Foronda 11).

Returning to the novelistic event of preparing tea, C. claims to criticize this view of hospitality, optimism, and the empty smile, yet she paradoxically performs it for Alejandro. The

preparation of tea, a scene that only takes a moment in the unfolding of the evening with Alejandro, is perhaps overshadowed by the explosion of memories triggered by seeing a buffet that belonged to her grandfather in her kitchen. She remembers the other places the piece of furniture inhabited throughout her life, which then sparks her meditation on hospitality and homemaking. After that long journey into the back room of her mind, Martín Gaité completes the circle by snapping us back into the present as C. takes the tea out to the living room, to serve Alejandro, with a smile, a smile that is decidedly *not* ironic. Castillo has written, “The company smile for the man in black—an interloper who could be the devil—reflects the archetypal attitude of the ideal woman defined by the Women’s Section. Once upon a time is still the present” (820). Her perceptive reading of this smile reminds us of the collapsing of time that C. herself reflects on in other passages of the book, and of the repetitiveness and circularity of behaviors that have become ingrained in C. and other women. At the same time, Certeau’s model of subverting from within, of *making do* when performing an imposed ritual, gives deeper meaning to the interiority of C.’s thoughts even as she outwardly complies with enduring expectations.

### Queen Isabel and the Symbolic “Y” of the Sección Femenina

Additionally, Martín Gaité signals a paradox in the importance the Sección Femenina placed on the smile by contrasting it with their use of the unsmiling image of Queen Isabel—which can then open up to a more generalized criticism of the symbols adopted (often problematically) by the Sección Femenina. C.’s initial criticism of Isabel reads, “Yo miraba aquel rostro severo, aprisionado por el casquete, que venía en los libros de texto, y lo único que no entendía era lo de la alegría, tal vez es que hubiera salido mal en aquel retrato, pero, desde luego, no daban muchas ganas de tener aquella imagen como espejo” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 84).

The magazine *Y* ran a feature on female rulers (which they emphasize are infrequent throughout history), including, of course, Queen Isabel. C. is right, that there is nothing in the description about her smile. While she is briefly described as “Adornada con virtudes y dotes excepcionales” (“El gobierno de las mujeres” 4), these qualities are surprisingly not elaborated. Instead the rest of the paragraph lists her accomplishments:

sacó a España del caos en que se hallaba sumergida en tiempos de Enrique IV. Bajo su reinado se verificó la unidad nacional expulsando a los árabes de Granda, su último reducto. Gracias a la decidida protección de Isabel pudo Cristóbal Colón llevar a cabo el descubrimiento de América, a la muerte de la Reina, tanto por su fabulosa extensión territorial, como por su prosperidad y grado de civilización, figuraba España a la cabeza de las naciones europeas. (“El gobierno de las mujeres” 4)

This description differs greatly from descriptions of other women to be idolized in *Y* and other propaganda.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Y* and other propagandistic women’s magazines showcased endless images of women who, despite the variety in the method of presentation (photographs, written descriptions, profiles, interviews, ads), still maintained homogeneity in their characteristics, many of which I analyze throughout this dissertation: young, attractive, cheerful, active, submissive, selfless.

Women's magazines were not the only examples of propaganda that promoted the legacy of Queen Isabel. The Sección Femenina published an entire pamphlet on the importance of the letter Y. In "La letra 'Y' (Su historia y presente)," Manuel Ballesteros Gaibrois explains that "La mujer Nacional-Sindicalista ha elegido la «Y» porque esta letra inicia—según la grafía del siglo XV, como veremos después—la palabra YSABEL," who is described as "nuestra reina grande" (Ballesteros Gaibrois 10). He emphasizes that "Y" symbolizes union, because it both graphologically represents a yoke and also grammatically functions as a conjunction. He writes,

La misión de la «y» como conjunción consiste en unir lo que es semejante, lo que es del mismo valor, para formar un todo superior y orgánico. Ysabel nos legó, con el solo enunciado de su inicial, la misma tarea. La «y» une, y la mujer tiene también como misión unir: a la ciudad con el campo, al poderoso con el necesitado, a lo doloroso con lo alegre, a lo duro con lo suave. La mujer ha de dar cohesión—unión—a los miembros de una familia; ha de lograr esa unión vertical que es la continuidad y pervivencia del hogar a lo largo de las vicisitudes de la vida. (Ballesteros Gaibrois 49-50)

For Ballesteros Gaibrois, then, "Al adoptar la «Y» como emblema, la mujer Nacional-Sindicalista no solamente recuerda la feminidad tipo, ejemplar—YSABEL—, sino que se recoge con ella todo lo que quiso significar de unidor, integrador" (50). His rhetoric dovetails with the idea of unity so central to José Antonio's ideology.

Martín Gaité does not ignore the symbolism of the letter Y in her novel, taking the opportunity to again parody the women's magazine that used it as its title. C. says, "la Y del título venía rematada por una corona alusiva a cierta reina gloriosa, cuyo nombre empezaba por aquella inicial, adivina adivinanza, la fatiga no la alcanza, siempre en danza, desde el Pisuerga al Arlanza, con su caballo y su lanza, no hacía falta tener una particular inteligencia en cuestión de acertijos, la teníamos demasiado conocida, demasiado mentada: era Isabel la Católica" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 83-84). Her wordplay mimics a childhood guessing game, and does so ironically as she emphasizes the utter lack of any doubt as to the riddle's answer: it could be none other than Isabel, so there is no need to guess or wonder at all. This removes the fun and uncertainty from the game to which she alludes, while she also circles back to the repeated idea that a lack of doubt is cause for suspicion and ridicule. Instead of anything resembling a game, the image of Isabel is presented as a static, strong, iconic symbol.

In her book *Women and Spanish Fascism: The Women's Section of the Falange 1934-1959*, Kathleen Richmond has emphasized the use of symbolic icons and mythic figures specifically in the Sección Femenina, as I have also touched on in the Introduction. For example, after José Antonio Primo de Rivera's death in a Republican jail in 1936, he was not officially declared dead until two years later, which meant that he was referred to in official state rhetoric simply as "el Ausente," maintaining him as a mythic symbol (Richmond 35). His sister Pilar Primo de Rivera and others continued to refer to him in the present tense (Richmond 36), in a sense initiating precisely the freezing of time that the character C. attributes to Franco's entire regime. Pilar was "established as the principal conduit for the emotions of José Antonio's followers and was herself the bearer of national grief" (Richmond 26) and harnessed power and legitimacy from her position as his sister, quoting him and referring to him often since, "On the basis that his words conveyed absolute, eternal truths, they were felt to be relevant for every problem and there was no need to speculate on how he would have faced current circumstances"

(Richmond 36-37). Time after time, Pilar quotes her brother José Antonio in speeches, holding him up as an example of the dedication and sacrifice necessary to serve the party.<sup>10</sup>

Richmond has also shown how the Sección Femenina, “Through its exploitation of the conference sites [in Segovia and Salamanca,] created its own ‘mythic time’, identifying Falangism with the heroes, events and buildings of medieval and Golden Age Spain” (38). She continues, “The principal reference point for this ‘mythic time’ was the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, which was a period defined by the expulsion of Jews from Spain, the Inquisition, the *Reconquista* of Spain from the Moors, and the authorization of Columbus’ journey to the ‘New World’” (Richmond 38). Despite the obvious prejudice the Falange maintained that “The Catholic Monarchs had found the solution to Spain’s problems of the past (lack of religious and national unity) and were the heralds of future glories, as territorial expansion brought wealth and power to Spain. The parallel with Franco’s ‘Reconquest’ of a godless Spain was an obvious one” (Richmond 38-39). This propagandistic view of the “Golden Age” of Spain and Franco’s harnessing of that imagery to glorify his own actions provide further reasoning, too, for the use of Isabel as the icon of the Sección Femenina. *El cuarto de atrás* parodies the mythic figures chosen by the Franco regime by questioning their inconsistencies. The paradox of Queen Isabel is also echoed in the figure of Pilar herself, and even trickles down to the other leaders of the organization, as discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation.

### **The Resistance to Homemaking**

The obvious solution to Pilar’s dilemma was to return yet again to the separate spheres doctrine. “The predetermined role of male and female in post-war Spanish society was very specific, and its rigidity was supported amongst other things by a clean division between, for example, interior and exterior spaces. The interior spaces, in their turn, were prone to extra control by what Martín Gaité herself refers to as the *culto al orden*” (Womack and Wood 102), which stressed cleanliness, order, and domesticity. From the beginning, the Sección Femenina was associated not only with metaphorical cleaning, but also literal. Richmond explains, “The women of SF were to be frontline workers in the cleansing of Spain, their brooms and disinfectant the external embodiment of a moral and spiritual campaign” (15). Their first fundraiser was selling soap (Richmond 15). This rhetoric of cleansing reflected the teachings of the Falange, which wanted to return to (what they saw as) Spain’s glorious past.

Another layer of the purity and cleanliness of the home was achieved by keeping that home separate from the chaos of the world outside. This was part of the Sección Femenina’s training for all women, which maintained that home should be a haven. It also became part of their organizational structure; “the major way in which separate identity was achieved for SF was by its acquisition of a permanent private space” (Richmond 41), as promised by Franco. In order to perform its work, the Sección Femenina needed a room of its own, too. Their use of a medieval castle, called La Mota, took on metaphorical significance as it paralleled the reactionary rhetoric of both the Franco regime (desiring of a return to the “Golden Age” of Spain) and the Sección Femenina (desiring of a return to more traditional gender roles). Richmond writes that La Mota

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<sup>10</sup> The collection *Discursos, Circulares, Escritos*, published by the Sección Femenina de F.E.T. y de las J.O.N.S., reproduces the texts of Pilar Primo de Rivera’s speeches and writings, spanning from 1937 to at least 1942 (many undated).



was not an exact representation of domestic reality, being a larger-than-life ideal home which contained no men. However, its brick and mortar stood for the enduring values of domesticity and its interior elegance for the elevation of the role of housewife. At one level, life in La Mota exemplified the Falangist family, where women from all over Spain and from a variety of backgrounds came together in camaraderie to experience and restate their political beliefs. At another, it was a construct of home and family life, an acting out of some of the routines and roles implicit in women's "transcendental mission" as homebuilders. The etiquette at table, daily tidying of rooms, flower arranging and handiwork classes were part of a routine which would add to understanding and development of a "way of being." (Richmond 43)

Richmond's highlighting of the routines of La Mota signals another important circularity of the Sección Femenina's work and training: the work of a woman is not a checklist that can be finished, but rather an ongoing project—a *routine*—to be incorporated into her regular daily life. These repetitive routines are precisely what Martín Gaité rebels against in *El cuarto de atrás* as she reclaims the idea of circularity in order to use it for remembering. At the same time, this quotidian work is elevated in importance and status by the size and grandeur of La Mota, paralleling the Francoist propaganda that rhetorically elevated women's work in yet another example of its benevolent sexism.<sup>11</sup>

La Mota also serves as a concrete embodiment of the kind of control that the Sección Femenina sought over women's lives: a kind of control that would be immune to the undermining that Certeau has explored. The Sección Femenina's intent to colonize people's everyday routines and attitudes was an attempt to erase precisely this possibility, of "making of" their routines something else. Invading the home was a way of invading the psyche of women charged with being its caretakers.

The separation between interior and exterior, between women's roles and men's roles, between the home and the outside world, is what Martín Gaité is criticizing throughout *El cuarto de atrás*. Harnessing the can-do attitude and tone of the Sección Femenina's publications, C. in effect parodies the extensive expectations of women at the time:

Orgullosas de su legado, cumpliríamos nuestra misión de españolas, aprenderíamos a hacer la señal de la cruz sobre la frente de nuestros hijos, a ventilar un cuarto, a aprovechar los recortes de cartulina y de carne, a quitar manchas, tejer bufandas y lavar visillos, a sonreír al esposo cuando llega disgustado, a decirle que tanto monta monta tanto Isabel como Fernando, que la economía doméstica ayuda a salvar la economía nacional y que el ajo es buenísimo para los bronquios, aprenderíamos a poner un vendaje, a decorar una cocina con aire coquetón, a prevenir las grietas del cutis y a preparar con nuestras propias manos la canastilla del bebé destinado a venir al mundo para enorgullecerse de la Reina Católica, defenderla de calumnias y engendrar hijos que, a su vez, la alabaran por los siglos de los siglos. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 84-85)

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<sup>11</sup> See articles by Julia Becker and Stephen Wright, or Peter Glick and Susan Fiske.

In merging the high and the low, the serious and the frivolous, the playful and the mundane, Martín Gaité signals that the never-ending cycle of chores and tasks to master is all-encompassing, without escape. It is a circle with no opening.

Moreover, Martín Gaité's irony in this fragment brings us back to Certeau's idea of subversion under the guise of passivity. She celebrates what Certeau calls "the innumerable practices by means of which users re-appropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production" (xiv). *El cuarto de atrás* was written and published after Franco's death, meaning it was not subject to the same censorship as *Nada* and *Primera memoria*, but Martín Gaité's other novels certainly were. If we are to read these earlier novels, written under Franco's regime, as subversive, we must be clued into those practices that Certeau has suggested and Martín Gaité has celebrated.

In contrast to a perfect Falangist woman, and as another example of resistance to control of the minute details of one's life, C.'s mother "no era casamentera, ni me enseñó tampoco nunca a coser ni a guisar, aunque yo la miraba con mucha curiosidad cuando la veía a ella hacerlo, y creo que, de verla, aprendí; en cambio, siempre me alentó en mis estudios, y cuando, después de la guerra, venían mis amigos a casa en época de exámenes, nos entraba la merienda y nos miraba con envidia" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 82). Michael Thomas has described C.'s mother as a "counterbalance" to the Sección Femenina's models of womanhood, such as Isabel (*Coming of Age* 100). C.'s mother is portrayed here as supremely supportive—even envious—of C.'s access to education. That envy, though, takes the form of generous protection and encouragement. More specifically, C. remembers her mother responding "Hasta a coser un botón aprende mejor una persona lista que una tonta" to a woman who, as a criticism of a young C., cited the Spanish refrain, "Mujer que sabe latín no tiene buen fin" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 82). She defends C.'s interest in school by telling her friend it will help her be a better homemaker; at the same time, she subtly refuses to comply with societal expectations by neglecting to teach C. the "typical" tasks associated with homemaking, the tasks in C.'s list. We must assume that this is, at least subconsciously, deliberate on the part of her mother, since she is capable of performing them, and since C. is curious about them. She makes a choice not to pass the knowledge onto her daughter, and another choice to protect her daughter's schooling—both moves that demonstrate her desire for a different life for her daughter. C. meditates:

Por aquel tiempo, ya tenía yo el criterio suficiente para entender que el «mal fin» contra el que ponía en guardia aquel refrán aludía a la negra amenaza de quedarse soltera, implícita en todos los quehaceres, enseñanzas y prédicas de la Sección Femenina. La retórica de la posguerra se aplicaba a desprestigiar los conatos de feminismo que tomaron auge en los años de la República y volvía a poner el acento en el heroísmo abnegado de madres y esposas, en la importancia de su silenciosa y oscura labor como pilares del hogar cristiano. Todas las arengas que monitores y camaradas nos lanzaban en aquellos locales inhóspitos, mezcla de hangar y de cine de pueblo, donde cumplí a regañadientes el Servicio Social, cosiendo dobladillos, haciendo gimnasia y jugando al baloncesto, se encaminaban, en definitiva, al mismo objetivo: a que aceptásemos con alegría y orgullo, con una conducta sobria que ni la más mínima sombra de maledicencia fuera capaz de enturbiar, nuestra condición de mujeres fuertes, complemento y espejo del varón. Las dos virtudes más importantes eran la laboriosidad y la

alegría, y ambas iban indisolublemente mezcladas en aquellos consejos prácticos, que tenían mucho de infalible receta casera. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 82)

The refusal to pass on the tasks of homemaking from mother to daughter also reflects a desire, perhaps subconscious, to reclaim women's time, which had no value. Cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing, and the like were repetitive, time-consuming tasks that kept women busy, at home, all day, day in and day out. This repetitiveness, described above in Richmond's list and parodied in C.'s, trapped homemakers into the circularity of their chores. In contrast, men's work time was spent away from the home, bookended by a clear start and stop, compensated with monetary gains, measured in hours. C.'s mother's rupture with the generational pattern and the daily repetitiveness of women's work proves a subtle and nuanced resistance, for which C. feels "un agradecimiento eterno" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 82). The interruption of both cycles—the generational cycle and the cycle of women's work—creates an aperture that allows for C. to reclaim this circular temporality, using it instead for her journeys to her imagination, her memory, her refuges, her back room. This kind of circularity is pleasurable rather than burdensome and voluntary rather than imposed.

In the figure of C.'s mother, then, the resistance to homemaking is closely tied with the drive to do something else with her time (in this case, to pursue an education). C. vocalizes this connection again when she writes, "Yo soñaba con vivir en una buhardilla donde siempre estuvieran los trajes sin colgar y los libros por el suelo, donde nadie persiguiera a los copos de polvo que viajaban en los rayos de luz, donde sólo se comiera cuando apretara el hambre, sin más ceremonias" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 78). Breaking free of the expectations of an orderly home was a way of breaking free of a larger, Foucauldian system that required discipline, in the way Certeau theorized; in other words, it was a way to sidestep societal expectations and control, to be more than just a docile body. And this necessity to escape becomes another trope in *El cuarto de atrás*.

## The Search for a Refuge

C. traces more circles as she repeatedly retreats into her own imagination, where literature serves as a refuge for herself both as a reader and writer. Martín Gaité makes this theme quite explicit and repetitive in the book, in C.'s own reminiscing and also in Alejandro's questions and observations. For example, he tells C., "Aprendió usted a aislarse" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 168), and later, "se ha pasado usted la vida sin salir del refugio, soñando sola. Y, al final, ya no necesita de nadie" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 169). This is after C.'s own clarification of Alejandro's question, "¿A qué edad empezó a escribir?" as "¿Quieres decir a qué edad empecé a refugiarme?" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 54), equating these two activities. He asks, "¿Y de qué se refugiaba?" and she responds, "Supongo que del frío. O de los bombardeos" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 54). For C., writing and the creative project are a refuge, beginning in childhood. As Catherine Bellver has written, "the war serves as a testing-ground for the child's survival instincts. During the war the frightened young girl fights off the real world and her fears by beginning to write. What begins as an escape mechanism becomes a tool for self-preservation" ("War as Rite of Passage" 69). C. remembers her best friend from wartime, whose parents were Socialists, as brave and strong. This friend "nunca tenía miedo ni tenía frío, que son para mí las dos sensaciones más envolventes de aquellos años: el miedo y el frío pegándose al cuerpo"

(Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 53). In her conversations with Alejandro, C. is conflating two very distinct meanings of the word *refugio*: the literal and the metaphorical. Writing can provide an emotional refuge, but not material protection from bombs, starvation, or cold. As she blurs this distinction, though, she highlights and perhaps exaggerates the importance of writing to her own survival of the war and postwar.

The time under Franco's rule is marked by scarcity and sacrifice and doing without.<sup>12</sup> C. remembers, “En tiempos de escasez hay que hacer durar lo que se tiene, y de la misma manera que nadie tira un juguete ni deja a medio comer un pastel, a nadie se le ocurre tampoco consumir de prisa una canción, porque no es un lujo que se renueva cada día, sino un enser fundamental para la supervivencia, la cuida, la rumia, le saca todo su juego” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 154-155), and Brown has claimed that “fantasy is born of scarcity” in this novel (*Secrets* 158).

This emphasis on the need for a refuge evokes the memory of the *physical* refuge of the bomb shelter in Salamanca, when she was a girl and would make a game of yelling out, “¡vámonos al refugio!” and running to get there (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 56). She explains, “no entendía nada, todo lo que estaba ocurriendo me parecía tan irreal. ¿Ir al refugio?, pues bueno, era un juego más, un juego inventado por los mayores, pero de reglas fáciles” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 55). Again the use of the imperfect tense implies repetitiveness, obscuring the exact number of times the pilgrimage was necessary but emphasizing that it must have been enough for it to be a routine. Imagination played a key role there, as did her relationship with a neighbor boy who made her feel safe inside the shelter. Here, then, the physical and emotional protections are fused in her memory, the way that they continue to be connected in her mind. As Alejandro has said, she continues to look for this kind of protection (escape) throughout her life.

Escape is portrayed in the book as something ambivalent, an act both cowardly and heroic. C. contemplates this paradox when she explains, “quedarse, conformarse y aguantar era lo bueno; salir, escaparse y fugarse era lo malo. Y sin embargo, también lo heroico, porque don Quijote y Cristo y santa Teresa se habían fugado, habían abandonado casa y familia, ahí estaba la contradicción, nos contestaban que ellos lo hicieron en nombre de un alto ideal y que era la suya una locura noble” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 109). When a physical escape is unavailable, then, a mental one must stand in, and can even allow for the appearance of conformity (in the method of Certeau). The contradictions and ambivalences in this portrayal of escape reinforce the centrality of such paradoxes throughout the book. Martín Gaité resists absolute binaries by courting instead the ambiguities that destabilize them; as such, “The problem of undecidability among these many conflicting interpretations becomes one of the most representative and most puzzling problems of the text” (Castillo 819).

C.'s first fundamental refuge and escape, the location that allowed for imagination and creativity, was of course the *cuarto de atrás*, which we anticipate hearing about throughout the novel. While she briefly mentions it in earlier chapters, she also resists giving a full explanation because it's “el punto más importante, esto sí que tendría que contarlo bien” (Martín Gaité,

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<sup>12</sup> Martín Gaité's nonfiction study, *Usos amorosos de la posguerra española*, takes this idea as its starting point. With the book's dedication—“Para todas las mujeres españolas, entre cincuenta y sesenta años, que no entienden a sus hijos. Y para sus hijos, que no las entienden a ellas”—she signals the profound effects of the war and dictatorship, which were not only evident in people's public lives, but also, more deeply, in their private lives. In the Introduction, she emphasizes this generational rift by highlighting two words that loom large in her memory and personal experience of the postwar period, which she explores more in-depth throughout the book: “restricción” and “racionamiento” (5). Her main thesis is that the strict enforcement of these ideals affected family and romantic relationships.

*Cuarto* 160); it is worth waiting for. In having C. repeatedly circle back to the topic, mentioning it briefly without elaborating, Martín Gaité slowly constructs its importance. Describing—or not describing—in this sequence becomes a strategy to keep the reader’s attention, but can also be seen as erotic and tantalizing, a striptease performed for Alejandro that alternately reveals and conceals, hinting at the importance of the back room but only exposing it completely at the end of the book. Throughout the book, C. circles back to the topic of the back room over and over again, so that circularity now becomes a way of teasing a visitor whom C. also imagines as a character in a romance novel. Those mental visits to a long-lost space are fleeting and short, but the circling back is frequent. Martín Gaité also alludes to female eroticism and pleasure with the slow, nonlinear presentation of the story of the back room, which is a secret place, hidden from view<sup>13</sup> and from understanding, a space where C. and her sister lost their innocence and childhood.

C.’s trepidation at telling about the back room also echoes the doubts that accompany all of C.’s mental journeys to the past, reminding us of the uncertainty and difficulty of this project of remembering and telling (and telling well). Finally, though, late in the book, C. finds a way to *contarlo bien*, to pause in her orbiting through the past. Representative of her carefree childhood, and of life before the Civil War, the room is initially defined by its disorder, play, creativity, mobility, and freedom, yet all in an enclosed, domestic, and protected space. Quintessentially a Bachelardian felicitous space,<sup>14</sup> “en él reinaban el desorden y la libertad, se permitía cantar a voz en cuello, cambiar de sitio los muebles, saltar encima de un sofá desvencijado y con los muelles rotos al que llamábamos el pobre sofá, tumbarse en la alfombra, mancharla de tina, era un reino donde nada estaba prohibido” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 161). But with the war, the space is converted into storage, which means “el cuarto era nuestro y se acabó” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 162). Her short, matter-of-fact sentence contrasts with the long, elaborate list of the joys and chaos, signaling the centrality of the room’s evolution. She explains further, “dejamos de tener cuarto para jugar, porque los artículos de primera necesidad desplazaron y arrinconaron nuestra infancia, el juego y la subsistencia coexistieron en una convivencia agria, de olores incompatibles” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 163). A space once defined by imaginative play is now defined by material needs—the back room simultaneously represents the effects of a Civil War on citizens and the loss of innocence of a child coming of age.<sup>15</sup>

Paradoxically, though, the back room remains: “mientras yo viva, existe la habitación y me oriento por ella, aunque sea producto de mi fantasía, y ya hayan tirado la casa que vi con el perro ladrando, qué más da, también el cuarto de atrás sigue existiendo y se ha salvado de la muerte” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 147). It metaphorically persists in other forms, as well, such as in the creation of the *isla de Bergai*. Deprived of a physical space, C. (as a child) creates a new refuge in her imagination; while she calls it her “primer refugio” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 158), I still read the back room as that first refuge. Perhaps Bergai is her first completely non-physical refuge, one that doesn’t require an actual escape or fleeing but rather an inward journey, and it also corresponds to when C. begins writing. Since this is a collaborative effort with her friend, whose parents have been imprisoned, C. claims that “Ella me inició en la literatura de evasión, necesitaba evadirse más que yo, porque lo pasaba peor, era más desvalida, pero también más

<sup>13</sup> There are obvious connections here to Sigmund Freud’s theory of the *unheimlich*; see “The ‘Uncanny.’”

<sup>14</sup> See Marian Womack and Jennifer Wood, pages 137-138, for an analysis of Martín Gaité’s admiration for Bachelard.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Thomas takes up the question of *El cuarto de atrás* as a *Bildungsroman* in his book *Coming of Age in Franco’s Spain*.

sobria y más valiente, afrontaba la escasez” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 158). And it is her friend, in fact, who explains to C., “Si te riñen, te vas a Bergai... , ya existe. Es para eso, para refugiarse” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 167). As the two of them use Bergai more and more, it takes on epic proportions in their childhood. C. writes:

la isla de Bergai se fue perfilando como una tierra marginal, existía mucho más que las cosas que veíamos de verdad, tenía la fuerza y la consistencia de los sueños. Ya no volví a disgustarme por los juguetes que se me rompían y siempre que me negaban algún permiso o me reprendían por algo, me iba a Bergai, incluso soportaba sin molestia el olor a vinagre que iba tomando el cuarto de atrás, todo podía convertirse en otra cosa, dependía de la imaginación. Mi amiga me lo había enseñado, me había descubierto el placer de la evasión solitaria, es capacidad de invención que nos hace sentirnos a salvo de la muerte. (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 168)

We can see here the power of that refuge, and why it was so crucial to her childhood. Bergai becomes an escape when the back room is no longer available for that purpose. A pure figment of their conjoined imaginations, Bergai gives them strength. C.’s description appears almost exaggerated in its claim that Bergai made them feel invincible, even from death. This hyperbole emphasizes the intense power that C. attributes to the creations of the mind, including literature.

Literature, in this way, can supplant reality. In particular, C. must turn to fiction when she can’t fathom the reality of Franco’s death: “Parecía que la enfermedad y la muerte jamás podrían alcanzarlo. Así que cuando murió, me pasó lo que a mucha gente, que no me lo creía” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 115-116). She continues explaining, “no soy capaz de discernir el paso del tiempo a lo largo de ese período, ni diferenciar la guerra de la posguerra, pensé que Franco había paralizado el tiempo, y precisamente el día que iban a enterrarlo me desperté pensando eso con una particular intensidad” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 116). It has become almost impossible to understand reality after Franco’s manipulation of time.

In *El cuento de nunca acabar*, Martín Gaité incorporates pieces of her own autobiography and experiences of writing into her literary theory. One of the stories she tells is about her daughter giving her a notebook for her birthday. Before that, Martín Gaité had kept separate notebooks for different topics, but her daughter bought her one and wrote “Cuaderno de todo” on it. This gift changes the way that Martín Gaité experiences the world and the way she writes it. After her shift to her *cuadernos de todo*, she writes,

Han viajado conmigo por bibliotecas, cafés, trenes, archivos y autobuses, y en sus notas, de donde recogeré en gran parte el material de este cuento, hay referencias a los sitios por donde voy pasando —paisajes urbanos o rurales—, a los amigos a quienes estoy esperando, a los recados que me dirijo a hacer, a los recuerdos que me suscitan los lugares que veo, a olores, a colores del momento. Todo acompañando el otro fluir paralelo y más abstracto de mis comentarios a lecturas y mis notas sobre la narración, el amor y la mentira, que, gracias a la peculiaridad de los cuadernos que las contienen, no han quedado relegadas al plano de los olímpicos académicos, donde se reniega de toda geografía, sino que reclaman su derecho de bajar a revolcarse en la yerba y fragmentarse contra las esquinas de la calle, a respirar el aire del campo o la contaminación de la ciudad en un atardecer determinado y a espejarse en los ojos de la gente que va recogiendo mi discurso y

en los vasos de vino que van ayudando a entretener el viaje. (Martín Gaité, *El cuento de nunca acabar* 60-61)

The influence of this change in note-taking is evident in the way that she has crafted *El cuarto de atrás*. The book is all of these things, a *cuaderno de todo*. C. says, in fact, “Siempre el mismo afán de apuntar cosas que parecen urgentes, siempre garabateando palabras sueltas en papeles sueltos, en cuadernos, y total para qué, en cuanto veo mi letra escrita, las cosas a que se refiere el texto se convierten en mariposas disecadas que antes estaban volando al sol...vivo rodeada de papeles sueltos” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 106), just the way Martín Gaité described her fractured notes before shifting to notebooks. These *papeles sueltos* become the topics that are finally brought together in *El cuarto de atrás*. And so, if the book is a little bit of everything, Martín Gaité is really doing something quite radical in playing with genre by demonstrating that a book can have multiple, apparently contradictory, functions and effects. She advocates for literature as escape, but also for literature as a way to destabilize official histories and promote individual stories—in other words, we can escape into a fairy tale of *Pulgarcito*, and then we can search not only for white pebbles but also for breadcrumbs. Furthermore, she is again courting disorder and chaos with her note-taking, jumbling diverse events, thoughts, and tasks. This combinatory approach to her notes has echoes in the way she plays with genres and in the way she parodies the all-encompassing orderliness promoted by the Sección Femenina.

In addition to and alongside this genre play, Martín Gaité values greatly the way a story is told. This is where her literature becomes, too, a theory of literature. She has explained, “para mí narración era todo, no sólo la oral y la escrita, sino también la que se interioriza sin palabras y registra cuanto nos va aconteciendo y lo deforma: y narración el amor, y la historia y la política. Todo eran cuentos mejor o peor contados. Precisamente me interesaba saber porqué unos están mal contados y otros bien, en qué reside su credibilidad” (Martín Gaité, *El cuento de nunca acabar* 65). With the necessity of telling, there is a necessity to tell it well.

## The Interconnectedness of Storytelling and Narrative

For Martín Gaité, one of the ways to write well is to utilize spoken language. The process of writing is inherently tied up in conversation, which is especially evident in the progression of *El cuarto de atrás*, as her conversation with Alejandro enigmatically writes the book and creates the stack of pages next to the typewriter, mystifying even C. herself, who asks, “¿Pero bueno, estos setenta y nueve folios, ¿de dónde salen?, ¿a qué se refieren? El montón de los que quedaron debajo del sombrero también parece haber engrosado, aunque no me atrevo a comprobarlo” (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 89). This is not Martín Gaité’s first foray into questions of oral and written communication and narration, which she has already theorized in her essays, published in *El cuento de nunca acabar* and *La búsqueda de interlocutor*.

For example, she writes that “La capacidad narrativa, latente en todo ser humano, no siempre —y cada vez menos— encuentra una satisfactoria realización en la conversación con los demás” and “las historias ya nacen como tales al contárselas uno a sí mismo, antes de que se presente la necesidad, que viene luego, de contárselas a otro” (Martín Gaité, *La búsqueda de interlocutor* 23). Then she sums it all up a few pages later, writing:

En resumen: que si el interlocutor adecuado no aparece en el momento adecuado, la narración hablada no se da.

Ahora bien, ¿existe ese mismo condicionamiento para la narración escrita? Evidentemente, no; y en eso consiste la esencial diferencia entre ambas, en la distinta capacidad que ofrecen al sujeto para el ejercicio de la libertad. Es decir, que, mientras que el narrador oral (salvo en algunos casos de viejos o borrachos) tiene que atenerse, quieras que no, a las limitaciones que le impone la realidad circundante, el narrador literario las puede quebrar, saltárselas; puede inventar ese interlocutor que no ha aparecido, y, de hecho, es el prodigio más serio que lleva a cabo cuando se pone a escribir: inventar con las palabras que dice, y el mismo golpe, los oídos que tendrían que oírlas. (Martín Gaité, *La búsqueda de interlocutor* 27)

This preoccupation with the conditions of storytelling, the way that stories are affected by their telling, is tied up with questions of the importance of the narrator and especially of the interlocutor. In *Narcissistic Narrative*, Linda Hutcheon claims that postmodern metafiction displays the paradox of self-representation: it depends on the other, on an interlocutor. I also propose reading this self-representation and self-consciousness as yet another set of circles, as a continuous feedback loop between creator and observer, writer and reader, speaker and listener.

Martín Gaité explains her opinion that a message isn't worth transmitting without a recipient: "no creo que ningún narrador o aspirante a tal ignore que, sin contar con la atención de un destinatario, el mensaje no vale la pena de emitirse" (*El cuento de nunca acabar* 155). She claims that, quite unlike the sudden appearance of Alejandro in *El cuarto de atrás*, "el oyente ideal no llueve del cielo" (*El cuento de nunca acabar* 155). Initially, Martín Gaité's statement might appear to contradict, even to criticize, the unfolding of the interview in *El cuarto de atrás*, since Alejandro does seem to appear out of nowhere. But she continues, regarding this interlocutor, that "su aparición viene condicionada precisamente por la calidad del cuento elaborado para él y por el margen de participación que se le conceda en el mismo" (Martín Gaité, *El cuento de nunca acabar* 155); his appearance depends on the right conditions. And the assumption here is that those conditions are created by the writer. Thus, while Martín Gaité maintains that a story can only be told well "cuando se imagine el gesto de quien va a escucharla al calor del entusiasmo comunicativo" (*El cuento de nunca acabar* 159), meaning that the story's telling depends on an interlocutor, the creation of the interlocutor depends on the storyteller, creating a co-dependent circularity.

In *El cuarto de atrás*, this ideal interlocutor is embodied, certainly, in the figure of Alejandro. By inserting him into the text and into C.'s home, Martín Gaité again puts her theory into practice. Dressed in black, Alejandro arrives much to the surprise of C., with little warning, initially nameless, asking probing and thoughtful questions, right after C. says she would give her soul to the devil, contemplates an image of Luther talking to the devil (also depicted in black), and is frightened by a black cockroach. All these previous descriptions are interwoven into the initial description of Alejandro, foreshadowing the changing roles he will play. Many of these roles conflict with each other or counteract each other, and many also break with gender binaries: he represents and has been interpreted as a devil, a psychotherapist, a literary critic, an interviewer, a friend, an alter-ego, a confessor, a muse.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Castillo or Rebecca Marquis, among many others.



C.'s reaction to Alejandro's participation also ebbs and flows. He alternately provokes fear, inspiration, frustration, and pleasure. At one point, C. says, "La conversación con este hombre me ha estimulado y ha refrescado mi viejo tema de los usos amoroso de posguerra" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 65). She seems able to, at times, step back and analyze the situation, almost returning to a kind of literary theory. For example, she narrates, "Escribí varios ejercicios de redacción sobre ese tema de la visita inesperada, y algunos no me quedaron mal del todo; desde entonces he venido asociando la literatura con las brechas en la costumbre" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 68). Alejandro can be seen, then, as the embodiment of this theorization of the unexpected visitor; C. can look at him analytically as a part of her story. But later in the novel, after C. leaves the room and returns, she voices her unease: "Lo primero que me llama la atención, al entrar en el cuarto —y me inquieta—, es que el hombre ha cambiado de postura" (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 87). The mannequin created and positioned by Martín Gaité has moved all on his own and is starting to show his own agency, doing more than simply listening.

Still the question remains, why create an interlocutor? What tradition is Martín Gaité adhering to or deconstructing? Instead of a muse, there is Alejandro. The presence of an interlocutor and the development of narrative through a conversation is what most sets this novel apart from the proliferation of "libros de memorias" that become a "peste" after Franco's death, about which her character C. complains (Martín Gaité, *Cuarto* 111). Many critics have been interested in this conversation model in this novel, and in Alejandro. Rebecca Marquis has analyzed the confessional discourse of the book, claiming that "While *Cuarto* evokes the common conceptions of confession that emphasize hierarchal relationships of power, Martín Gaité's novel also highlights the use of confessional discourse as a way to write 'around' patriarchy" (Marquis 89), signaling another realm in which Martín Gaité subverts from within. In her article "Carmen Martín Gaité: Reaffirming the Pact Between Reader and Writer," Brown looks beyond the conversation with Alejandro to the agreement between reader and writer, expanding the conversational model. The book's emphasis on conversation, especially in this light, also makes a nod to gossip, which was discouraged as a frivolous, sinful behavior. For example, the magazine *Y* ran a two-page spread titled, "Enemigos de la mujer Nacionalsindicalista." The comic features six stylized black-and-white illustrations for the six enemies, which are labeled in a large, bold font: "el chisme, la desobediencia, el miedo, la pereza, el orgullo, el pesimismo" ("Enemigos" 56-57). Gossip, as an unmediated and secret discourse, was dangerous to the regime. And for Castillo, the use of Alejandro is central to the message of the book, since he "is clearly symptomatic of an even larger problem. We can never be sure if the meaning we assign to an event is correct. Always, the suspicion remains that any meaning we derive from the text is due to a misinterpretation, a misreading" (Castillo 819). In the context of this dissertation, as previously mentioned, the relationship between C. and Alejandro creates a feedback loop, a circle that allows for exploring and storytelling between the two participants but also into the past.

To these questions about the interlocutor, Martín Gaité herself responds, too, and not only thematically but also formally—coming full circle. She structures the novel she theorizes, which means that, in some ways, it is indeed an essayistic novel or a theoretical novel. *El cuarto de atrás* is, then, a very coherent project, a whole web being created in a self-conscious metafictional work, aware of its status as a literary construction and constantly questioning the relationship between fiction and reality. Castillo has explained,

One of the most intriguing aspects of this remarkable novel is, perhaps, what it is not. It is a book on memory but definitely not a memoir; a work absolutely faithful to the details of the author's life but not an autobiography; a recuperation of a lost historical past but not a history or straightforward historical fiction. Instead, this novel projects itself into another dimension, not merely fiction but, more radically, fantasy. (814)

And Brown writes,

The complex ways in which Martín Gaité interrelates the two modes of the novel, the supernatural and the real, give rise to a work that is much more effective and much more remarkable than either of its constituent elements would be separately. The author has taken two genres which historically have not been congruent, the avant-garde fantastic novel and the canonical realist narrative, and combined them in such a way that they are complementary. (*Secrets* 159-160)

Brenneis has also explored what she calls the “genre fusion” of history and narrative in this novel. Focusing now on Alejandro as the ideal interlocutor, in the context of Martín Gaité's other writings on the interplay between storytelling and conversation, has allowed us to see new connections in a web of genre play.

### **Intertextual Looping**

Beyond the inner circle created between C. and Alejandro, and the previously analyzed circles in time and in memory, Martín Gaité's work draws other circles—the most important perhaps being the way she ties other works of literature into her own. *El cuarto de atrás* is unabashedly and self-consciously a literary work about other literary works, and about the literary work that Martín Gaité and other authors do. The novel circles around multiple texts, of high and low culture, of varied genres, spanning many centuries, and of differing significance to the narrator's personal experiences. These intertexts are woven throughout the novel—explicitly mentioned and alluded to or implicitly influencing the thoughts and words of C. and Alejandro. Martín Gaité starts us off on this path with her dedication to Lewis Carroll. Within the novelistic world, C.'s literary references and allusions include *novelas rosas*, poems by Machado and Darío, works by Cervantes (including, especially, *Don Quijote*), and *Alice in Wonderland*. C. tells of the biography and photo of the straight-haired woman who won the first Nadal prize (though unnamed, we know it is Carmen Laforet), a possible sighting of the Falangist poet Dionisio Ridruejo, and theater-going in Madrid. She even mentions some of her own works (not coincidentally, they share titles with works by Martín Gaité herself: the still-in-progress *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España*, *Entre visillos*, and *El balneario*). And as already discussed, C.'s interest in the postwar period and her attempts at writing about it lead her to sift through libraries and archives. There is no doubt that C. is well read.

C.'s references, however, are not only literary, nor do they all belong to high culture. She also mentions and quotes *boleros*, Hollywood movies, works of art and posters hanging in her apartment, letters written by other characters, newspaper clippings, and childhood games. She

refers to some of the propaganda and publications of the Franco era, including the magazines *Y* and *Lecturas* by name, and her own resistance to the Sección Femenina's requirements for travel abroad. Ferrán has commented on the importance of this tapestry of the written word by explaining that, in addition to the “innumerables imágenes de la cultura popular de la posguerra” that created “una visión oficial de lo que debía ser la mujer bajo el franquismo,” C. also incorporates “otras imágenes que dejaban vislumbrar posibilidades de ser distintas para la mujer, posibilidades vedadas por el discurso oficial. Así, C. va reconstruyendo una historia oficial de lo que era (o debía ser) la mujer bajo el franquismo, al mismo tiempo que la va desconstruyendo al enfrentarla con esas otras imágenes, menos ortodoxas, de la mujer en la posguerra” (Ferrán 96-97). In this way, she concludes, “La novela es un reflejo más amplio que el de la experiencia individual de C. Es un espejo de todas las fuentes literarias, influencias sociales y personales, presiones y limitaciones que se le imponían a la mujer en esa época del franquismo” (Ferrán 98). The presence of so much art, whether visual, written, or spoken, showcases their influence on her creative process.

What is circular about all this? As C. floats in and out of her memories, her imagination, her reading, and her present writing project, the book becomes a vortex that draws readers into its hyper-literary world, with no escape in sight. An ordered stack of pages appears with no recollection of the process of writing that produced them, disjointed memories are considered but not spoken aloud, songs and poems play on repeat.

In “La vela de foque,” an essay on literary theory in *El cuento de nunca acabar*, Martín Gaité remembers an interaction with an academic friend. She has been writing, and shows her writing to the friend, who encourages her to read some narrative theory. Following his recommendation, she reads about Russian formalism, New Criticism, and structuralism. While she emphasizes that she does not regret her readings and that she has gained new knowledge and understanding from them, the main takeaway for her was “el de hacerme saber que el libro que yo quería escribir no estaba escrito todavía” because the theorists “no habían inventado un tono adecuado a lo simultáneo de la narración con la vivencia que la promueve” (Martín Gaité, *El cuento de nunca acabar* 69). After her reading and reflection, she reports back to her friend: “Son libros que te informan de muchas cosas —le dije a mi amigo—, pero que no te cuentan nada. Y yo creo que un libro sobre la narración tiene que dar ejemplo y contar cosas, ¿no te parece?” (Martín Gaité, *El cuento de nunca acabar* 69). Even in responding to theory, her friend becomes her interlocutor and her experience reading the theory becomes a story. Here and elsewhere, Martín Gaité emphasizes how a story should be told—and she regards theory as included in the category of “story.” It follows, then, that what appears as a story can actually be theory. “La vela del foque” is a narrative about theory but also theory of narrative, and theory as narrative. As Martín Gaité loops in and out of these different genres, she connects them all in a series of spirals and circles. She blends the genres, echoing a technique pioneered by Virginia Woolf in “A Room of One's Own,” yet making the outcome even more complex.

## Concluding Thoughts

In *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, Martín Gaité quotes Pilar, leader of the Sección Femenina, as saying, “Las mujeres nunca descubren nada: les falta desde luego el talento creador, reservado por Dios para inteligencias varoniles; nosotras no podemos hacer nada más que interpretar mejor o peor lo que los hombres han hecho” (68)—a fact that Martín Gaité

effectively disproves throughout her prolific career. In interpreting the literary theory created mostly by men, Martín Gaité proves that she can indeed create at the same time. She weaves a story as she engages with criticism and theory, leading by example and maintaining that these seemingly distinct modes of writing in fact orbit around one another in the genre play that Martín Gaité proposes and models. Indeed, Martín Gaité's entire oeuvre "call[s] into question the distinction between narration and theorizing about narrative and bring[s] questions of gender and personal voice into the discussion of literary theory" (Bergmann, "Narrative Theory"). As Ferrán has shown, "En desafío a este discurso oficial, *El cuarto de atrás* afirma la capacidad creativa de una mujer, y cuenta, sobre todo, el proceso de la autocreación de su narradora" (102). This is why "la conversación se vuelve un acto liberador para C.; por eso no quiere que se acabe" (Ferrán 102). Additionally, C.'s conversation with Alejandro is a doubly liberating act because she creates him as she creates herself, tying back to the never-ending story that *El cuarto de atrás* fulfills and creates.

## Conclusion

### Looking Back, Looking Forward

In three seminal works of the twentieth century in Spain—Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960), and Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* (1978)—we have seen varying forms of covert resistance to the Franco regime, which was the backdrop of their narrative (and, in the case of the first two, their production as well). In all three novels, we glimpse different forms of disruption to the regime's desire for unity: claiming that there is more than one way to be a girl, more than one way to be a woman, more than one way to grow up, and more than one way to remember or to write about memories. The emphasis on the narrator's own unique story and growth, a central characteristic of the *Bildungsroman*, questions the regime's desire to impose its patriarchal social norms on the individual and to group individuals into a homogenous bloc. And the fact that each novel is written by and about a woman rejects the restrictive roles offered to women: instead, each narrator (and author) finds her voice and tells her story, despite immense difficulty.

In order to approach these canonical novels with a new perspective and to continue building on the important work already done by literary scholars Olga Bezhanova, Sara Brenneis, Viktoria Hackbarth, David Herzberger, and Michael Thomas, among many others, I have delved into the understudied archives of the Sección Femenina (Women's Section), which has led me to analyze them in a more detailed, literary manner—down to the rhetorical devices used by the propagandists. The impetus to do so began with Martín Gaité's own mention of these materials in both her novelistic and historical output. While important research done by such historians as Anny Brooksbank Jones, Aurora Morcillo, Mary Nash, Inbal Ofer, and Kathleen Richmond has touched on these magazines and manuals of social behavior, these studies have not crossed into the literary genres. On the other hand, while numerous literary studies have helped create and theorize the subgenre of the novel of female development in Spain, often while nodding to the oppression of women at the time of their production, they have not yet deeply probed the techniques and patterns in the Francoist literature. It is at this intersection of archive and canon that I place my work, in the hopes it has illuminated new understandings about both.

In revisiting both the archive and the canon, I have shown how fictional representations of women's experiences coming of age during the postwar period in Spain critique, in a very nuanced way, the hegemonic prescriptions for how women's experiences ought to have been: in this covert maneuvering, I have identified an overlooked bravery and resistance present in the chosen works by Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité. Martín Gaité's historical work has suggested that the postwar propaganda disseminated the regime's messaging in an attempt to control all aspects of citizens' (especially women's) lives, repeating the expectations ad nauseam in order to penetrate the psyche. I have followed in her footsteps in order to investigate how that propaganda affected the novelistic output of three of the period's most important writers, and how those novels critiqued and undermined that very propaganda—ironically while still passing through censorship and even being granted literary prizes.

Viewing *Nada*, *Primera memoria*, and *El cuarto de atrás* as critical responses to the Sección Femenina propaganda that permeated all elements of life for women in the postwar has illuminated covert meanings in seemingly unimportant aspects of the novels. For example, when Andrea wanders the streets or wastes her money, when Matia escapes to her simultaneously

comforting and menacing green world, when Martín Gaité converses with a younger version of herself in a mirror in her kitchen—these novelistic events are not just elements of the plot, but rather subtle ways of undermining the Falangist ideal of an active, self-sacrificing, dynamic young fascist woman.

After having considered each of these novels as case studies that responded to the propaganda that was disseminated before and during their creation and publication, my hope is that this revisiting of the Sección Femenina archive will inspire future scholars to find the quiet strength hiding in other resisting works, even works that might appear not to resist at all. This reading methodology, of illuminating new details or understanding those details in a new way by examining the work alongside its contemporary non-literary production, can serve us in other contexts. I have begun with the canon, with just three classic examples, yet I see opportunities for studying many other Spanish women writers, in whose novels we might uncover other subtle forms of resistance against State rhetoric while still flying under the radar of State censorship. How do other authors play with the subtleties of hegemonic discourse in order to critique it?

It would be an obvious next step to expand this work to investigate other Spanish authors writing novels of female development under the dictatorship, such as Rosa Chacel, Ana María Moix, and Mercè Rodoreda. Later, Adelaida García Morales and Esther Tusquets continue to explore the female *Bildungsroman*, expanding our understanding of the genre and illuminating opportunities for considering other modes of resistance; here we might consider themes of uncovering secrets, confronting death, or exploring women's sexuality and power as vehicles for undermining expectations of young women. Film has also been a fertile medium for the expression of children's, young adults', and/or women's experiences of the Spanish Civil War, postwar, and dictatorship: directors Pedro Almodóvar, Icíar Bollán, Víctor Erice, and Guillermo del Toro, among others, approach these topics in films produced during and after the Franco regime, granting us access to their multifaceted stories of children, women, mothers, families, and homes. Creating these fictional stories and recuperating the truths in which they are based is still an active process; even now, almost a century since the Spanish Civil War and almost a half-century since Franco's death, the recently released documentary *El silencio de otros* (2018) details the painful and personal struggles against Spain's Amnesty Law of 1977. I also hope that this methodology will inform future research into both propaganda and literature outside of Spain—perhaps to question the overlooked subversive nature of authors writing under other dictatorships, whether in Latin America or in other parts of Europe. In Portugal, for example, I find the more overtly anti-Salazar work of Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta, and Maria Velho da Costa (the “Três Marias”) intriguing for its blending of many genres within their own co-authored tome *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* (1972).

As I come to the close of this dissertation, I too feel compelled to circle back to where I began—following in the footsteps of the three female narrators in their stories, the three female authors in their novels, and especially Martín Gaité in her historical work for *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*: “Prohibido mirar hacia atrás. La guerra había terminado. Se censuraba cualquier comentario que pusiera de manifiesto su huella, de por sí bien evidente, en tantas familias mutiladas, tantos suburbios miserables, pueblos arrasados, prisioneros abarrotando las cárceles, exilio, represalias y economía maltrecha” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 13). This prohibited backward glance, and the voicing and telling of that journey of memory, gives a fresh view of their works as each one reclaims her gaze, her history/story, her memory, and her meaning.

And circling back to the difficulties of writing while female, difficulties made even more prohibitive by an oppressive and repressive regime, I would also like to revisit the words of Pilar Primo de Rivera: “Las mujeres nunca descubren nada: les falta desde luego el talento creador, reservado por Dios para inteligencias varoniles; nosotras no podemos hacer nada más que interpretar mejor o peor lo que los hombres han hecho” (qtd. in Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 69). This devaluing of the creative power of women is precisely what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar signaled when they mentioned the common, debilitating “radical fear that she cannot create” among women writers (49). In spite of these and many other obstacles, we have seen in this dissertation a group of women who refused to let those fears and prejudices prevent them from their creative processes. As they confront these obstacles, the three selected works by Laforet, Matute, and Martín Gaité are in this way forward-looking, even as they perform a prohibited backward glance to tell the stories of their comings of age. The protagonists look back to their pasts, in order to tell those stories, but they also look forward to a time when Franco will no longer reign, when anti-State discourse need not be hidden. We, too, continue looking back and looking forward.

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