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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Finding Life in the Corpus:
Fiction as Existential History in Miguel de Unamuno,
Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, and Javier Marías

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Spanish

by

Emily Ann Jackson

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair
Professor Jacobo Sefamí
Professor Santiago Morales-Rivera

2017

DEDICATION

To Daniel,
in hope that this is one of many trees we will remember
hand in hand, years from now, and say in wonder,
“It’s a gift!”

This was the first thing Mark had been asked to do which he himself, before he did it, clearly knew to be criminal. But the moment of his consent almost escaped his notice; certainly, there was no struggle, no sense of turning a corner. There may have been a time in the world’s history when such moments fully revealed their gravity, with witches prophesying on a blasted heath or visible Rubicons to be crossed. But, for him, it all slipped past in a chatter of laughter, of that intimate laughter between fellow professionals, which of all earthly powers is strongest to make men do very bad things before they are yet, individually, bad men.

—C.S. Lewis, *That Hideous Strength* (1945)

Should the starting-point for the understanding of history be ideology, or politics, or religion, or economics? Should we try to understand a doctrine from its overt content, or from the psychological make-up and the biography of its author? We must seek an understanding from all these angles simultaneously, everything has meaning, and we shall find this same structure of being underlying all relationships. All these views are true provided that they are not isolated, that we delve deeply into history and reach the unique core of existential meaning which emerges in each perspective.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945)

If this was history it did not feel like it.

—George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (1955)

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My journey to this point began *in utero*, when my mom was a grad student in the Spanish Department at UC Irvine during the 1982-1983 school year. My gestation and the school year coincided almost exactly, and while her colleagues began summer vacations, my mom was embarking on a much longer and life-altering adventure: motherhood. Six daughters and almost thirty-five years later, my mom's master's degree remains to be finished. But by Summer 2018 the six daughters will have accumulated five bachelor's degrees, four master's degrees, one J.D., and two Ph.D.s. Somehow, the four grandbabies are still the greater triumph.

Together, my mom and dad have spent their lives ensuring that their daughters had every opportunity and expecting the best from us. Thank you to my mom, Cuqui Younger, for passing on a love for learning through long mornings spent teaching me to sound out the letters and late nights spent discussing *San Manuel, Bueno*. I love you. Thank you to my dad, Terry Younger, for your humble servanthood in always being the guy behind the scenes, making our opportunities possible with long hours, days, months, and years of hard, hard work. I love you.

Gracias a mi Bito, Eladio Short, y a mi Bitá, Elda Short, ahora fallecida, por enseñarme con su ejemplo el amor a la poesía y el cuento. Me mostraron que estos son tesoros de deleite y sabiduría para la vida cotidiana, no sólo artefactos vigilados por los académicos. Los amo.

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This project would not have been possible without the financial support of the Dean's Fellowship from the UC Irvine School of Humanities and the GAANN Fellowship. I am grateful for all of the opportunities provided by UC Irvine and for the guidance and support of the administrative staff in the Spanish Department.

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Daniel and Eva have made more sacrifices for this project than anyone. I love you both more than any collection of words could tell. Now on to the next adventure!

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

Revivifying Corpse and Corpus:

Fiction as Existential History in Unamuno, Martínez de Pisón, and Javier Marías

by

Emily Ann Jackson

Doctor of Philosophy

University of California, Irvine, 2017

Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair

This dissertation explores the potential of fiction to create existential history as a contemplation of the past that seeks not to explain it but to bring it to life again. There are two guiding questions: first, what does history *feel like?*; and, second, how does fiction illuminate that experience by means inaccessible to history? My analysis folds over two sets of Peninsular Spanish texts separated by about a century: the short fiction of Spain's prolific early 20th-century thinker Miguel de Unamuno, and the contemporary novels of Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, with interventions from John Dos Passos (Chapter 2) and Javier Marías (Chapter 3).

The first chapter, "Personality as Historical Truth in Unamuno," sets the stage by examining the implications of a statement lifted from one of Unamuno's short stories: "No hay más verdadera historia que la novela . . ." Using this idea as a springboard, I propose a reading of Unamuno's most popular story, *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, that is at odds with the most prominent scholarship but, I argue, in harmony with Unamuno's own intimations, significantly in the jointly-published "Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez."

In the second chapter, I argue that novels function well as existential history because they drop readers into a space of potentiality, where ethical choices must be made without knowledge of eventual consequences. The idea of potentiality comes to the forefront in the two primary texts considered: Martínez de Pisón's *Enterrar a los muertos* and *El día de mañana*, set, respectively, during the Spanish Civil War and Transition periods.

The third chapter looks at fiction's potential to recreate the physical realities of embodied experience, specifically family connections of inheritance and legacy. I consider the difference between memory (internal interaction with the past, from within a body) and history (interaction with the past that always has an external communicative function) in relation to family legacy, family homes, and the metaphor of the mirror as it relates to interactions between family members. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings on embodiment and the sensory dimensions of Being inform my analysis throughout the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

George Orwell's classic *Homage to Catalonia* is powerful because of the way that it imbues an ideologically-charged historical moment with humanity in all its messiness and ambiguity. Moved by the cause of socialist revolution and inspired by ideals of camaraderie, transparency, and equality, Orwell arrives in Spain eager to join the fight against Fascism months after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936. What he finds, rather than a clearly delineated (morally or physically) field of conflict, is disorganization, corruption, aimlessness, pointless loss of life and property, and significant personal discomfort. In the account of a frustrating period of on-the-street gunfights in Barcelona in May 1937, Orwell laments, "When you are taking part in events like these you are, I suppose, in a small way, making history, and you ought by rights to feel like a historical character. But you never do, because at such times the physical details always outweigh everything else" (139). He goes on to compare the imperfections of his on-the-ground analysis to the sanitized and sensical versions published in the papers:

Throughout the fighting I never made the correct 'analysis' of the situation that was so glibly made by journalists hundreds of miles away. What I was chiefly thinking about was not the rights and wrongs of this miserable internecine scrap, but simply the discomfort and boredom of sitting day and night on that intolerable roof, and the hunger which was growing worse and worse—for none of us had had a proper meal since Monday. . . . If this was history it did not feel like it. (139)

Orwell signals here the discrepancy between the dusty, bewildering reality of lived experience and the type of simplified bird's-eye view that makes its way into historical narrative. This discrepancy in turn suggests a paradox: we are each historical characters—some scheming or stumbling their ways onto a more prominent stage—but as we move through time we do not

have the sensation of participating in anything as clearly defined as History with a capital “H.” Rather, our movements through time are most often consumed by what Orwell calls “the physical details”—the pleasures, necessities, and burdens of daily human experience.

The questions behind this project were inspired by that scene of Orwell on the rooftop and by the paradox of historical beings carrying around a sense of alienation from their own moment in history—the very moment that it seems they should be most qualified to explain. Orwell says that his time on the street in Barcelona did not “feel like” history. But what does history “feel like”? How does one reconcile a desire to get to the “truth” about a certain historical episode with a host of diverging eyewitness accounts? If the constraints of objectivity laid on formal history-making make it impossible to capture what history “feels like” for any given individual, can fiction help to shoulder the load? Can fiction be a sort of “existential history”—an account that recreates a historical moment in the context of the “physical details” that consumed Orwell’s attention? And could this kind of existential history communicate certain truths about the past more effectively even than more scientific historical accounts?

The thesis of this project is that, yes, fiction can work as an existential history. Not only that: it can be even better than formal histories at helping readers to understand what history “feels like” when it is encountered in the middle of all of its physical details. Each of the primary texts considered here contributes something unique to a discussion of how fiction can help readers to understand what it feels like to be a person living a particular time in history. While the socio-scientific enterprise of history will enter into the discussion that follows, my interest is the potential of literature to inform the lives of individual human beings as they understand and experience history. I do not mean to suggest that fiction should replace history or that fiction—even *historical* fiction—can attain the same truth-claim status as history. Instead, I suggest that

fiction can do things that history cannot do. Fiction is in many ways more versatile. What I'm after is shedding light on the instances where fiction can make human connections across time and place—illuminating an understanding of fellow human beings who, though they may not inhabit the same geographical or chronological corner of History, also find themselves wrapped up in and sometimes tied down by the threads of it. Historical truth can be present in a fictional account, even apart from explicit exposition of dates, places, and names. Rather, the truth communicated in a fictional existential history is truth of relationship, experience, personality, and—related to Heidegger's Being-toward-Death—a sense of mortality and race against time.

WHAT IS “EXISTENTIAL HISTORY”?

Predating postmodernism by decades, existentialism is an eclectic school of philosophy that included under its umbrella explicitly Christian thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel, as well as agnostic and atheist thinkers like Martin Heidegger or Jean-Paul Sartre. The title “existentialism,” eschewed by many of the same individuals with whom it is identified today (e.g., Camus, Unamuno, Ortega y Gasset, Merleau-Ponty), encompasses a host of iterations, in many ways as unique as the individuals who propounded them. But that was part of the point. Existentialism brought the focus back to the individual—Heidegger's *Dasein*—who is thrown into the world and must make sense of the world, of himself, and of his place in the world. The existentialist self is fundamentally responsible for himself—for the choices that he makes and for his relationships to the other beings he encounters in the world. The existentialist self is also, necessarily, alive; death looms ahead and the reality of mortality doggedly shadows every decision-making process, emphasizing the limits of time and possibility.

In his 1975 classic *The Writing of History*, Michel de Certeau referred to history as “[a]

play of life and death . . . sought in the calm telling of a tale, in the resurgence and denial of the origin, the unfolding of a dead past and result of a present practice” (47). This idea of history as a play of life and death is present throughout *The Writing of History*. History begins where life ends. Not just an individual life—you can write histories about individuals who are still alive—but the life inherent in a particular event or set of decisions. To write a history of something is, in effect, to entomb it, to remove its lifeblood and sense of potentiality and place upon it the great seal of the “once and for all.” The historian has the power of the undertaker to decide how the corpse is made up and dressed and how it will be preserved for viewing by the public (or at least by those who choose to attend the funeral).

In contrast to a dead history, existential history invites readers to walk in the shoes of an individual-inside-of-history, to turn back the clock to a time when things were not concluded “once and for all.” If “existentialism” is considered in Heideggerian terms as Being-Toward-Death, fiction does not start after death, like history does, but inhabits the space of “Being.” Existential history undertakes something akin to what de Certeau talks about when he imagines a historian “restor[ing] the forgotten and meet[ing] again men of the past amidst the traces they have left” (35-36). Fiction is uniquely suited to tell this type of history. For one thing, fiction makes no claims to objectivity in the way that “objective” histories must (based on the rules of genre—rules which the authors I consider do not treat as sacred, as will be seen). For another, fiction can flit among the traces, picking up some and discarding others, rearranging the life of a fictional character in order to showcase certain events and avoid others. Even a historian under the philosophical auspices of Jacques Derrida¹ or Hayden White does not unapologetically fill in the blanks with his or her own imagination. “On the contrary,” insists Gonzalo Sobejano in his

¹ E.g., Derrida's refutation of a "metaphysical" concept of history" as set out in *Positions* (U. of Chicago P., 1982), pp. 56-57.

contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel*, “even new historicists present narrative as empirically grounded fact. While imagination plays a role in interpreting facts, history, in their view, is not an imaginative art” (Sobejano 184). Fiction, on the other hand, is free from this limitation.

Existential history enlivens ethical questions in a way that a traditional history cannot. With the advantages of hindsight, we can look back on history and see who won and who lost, who was on the right side and who on the wrong. When we judge history’s actors, we impute to them all the knowledge that we have of what they would later become. From the vantage point of the Now, we can see all the things that the people living in the time could not see. On a philosophical level, existential inquiry blows open the moment of decision, exposing what Unamuno might call the “agony” of a person caught between two or more decisions. Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, a classic of existentialist thought, makes a book-length study of the agony behind an action that is given one sentence in its biblical-historical account: “And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son” (Genesis 22:10, King James Version). Fiction can re-imbue the moment of agony with something nearer its original power.

Existential history also proposes an aid to overcoming the obstacle of blaming that accompanies the act of labeling common to history-making. As Unamuno warns in *En torno al casticismo*, not only the “bad guys” bear responsibility for the crimes of the past. There were plenty of good guys who were not always good or whose best intentions nevertheless played a part in propelling some tragedy. Existential history gives us a window into the struggle, and helps readers to approach the question “why?” with a more nuanced perspective. Rather than reiterating the traditional history or revisionist backlash, existential history in fiction reminds us continually that we are responsible for our decisions not just to ourselves, but to our families,

communities, and successors. Transcendent themes can be presented and understood in fiction in a way that would be heavy-handed sermonizing from a historian's pen.

An obvious feature of existential history is that it is radically centered on the individual—just as we, as history-bound individuals, experience our own journey through time from within the isolating boundaries of consciousness. Each individual person making decisions may be operating as part of a family, a community, or a political movement (and each of these types of commitments will surface in the novels considered here), but ultimately that person's decisions will be his or her own. History cannot enter into an individual's psyche without at least some element of presumption. A historian cannot tell everything Julius Caesar thought while deciding whether to cross the Rubicon. A historian *can* make recourse to documents, or in some more recent cases to audio- or video-recordings that might show us the person explaining his or her actions. Even these traces, though, cannot get inside of the person's head at the time of the decision-making process in the same way as a fiction-writer can usher readers into a protagonist's mind.

This individual focus is helpful when considering a contested battleground of history like the years of the Spanish Civil War and Transition. It is not enough to label a person "Fascist" or "Communist" or "Catholic." Each of these terms is much more nuanced in experience than it ever could be as a broad and general label. The distancing from a historical context offered by fiction can help readers to think productively about the place for individual ethical responsibility in the face of national crises and the destabilization and deconstruction of formerly-dominant national narratives. In Solzhenitsyn's words from *The Gulag Archipelago*,

If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line

dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart? (615).

Existential history invites readers into a heart as it shifts from one side of that line to another, without awareness of the labels that history would attach to either one.

SELECTION OF PRIMARY TEXTS

Each of the primary texts considered in this project uniquely contributes to the consideration of what history “feels like” and how fiction can tap into to that experience. Not all of the texts are historical fictions,² and one—Ignacio Martínez de Pisón’s *Enterrar a los muertos*—is not fiction at all. Each nevertheless highlights some aspect of fiction’s strengths in drawing a reader into an existential history. Miguel de Unamuno’s contribution to the project is both philosophical and pragmatic, for the way that he crafted his own fictions as existential histories. Bringing in a thinker from a distance of a hundred years is an exercise in folding two historical contexts together to trace the themes that remain constant across time. I value Unamuno’s philosophical focus on the “problem of personality” for the similarities that it bears to later postmodern critiques of deterministic Hegelian histories, all without denying the transcendent qualities of human experience or the possibility of a metaphysical element in human interactions.

In the case of *Enterrar a los muertos*, fiction’s interaction with history surfaces in the treatment of John Dos Passos’s journalistic writing and novels, both alike offered up as evidence to help solve a historical mystery. Martínez de Pisón’s novels focusing on the Spanish Civil War and Transition offer a perspective of the *intrahistoria* of that period while relying on narrative techniques that showcase the wide variety inherent in eyewitness experience, the weaknesses in

² For a fascinating survey of the overlap between history and fiction in Spanish literature, see Geoffrey Ribbans's chapter, "History and Fiction," in the *Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel: From 1600 to the Present* (Cambridge 2003).

all-encompassing historical narrative, and the power of what Orwell calls the “physical details” to derail our attention from large-scale events to the minutiae of everyday life. The choral narrative technique in *El día de mañana* and the perspective-shifting narratives of *Dientes de leche* and *El tiempo de las mujeres* expose the reality that the truth about history, when invited from a plurality of witnesses, will always be layered and often irreconcilably so. Javier Marías’s novel *Corazón tan blanco* is helpful for its perspective on the influence of physical and hereditary legacy on an interpretation of historical truth: every actor in history adopts a certain perspective in many ways determined by his body and hereditary legacy.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Each of the three chapters that follows focuses on one facet of fiction’s value as “existential history” for students of literature and of history, and I will provide a brief overview of these three facets (and their accompanying chapters) here. First, fiction invites readers to think about aspects of historical truth that lie outside the province of formal histories; second, fiction invites readers to open up and experience the complexity of ethical dilemmas that have been sealed by time; and, third, fiction invites readers to—figuratively—open up human bodies, contemplating the lived experience of inhabiting a particular moment as an embodied human being.

I. Truth Beyond Historical Truth

Historical truth, unearthed during the study of past events, is propositional. It is built around a set of factual assertions communicated in the indicative mood and based on certain given and accessible pieces of evidence. In contrast to this kind of truth, Miguel de Unamuno raises the possibility of a variety of truth related to what he called “the problem of personality.” This

indirectly-revealed experiential (rather than propositional) truth surfaces in a reader's interaction with the written word, since—in Unamuno's reckoning—that word works as an imprint of the author's personality, a type of incarnation. I read "San Manuel Bueno, mártir," probably Unamuno's best-known story, through this lens, focusing my analysis on the story's narrator, Ángela Carballino. A surprising number of critics have read "San Manuel Bueno, mártir," as a historical account dealing in propositions and treat it as a quasi-autobiographical account. Rather than reading the story as a historical account of the priest Manuel Bueno's existential struggle, however, I read it as an exploration of Ángela's personality. When Ángela's personality is brought to the forefront, the reader is forced into a struggle of faith and doubt (about the reliability of Ángela's narrative) that mirrors that experienced by the protagonist. The truth of personality is complex, sometimes shifting, and rarely reducible to propositions. My reading of "San Manuel Bueno, mártir" is supported by its pairing (by Unamuno) with "Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez," which goes even further than San Manuel at opening up the question of a truth of personality, presenting a story whose only pretense of plot is the sparse sketch of a personality about whom almost nothing is known.

Unamuno's linking of truth with personality is indebted to the Christian tradition and the idea of Christ as both "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6, King James Version) and the incarnate eternal Word (e.g., John 1:1-2). To bring these ideas out of Unamuno's time and into contemporary conversation, I place them in dialogue with those of Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo, also steeped in a Christian vocabulary. Vattimo re-interprets Heidegger for a postmodern (or post-postmodern) audience, replacing an idea of truth-as-appeal with the idea of truth-as-aperture. The result is what Vattimo calls "weak truth" or "weak thought" which, like personality, is yielding and flexible, rather than being "'there, outside,' like a wall against which

one beats one's head" (*Belief* 36). To help illustrate the contrast between the "dead" truth of history and the "living" truth of personality, I rely on the metaphor of the autopsy (as compared to an encounter with a living person), aided by Michel Foucault's provoking reflections on the topic in *The Birth of the Clinic*.

II. Ethical Dilemmas Reconsidered

The second chapter looks at the ways that fiction can burst into the chronology of a particular moment, placing the reader in the middle of ethical questions that have since been foreclosed. I consider Walter Benjamin's plea in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to "brush history against the grain" (392), reevaluating what is "right" or "wrong" in a particular moment of history, even in the face of powerful and seemingly unyielding hegemonic narratives. Re-imagining day-to-day experience in the past can help to illustrate the complicated dimensions of life within the gray areas of a given moment, when the identities of history's victors and vanquished have yet to be revealed.

The primary texts for this chapter are two novels by Ignacio Martínez de Pisón: *El día de mañana* and *Enterrar a los muertos*. Both texts introduce characters who must make difficult decisions in a shifting political and cultural landscape fraught with ambiguity. *Enterrar a los muertos* is actually a heavily-documented historical investigation written like a novel. My reading of it focuses on the ways that Martínez de Pisón relies on the fictional texts of John Dos Passos in constructing his history, creating the impression that these fictional texts are in many regards even more historically valuable than journalistic records of the same events. Dos Passos's own bewilderment as he tries to solve the mystery of a friend's disappearance proves a helpful technique for exposing the shadowy nature of lived experience.

In the second section, I look at *El día de mañana* and the ethics of history-making as it relates to the life of the central character, Justo Gil Tello. Both the choral narrative style and the record of the characters' capricious political and personal alliances highlight the uncertainty of the last days of Franco's government and the beginning of the Transition period. Martínez de Pisón destabilizes the idea of eyewitness testimony, showing how one event can be differently perceived and interpreted by a nearly-infinite group of witnesses. This chapter considers the potential of fiction to re-open ethical dilemmas, asking what is right or wrong in a moment where the outcome is not known.

III. Embodied Experience in Context

The third chapter encounters fiction in the context of embodiment, arguing that fiction can put a reader inside the mind and body of a particular person in a way that history cannot. In conjunction with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings on embodiment, I look specifically at the way that family inheritance and legacy (both genetic and material) come to the forefront in a select group of texts. Once again, the primary texts are from Ignacio Martínez de Pisón: *Dientes de leche*, which is set in the last days of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco years, and *El tiempo de las mujeres*, set during the Spanish Transition to democracy. I read these novels alongside an older novel from Javier Marías, whose *Corazón tan blanco*, like Martínez's two novels, considers the theme of a man's relationship with his father (or, in *El tiempo de las mujeres*, a daughter's relationship with her mother).

Fiction can represent embodied reality in a way that would be certainly difficult and probably inappropriate within the constraints of history. Merleau-Ponty, who has been called "something like the patron saint of the body" (Shusterman 151), was a student of Heidegger

whose work took a decided turn away from “Being” in the abstract and toward the actual sensory experience of individual human bodies. Relying on Merleau-Ponty’s contemplation of embodiment, particularly in his essays “Eye and Mind” and “The Primacy of Perception,” I undertake close readings of the primary texts to see how the characters’ embodied realities shape their experiences in the novel. Beginning with some reflections on the distinctions between memory—the way that embodied individuals habitually interact with the past—and both informal and formal histories, I employ a “hauntological” (borrowing the term from Derrida via Jo Labanyi) analysis, looking at the ways that individuals and places in these novels have a haunting influence on each other. Specifically, the chapter takes up the role of embodied experience in three areas: physical inheritance and legacy in a family context; the relationship of embodied characters with family homes; and, finally, the relationship of embodied characters with mirrors—both literal and metaphorical.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

In his 2015 book, *North Korea Undercover: Inside the World’s Most Secret State*, British journalist John Sweeney begins a biographical section on Kim Il Sung declaring, “The best book I’ve ever read that peers into the mind and soul of a dictator is a novel, *The Porcupine* by Julian Barnes” (Sweeney 60). Sweeney does not suggest that this novel communicates actual historical data or that it is a faithful portrait of any particular dictator.³ Rather, he suggests that *The Porcupine* does something more: it invites readers into the mind of a dictator—inside a door that is most often locked to the historian—and in so doing uncovers some important truths. In Sweeney’s words,

The trick that Barnes cleverly pulls off is to make the dictator act like a real flesh-and-

³ Sweeney does say that Barnes's dictator character is based on "ex-[Bulgarian]dictator Todor Zhikov" (60).

blood human being, not just a creature from darkness. The dictator, with his back against the wall, comes out fighting, a bruiser, contemptuous of the lickspittles, funny, amusing, hard as concrete. Barnes, who conjures with the English language like a magician plucking out a rabbit from his hat, makes you sympathize with the devil. . . . But the heft of *The Porcupine* makes a simple point: you don't get to be a dictator of a country unless you've got serious qualities, of conviction, self-belief, a hardness of the soul. (60-61)

Sweeney's observations resonate with the questions behind this project. Why is it that a novel would be the best way to peer into the mind and soul of a dictator? Why is it that a journalist who has spent much of his career profiling dictators would find "the best" insight into the mind of a dictator in—of all things—a novel about a dictator who did not exist? The type of truth that is conveyed by a novel like *The Porcupine* both is and is not historical. It is not historical in the sense of a factually accurate recounting. It does, however, draw readers' attention to transcendent truths about the experience of Being-in-the-World that may in the long run prove even more enlightening on a personal level than any litany of names, dates, and places.

The work of creating an "existential history" invokes a parallel with the work of Dr. Frankenstein. History-writing can be thought of as an act of re-membering, connecting the parts of a body that has been separated by time. History is, after all, a recounting of a past that, once the locus of life, has now been deprived of it. Time has moved on and the events of history are finished. If Michel de Certeau was right in *The Writing of History* that the historian "represents the dead along a narrative itinerary" (100), then to craft an existential history is to breathe life back into those dead, to raise their corpses and imbue them once more with thought, speech, and potentiality—to imagine, in the middle of all of the messiness and ambiguity that so troubled Orwell, how another person's history may have felt.

CHAPTER 1

Personality as Historical Truth in Unamuno

Los más grandes historiadores son los novelistas, los que más se meten a sí mismos en sus historias, en las historias que inventan.
—Miguel de Unamuno, *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez*

In relation to style and methods of writing, I hardly think of the past in chronological order.
—John Dos Passos, “Dos Passos’ Own Views”

INTRODUCTION

In an examination of contemporary Spanish novels, it might seem odd to begin with a chapter that rests on the work of Miguel de Unamuno. But, before taking up a series of novels that consider the problems inherent in the creation of historical “truth,” it is interesting to set the stage by examining the work of an author who insists in his fiction that “no hay más verdadera historia que la novela” (*San Manuel Bueno, mártir, y tres historias más* 96). The epilogue to Unamuno’s short story *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez* asserts that “Los más grandes historiadores son los novelistas, los que más se meten a sí mismos en sus historias, en las historias que inventan” (95). Contemplating the divide that marks the difference between “fiction” and “non-fiction,” the Unamunian epilogue-writer blurs the distinctions of genre to signal that the creative product of the novelist is also a historiographical endeavor by nature of the novelist’s existence as a historical being. Present here is the idea of creative work as a kind of incarnation—the transfer of one’s self into the written word. The incarnation is just as real in a fictional work as in a historical work. Unamuno would say that the former is even *more* real, since the novelist is free to insert himself into his work without the constraints of factual accuracy that bind the writer of histories. Creative work is a product of the creator’s personality,

and as such functions as an introduction to that personality, however incomplete, indirect, or mysterious that may be.

To discuss incarnation is to step into the vocabulary of theology, a step which for Unamuno is not accidental. Just as he contends that human authors inhabit their creative work, imparting a truth about themselves to their readers, Unamuno wrestled throughout his life with the idea that God has done the same, expressing himself in his creatures, particularly through language. The overlap between word, truth, and personality is at the forefront of christological theology, put forward most clearly in the first words of the gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was with God. He was in the beginning with God.” This word, Jesus, also said of himself “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The God introduced in John’s Gospel is one who becomes man, but at the same time takes on the titles of “Word” and “Truth,” linking both of these concepts inextricably with a particular personality. This is not the truth of facts and data that can be objectively corroborated, but a truth of experience and revelation. It is the truth present in the everyday experience of an encounter with another person. Texts, argues the Unamunian epilogue, as creative products, bear this indelible imprint of personality

So it seems appropriate to begin here, with Unamuno, in an exploration of the potential for fiction to be a type of existential history. This chapter will flesh out the assertion that “no hay más verdadera historia que la novela” with some deeper digging into Unamuno’s body of work, specifically the two stories that Unamuno himself united under the theme of “el problema de la personalidad”: San Manuel Bueno, mártir, and “La novel de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez.” To help build a portrait of the personality of the historical truth that is at work in Unamuno, I’ll be working with a contemporary thinker who has also made a link between truth, personality,

and incarnation: Gianni Vattimo, particularly his reconsideration of Heidegger as laid out in *Belief* (1996) and *A Farewell to Truth* (2009).

HISTORY AND PERSONALITY IN THE *INTRAHISTORIA*

In the claim that “no hay más verdadera historia que la novela,” the epilogue writer of *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez*⁴ stretches the common understanding of historical truth as objectively verifiable fact to make an intriguing claim: that the novel offers a multi-dimensional truth of personality that may, in the final analysis, prove even truer than a claim to factual accuracy. A novelist pours a version of himself into his work, as the characters and situations he records are of his own invention, even if based on reality. Concerns about factual accuracy or faithfulness to a biographical subject need not hinder the creative flow in the same way as they might for one who has made a pact of verifiability with the reader (e.g., an official historian or biographer). The novel bears the image of its author’s thought-life, and in that sense functions as a historical record that needs no outside validation.

Unamuno links individual personality and collective, unconsciously-expressed history in the concept of “intrahistoria,” which he develops in the first essay of *En torno al casticismo*, “La tradición eterna.” Despite Unamuno’s bold claims about the historical power of the novel, *intrahistoria* is probably considered his greatest contribution to thinking on the subject of history. Unamuno called *intrahistoria* “lo inconsciente en la historia” (*En torno al casticismo* 27), the undulating movement of minute, every-day occurrences that forms the ocean of historical reality. This silent, monotonous movement of history—the working out of “la tradición eterna”—is the locus of a truth deeper than the reports of what happens on the crests of history’s

⁴ Hereafter, for the sake of brevity, *LNDS*.

waves. Unamuno juxtaposed *intrahistoria* with the type of history that makes its way into newspapers and history books:

Todo lo que cuentan a diario los periódicos, la historia toda del “presente momento histórico”, no es sino la superficie del mar, una superficie que se hiela y cristaliza así . . . Los periódicos nada dicen de la vida silenciosa de los millones de hombres sin historia que a todas horas del día y en todos los países del globo se levantan a una orden del sol y van a sus campos a proseguir la oscura y silenciosa labor cotidiana y eterna, esa labor que como la de las madréporas suboceánicas echa las bases sobre que se alzan los islotes de la historia. (*En torno al casticismo* 27-28)

As Peter Earle concluded in his survey of Unamuno and “history,” “Unamuno and the Theme of History,” “[I]t is not difficult to see that Unamuno’s concept of the history and destiny of *peoples*—a history and destiny (past and future) inseparable from that of individual men—had a fundamental effect on his idea of the dilemma of single souls” (Earle 339). As a novel reflects its author’s personality and functions therefore as autobiography, it is the *intrahistoria*, and not the record of official history, that tells the true story of a nation’s personality. This idea that it is the large-scale shape of things, rather than discrete “factual” claims, that tells the truth about past and present is central in all of Unamuno’s work.⁵

Within the confines of a novel, the use of first-person narration creates yet another author figure whose personality essentially shapes the story. Unamuno is notorious for blurring the lines between author and narrator; as Gonzalo Navajas has noted, for Unamuno, “[e]l yo es una

⁵ As Earle also discusses, a preoccupation that Unamuno carried into his reflection on history was the distinction between “el hecho” and “el suceso,” which appears and re-appears in his fiction, essay and poetry (e.g., the 1928 poem “No es un hecho, es un suceso”). The 1912 essay “El porvenir de España” describes this duality in language in terms similar to those of *En torno al casticismo*: “Hemos atendido más a los *sucesos* históricos que pasan y se pierden, que a los *hechos* sub-históricos, que permanecen y van estratificándose en profundas capas.” The interest in the “sub-histórico” is what I argue can be likened to the obsession with the problem of personality.

ficción textual” (60). In an examination of how personality shapes and creates novelistic truth, then, fictional authors/narrators create a theoretical laboratory for problems that are always already present for human narrators. In Unamuno, there is always to some extent a division between his characters and himself, but the problem of personality exists for all. To return to Navajas’s description of the Unamunian perspective, “Estamos inmersos en la letra, estamos literarizados y ese fenómeno conlleva que nuestra observación del mundo se produzca a través de una recomposición creadoramente deformante de lo que observamos” (56). What interests me is this creatively deforming perspective, which is all part of the transfer of the author (whether merely human or merely textual) into the created work.

HISTORICAL FICTION AS AUTOPSY

Historical fiction is unique in that, where a claim of relationship to a historical time period or episode exists, there are really two bodies in play: one is the body of the author/narrator exercising the work of creative deforming, and the second is the body of historical knowledge that anchors an author/narrator’s inquiry into the past. While the author/narrator wields the present power of the written word and narrative focus, the body of materials available still lends its particular personality to and sets limits on the final product.

To think about this relationship between the narrator and the body of facts being examined, the metaphor of autopsy is helpful for what it can teach us about both the objective solidity and subjective fluidity of truth. Michel Foucault dedicated two chapters to the history of autopsy in his history of the French medical establishment, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. He describes the difficulty present for a doctor performing an autopsy in capturing the truth of the patient’s condition, even with the entire body available

for his examination. The utopic answer to this problem would be “the great myth of a pure Gaze that would be pure language: a speaking eye” (114). As this speaking eye could immediately translate what it sees to language, it would be “the servant of things and the master of truth” (115). The problem is that there is a chasm between the visible and the expressible, as Foucault develops further:

[C]linical experience represents a moment of balance between speech and spectacle. A precarious balance, for it rests on a formidable postulate: that all that is *visible* is *expressible*, and that it is *wholly visible* because it is *wholly expressible*.” (115)

Of course, there is no “speaking eye” to which even a doctor—fully immersed in the seemingly-objective language and limitations of science—can make recourse. Foucault concludes that “[t]otal *description* is a present and ever-withdrawing horizon” (115). This is even more true for the would-be historian examining the remains of a past period or event.

Even where total description is not possible, however, the corpse offers up special types of truth by virtue of its lack of life. In examining the corpse, the doctor gains perspective on space and time that could not be gained without the aid of the figurative freeze imposed by death. “It is from the height of death,” Foucault says,

that one can see and analyze organic dependences and pathological sequences. Instead of being what it had so long been, the night in which life disappeared, in which even the disease becomes blurred, it is now endowed with that great power of elucidation that dominates and reveals both the space of the organism and the time of the disease. The privilege of its intemporality, which is no doubt as old as the consciousness of its imminence, is turned for the first time into a technical instrument that provides a grasp on the truth of life and the nature of its illness. Death is the great analyst that shows the

connexions by unfolding them, and bursts open the wonders of genesis in the rigour of decomposition: and the word *decomposition* must be allowed to stagger under the weight of its meaning. (144)

Just as the death of the corpse opens up a window in time through which the doctor can complete his or her inquiry, the dead-ness of a past historical moment opens a space for analysis and reconsideration of a web of relationships as they existed in that moment. Part of what any author will do in examining a body of evidence for the purpose of history-writing is to rearrange what s/he encounters in the corpus into a new framework of narrative time and space. The very dead-ness of the event offers it up for reconsideration and de- and re-composition by a new author, even while the impossibility of the “speaking eye” assures that part of the truth will always remain veiled and inaccessible.

The relationship between body and truth presented in the metaphor of autopsy bears some resemblance to what contemporary Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo calls “weak thought” or “weak truth,” a type of truth that is “not objective correspondence but the paradigmatic horizon within which every correspondence is verifiable” (*Farewell* xxxiii). Vattimo’s truth is not without moorings; just as the doctor must anchor himself in the physical reality of the patient’s body, the one who searches for truth as Vattimo understands it is driven by his unique perspective and by the unique need of the process in which he is engaged. Rather than seeking an ultimate objective truth that will furnish his fundamental orientation toward the world, he realizes that he will only answer a limited set of questions and that the answers to those questions may conflict with other information. Where history specifically is concerned, Vattimo advocates an acceptance of history as “open to the future” (*Farewell* xxxii), in the sense that the understanding of a particular history may be seen as dynamic in response to present inquiry

rather than static and potentially procurable-as-object once and for all. Vattimo anchors his trek toward “weak truth” in his readings of Nietzsche and Heidegger, taking a nuanced and highly personal journey away from the idea of ultimate Being and truth-as-appeal to an idea of truth-aperture. As in the case of autopsy, this type of quest for truth does not discount the possibility of learning things that are true, but it is at every step cognizant of its limitations.

In a connection that will be significant as we consider Unamuno’s problem of personality, Vattimo make a specific link between weak thought and incarnation in the part-memoir, part-philosophy textbook, *Belief*. He says,

The fact of the matter is that at a certain moment I found myself thinking that the weak reading of Heidegger and the idea of the history of Being has as a guiding thread the weakening of strong structures, of the claimed peremptoriness of the real that is given “there, outside,” like a wall against which one beats one’s head, and that in this way makes itself known as effectively real (it is an image of the reality of Being and ultimately of God’s transcendence...), was nothing but the transcription of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God. (*Belief* 36)

For Vattimo, the doctrine of the incarnation establishes a model for transitioning from thinking of truth as hard, immovable, and attainable-as-object to contemplating it as soft, flexible, and imbued with personality. In the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, God took on human form to interact with humans on a personal level. Rather than abstract, all-encompassing Being, Truth—in Jesus—became a person. “Revelation,” of the type that Vattimo sees incarnate in Christ, “does not speak of an objective truth, but of an ongoing salvation” (48).

With this incarnational approach in mind, Vattimo accepts Heidegger's invitation to view truth not a statement of verifiable fact, but as an unveiling of a reality. Discussing his debt to Heidegger, Vattimo says,

[T]he relation of thought to the truth of Being, to the original aperture of truth, to the milieu into which *Dasein* is thrown, is in no sense a cognizance, a theoretical acquisition. Rather, it is what Wittgenstein would call the sharing of a "form of life." This does not mean something purely irrational, since, in Heidegger anyway, it means assuming the heritage of the tradition into which we are thrown as a horizon of possibility. (*Farewell* xxxi-xxxii)

I propose that to think of history as the autopsy of a particular corpse is to allow room for a flexible truth in the tradition of Vattimo, while allowing for the hard reality of a particular ground to the inquiry. Rather than treating historical remains as "a datum to be known objectively," the historian operating under Vattimo's weak-truth paradigm sees these remains "as a message that we have to knowingly interpret and transform" (*Farewell* xxxii). Even where a change is needed in how we view the firmness of historical conclusions, we must not deny that there *are* conclusions to be drawn.

Following Vattimo to Heidegger, the truth we are discussing, then, is closer to what Heidegger described in *Einführung in die Metaphysik* as aperture or "un-concealment." In describing this kind of truth, Heidegger made recourse to the Greek word *alētheia*, which is intertwined with the reality of being or *physis*:

The essence of being is *physis*. Appearing is the power that emerges. Appearing makes manifest. Already we know then that being, appearing, causes to emerge from concealment. Since the essent as such *is*, it places itself in and stands in *unconcealment*,

alētheia. We translate, and at the same time thoughtlessly misinterpret, this word as “truth.” (102)

As in the case of the autopsy, what is unconcealed may not be the whole of being, but it is no less true for being only a partial revelation. The corpse present in the autopsy represents a potential shifting ground for an exploration of truth as aperture.

Heidegger warns against the improper use of *alētheia* and sheds more light on the importance of the significance of the *essent* (what *is*) to this understanding of truth:

[P]eople are gradually beginning to translate the Greek word *alētheia* literally. But this does not help much if one goes right on to construe “truth” in a totally different un-Greek sense and attribute this other sense to the Greek word. For the Greek essence of truth is possible only in one with the Greek essence of truth as *physis*. On the strength of the unique and essential relationship between *physis* and *alētheia* the Greeks would have said: The essent is true insofar as it is. The true as such is essent. (102)

This concept of truth as *essent* marks the meeting place of the thinkers that I have introduced so far. Unamuno’s description of *intrahistoria* encompasses the claim in his fiction that a novel could be truer than history. Just as he finds the truth of history in the ebb and flow of unconscious, unrecorded everyday life, the truth of an author’s existence within history is present in his unconscious record of it in the writing of his novel. As a truth of personality, this kind of truth can be known (just as we can come to know each other), but it cannot be validated as such. This is one of Vattimo’s main points about the truth apparent in Christ’s incarnation. It is the truth of a person’s nature, as complicated, obscure, and opaque as that kind of truth often is; it is not the truth of a proposition.

In the novel according to *Don Sandalio*'s epilogue-writer, the novelist himself acts as an incarnated truth. His creative product speaks for his personality such as it is, and therein lies a truth that can be uncovered by readers of his work. It is also a truth that incorporates the knowledge that the author/narrator has received about the past. What he has learned in observing the past becomes part of his personality and part of what is revealed in his writing. The two bodies—narrator and the remains of the past—are continually influencing one another, becoming irrevocably intermingled in the act of creating a new written word.

The encounter with the aperture is true of all creative acts that relate to reality. Every time a poet or novelist or historian is inspired by or captures something from reality in a text, this type of aperture is created and employed as the portal to the created world. What Unamuno does in *SMBM* and *LNDS* is to expand this idea—to take a space that is normally collapsed and open it up for consideration. This process does not lend itself to a tidy relationship with truth that ties up all the loose ends into a neat objectivity. Gonzalo Navajas put it this way: “Unamuno prefiere estar en contacto con los datos imperfectos de la experiencia humana más que con su versión sublimada por un proceso de depuración de los elementos que no son asimilables a la matriz interpretativa con que se los explica” (65). The choice of one story out of a number of stories is an always-present but mostly-invisible antecedent to the writing of any [hi]story.

OVER MOSES' DEAD BODY: *SAN MANUEL BUENO, MÁRTIR* AS A STRUGGLE OVER A CORPSE

The often-overlooked epilogue to Miguel de Unamuno's 1931 short story *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*⁶ invokes an obscure biblical episode from the cryptic epistle of Jude: the struggle between the archangel Michael and Satan over Moses' dead body. The paragraph that includes the

⁶ For the sake of brevity, I will refer to this text in this chapter as "*SMBM*."

biblical citation stands alone, with seemingly no transition from or to its neighbors above or below:

Y ahora, antes de cerrar este epílogo, quiero recordarte, lector paciente, el versillo noveno de la Epístola del olvidado apóstol San Judas —¡lo que hace un nombre!—, donde se nos dice cómo mi celestial patrono, San Miguel Arcángel —Miguel quiere decir “¿Quién como Dios?”, y arcángel, archimensajero—, disputó con el diablo —diablo quiere decir acusador, fiscal— por el cuerpo de Moisés y no toleró que se lo llevase en juicio de maldición, sino que le dijo al diablo: “El Señor te reprenda.” Y el que quiera entender que entienda. (59)

In this paragraph, the epilogue-writer turns the story’s main narrative on its head, suggesting with the reference from Jude that the narrator, Ángela Carballino—despite her celestial name—is playing the role of devil’s advocate. Ángela’s biographical description of the priest Manuel Bueno, which comprises the bulk of the story, is recorded against the backdrop of an inquiry into Manuel’s beatification by the local bishop. Rather than affirming Don Manuel’s claims to saintliness, as she purports to have done in her official communication with the bishop, Ángela uses this alternate text—her “confesión íntima”—to paint a competing portrait of the priest’s life and work in the small village of Valverde de Lucerna. Ángela suggests that the priest did not believe in the creed he preached to the unsuspecting faithful of their village, instead mounting a “piadoso fraude” aimed to lead the villagers, if not toward truth, at least toward blissful ignorance. In Ángela’s words, “[A]hora creen en san Manuel Bueno, mártir, que sin esperar inmortalidad les mantuvo en la esperanza de ella” (58). The portrait of Don Manuel present here is one of a priest whose version of Christianity was, at best, unorthodox, and, at worst, heretical or even blasphemous.

To be devil's advocate in the context of beatification connotes more than merely giving voice to a skeptical position. In Roman Catholic parlance, the devil's advocate is another name for the "Promoter of the Faith," an individual whose task is to present all evidence opposed to an individual's canonization in a trial-like setting. Like the Promoter of the Faith, Ángela's work is to cast doubt on Don Manuel's qualifications for sainthood as gathered by the bishop from the testimonies of the faithful of Valverde de Lucerna. The very idea of competing narratives of the priest's life, made explicit by the reference to Jude in the epilogue, is present from the opening sentences of the story.

More than casting Ángela as a type of Satan ("for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light," to borrow Saint Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 11:14), the epilogue of *SMBM* suggests the image of a struggle over a corpse as an overarching metaphor for the story. Here, the corpse is that of Don Manuel, whose story is being investigated by the bishop and whose biography is provided by Ángela in the form of her eyewitness testimony. In much the same way that the manner of Moses' burial is under dispute, the figurative burial of Don Manuel's reputation is being disputed by diverging accounts of his life. Viewing Don Manuel as a corpse emphasizes that Ángela, rather than Don Manuel, is the one with the agency in the story. Although the document received by the reader bears Don Manuel's name, the personality encountered in the reading of the story is actually that of Ángela and not her priestly father-figure.

LITERARY AUTOPSIES OF *SAN MANUEL BUENO, MÁRTIR*

While the version of the priest's life story given in the main text of *SMBM* has been accepted by many readers and critics at face value (more on that in a moment), a reading that focuses on the

reader's encounter with Ángela herself seems more in keeping with the Unamunian preoccupation with texts, authorship, and personality that guides this chapter. A brief review of the criticism surrounding *SMBM* will place my own arguments in the greater context of the scholarship on this story.

Whether self-consciously or not, many critics who have written about *SMBM* adopt a position on the relationship of fiction to history in the way they choose to approach the story, in some cases arguing that fiction can give a truer account of historical reality than biography itself. The main division of criticism of *SMBM* is between critics who accept the story's narrative as a reliable biographical account of the priest Manuel Bueno, and those who argue that the text purposefully throws the reliability of that narrative into question. Both lines of criticism anchor themselves in specific known characteristics of Miguel de Unamuno himself. Those who see the text as a reliable biographical account often link it to Unamuno's own biography by suggesting that readers can get a better view of the historical Unamuno through his portrayal of a fictional priest. Those who see the text as a hermeneutical problem point to Unamuno's proclivity for creating stories that create space for the reader to exercise his own creative powers of interpretation.

The most common reading of *SMBM* offers Don Manuel as a quasi-autobiographical figure, the incarnation of Unamuno's *hombre agónico*.⁷ The consideration of the story as

⁷ Unamuno's agonic man, whose nature is explored in both *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1912) and *La agonía del cristianismo* (1930), is engaged in an existential struggle related philosophically to the struggle of will in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche and to Kierkegaard's knight of faith (a figure that Unamuno sees, in the Spanish context, incarnated by Don Quixote himself). In Unamuno's work, agony is a proof of life. Those who receive life passively, or—in the case of religion—who blindly accept the "fe del carbonero," are functioning as the dead. *La agonía del cristianismo* develops the idea that the original agony of Christianity was the agony of Christ, who cried out from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Unamuno takes this to be an expression of doubt at the very moment of Christ's redemptive act, a sign that there was an unresolved tension at the heart of Christ's relationship with God the Father. A repetition of this agonic tension is, then, what characterizes the life of those who aim to imitate Christ by taking on the mantle of discipleship. The heart of Christianity for Unamuno is, rather than an acceptance of a given dogma, an individual's living-out of this tension between belief and doubt.

autobiography is more prevalent with *SMBM* than with the rest of Unamuno's fiction, as numerous critics interpret the story as a veiled account of Unamuno's own faith crises and even perhaps a sign of his own atheism. The most prominent of these critics is Antonio Sánchez Barbudo,⁸ who first explained his thesis in the 1950 article "La formación del pensamiento de Unamuno. Una experiencia decisiva: la crisis de 1897," a thesis he would go on to develop in subsequent articles and eventually in his book *Estudios sobre Unamuno y Machado* (1959). Sánchez Barbudo undertakes a detailed historical analysis of Unamuno's life and his reflections on faith, relying primarily on his fiction and correspondence.⁹

Based on Unamuno's description of a crisis of faith in 1897 (an event widely discussed in Unamuno scholarship), Sánchez Barbudo hypothesizes that in that year Unamuno renounced the faith of his childhood and turned to atheism. A later and similarly troubling crisis between 1924 and 1930 (the years of Unamuno's exile to France for his tumultuous involvement in Spanish politics) is said to have produced both *Cómo se hace una novela* and *SMBM*. According to Sánchez Barbudo, Unamuno chose not to proclaim his atheism to the world, instead limiting himself to subtle suggestions throughout his personal correspondence and fictional and philosophical corpus. Sánchez Barbudo finds these suggestions at their loudest in *SMBM*, where he reads the priest as a stand-in for Unamuno:

[E]n la historia del párroco de Valverde de Lucerna es donde mejor y más bellamente él mostró la intimidad de su alma; y, ya que él se identifica con ese incrédulo párroco, la historia donde más claramente indica cuál era el verdadero fondo de sus creencias: es *San*

⁸ J. Ferrater Mora is among those who have argued that *SMBM* is a testament to a crisis of faith that marked a significant transition in Unamuno's life and belief. See *Unamuno, bosquejo de una filosofía* (Buenos Aires: 1957).

⁹ Given the weight that critics like Sánchez Barbudo put on Unamuno's correspondence, it is ironic that Unamuno chose to use the medium of correspondence in *Don Sandalio* to completely up-end any of the reader's potential presuppositions about the reliability or truthfulness of the medium. One way of reading Unamuno's letters is to accept that the "Unamuno" who belonged to any of his individual correspondents was idiosyncratic and cannot be captured (or comprehended/understood) by other readers, especially at a distance of time or intimacy.

Manuel Bueno, mártir, su confesión más sincera, su testamento definitivo. (“Los últimos años...”, 282-283)

In this reading, Don Manuel is an atheist, even though he still teaches Christian dogma for the good of an ignorant public who craves the “opio” of a belief in a better life after death. Don Manuel’s commitment to what Sánchez Barbudo calls “la fe ingenua” is not intended to be portrayed in a negative light; instead, it is an expression of the use of feigned faith for the pragmatic good of less-sophisticated followers for whom blind faith¹⁰ is still possible.

Significantly, Sánchez Barbudo’s criticism **does** take into account the epigraph’s mention of the epistle of Saint Jude,¹¹ an acknowledgement that is sparse in Unamuno criticism.¹² The meaning given this epigraph by Sánchez Barbudo, however, is wrapped up with his stalwart commitment to autobiographical criticism. He interprets the repetition of the archangel Michael’s phrase, “El señor te reprenda,” as an absolution of Moses’ failures—an absolution that Sánchez Barbudo argues Unamuno was extending to Don Manuel, and, in turn, to himself: “Y lo que quiere insinuar, en total, es que el párroco, por haber engañado a su pueblo no merecía reproche, y él tampoco por haber engañado al lector” (“Los últimos años...”, 292). The comparison of the

¹⁰ In a 2006 article, Harold Mancing expressed his disgust with the priest as characterized in this light. For Mancing, Don Manuel is “one of those self-appointed conservative intellectual élites who believe that while they can struggle with the important philosophical, religious, political, economic and/or social issues, the masses cannot” (357). At the same time, Mancing heeds John Butt’s warning against ascribing Don Manuel’s thoughts to Unamuno himself, instead interpreting the priest as a “test case to illustrate what might happen if one started with his exact concerns and then acted in a way almost diametrically opposed to the option he chose throughout his life” (349).

¹¹ As Ciriaco Morón Arroyo has pointed out, Sánchez Barbudo refers to the Jude citation in “Los últimos años de Unamuno” as “el Evangelio” (292). Jude is, in fact, a separate epistle included near the end of the New Testament, not part of the Gospel accounts. This highlights an interesting problem with Unamuno criticism: it seems that the more familiar a critic is him/herself with Christianity or the biblical texts alluded to by Unamuno, the more likely that the critic will find the story conducive to a reading where the priest is not truly faithless after all.

¹² In fact, Morón Arroyo has said that Sánchez Barbudo has staked his entire reading of *SMBM* on three textual points, among them the epilogue: “El profesor Sánchez Barbudo fundamenta su tesis de que *San Manuel* representa un *Mea culpa* de Unamuno, en tres textos: el concepto de arrepentimiento que da el párroco en *SMBM*..., en el texto “yo no puedo perder a mi pueblo para ganarme el alma,” y en el enigmático texto de San Judas aducido por Unamuno al fin de la novela” (230). Even a 2001 article by Eduardo Godoy Gallardo, called “El trasfondo bíblico en ‘San Manuel Bueno, mártir’ de Miguel de Unamuno” and self-described as “un rastreo minucioso de personajes y hechos presentes, tanto en el Antiguo como en el Nuevo Testamento,” makes no mention of the citation to Jude in the epigraph. See Eduardo Godoy Gallardo, “El trasfondo bíblico en ‘San Manuel Bueno, mártir’ de Miguel de Unamuno.” *Revista Chilena de Literatura*, 58, Apr. 2001, 19-34.

“engaño” carried out by Don Manuel to that carried out by Unamuno is not difficult to accept if one is also willing to accept Sánchez Barbudo’s premise that Don Manuel is a stand-in for Unamuno. But the leap from Moses’ disobedience (which is what barred him from entering the Promised Land) to Don Manuel’s is never explained.

Sánchez Barbudo’s reading has come under criticism both from scholars who object to his leaning so heavily on biographical parallelism and from those who argue that his interpretation of *SMBM* as a veiled declaration of atheism does not harmonize with the rest of Unamuno’s corpus, especially his poetry. Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, Marie Panico, and John Butt are among these scholars. Morón Arroyo argued beginning in 1964 that *SMBM* should be interpreted as part of a complete system established by Unamuno and credits the story as “un inventario de las ideas de Unamuno” (227). In the context of this system of Unamuno’s, faith and doubt are not mutually exclusive conditions, but coexist in complex ways. Morón Arroyo expresses surprise that Sánchez Barbudo would characterize *SMBM* as laudatory of “la fe ingenua.” He says, “Es inexplicable que Sánchez Barbudo descubra en ‘San Manuel, Bueno...’ ‘respeto a la fe ingenua.’ La falta de respeto a la ‘fe ingenua’ es una constante de la obra unamuniana; y esta falta de respeto, cobra en los últimos años un tono auténticamente agresivo” (229). In response to Sánchez Barbudo’s argument that Unamuno’s description of *SMBM* as his “testamento definitivo” is intended as a confession of Unamuno’s own atheism, Morón Arroyo counters that *SMBM* is, rather, “una exposición más de la constante actitud teológica de Unamuno, su ‘testamento definitivo’; pero no porque contradiga testamentos anteriores, sino porque es el último inventario de la hacienda espiritual que Unamuno fué legando a través de su vida” (232).

Marie Panico adds to Morón Arroyo's analysis a detailed overview (again in direct response to Sánchez Barbudo) of the themes of doubt, death, and immortality present in Unamuno's *Cancionero*, published well after the date of the crises so important for Sánchez Barbudo's arguments. Rather than "a theatrical demonstration of an untruth" (475), as alleged by Sánchez Barbudo, Panico finds the treatment of these three themes in *SMBM* to be consistent with Unamuno's "genuine personal concern" (*Ibid.*) with them, as expressed in his poetic work.

In a 1981 monograph, John Butt joined those who warned against giving too much weight to any purported faith crisis (or other biographical feature) of Unamuno in order to interpret *SMBM*:

Those who are new to Unamuno's work should be wary of drawing too many conclusions about his character or beliefs from *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, a work which some *Unamunistas* have (for no obvious reason) taken as the definitive final statement of his real views about the matters it raises. To read it thus consigns all his earlier, major works to the status of provisional stages in his thought. There is surely something wrong with a critical approach which takes only the last works in a man's life as the true record of his beliefs.

San Manuel Bueno, mártir in many ways actually negates what Unamuno stood for himself, and...it should be read neither as a straight reflection of its author's beliefs nor as an attempt at a realistic portrayal of rural life in the modern age. The novel has a strong element of fantasy, and it is in some ways a tentative, hesitant and what Unamuno would call exemplary (*ejemplar*) work— i.e. it offers a particular instance or case of human behaviour but in many ways suspends judgement on it. (10)

Like Morón Arroyo and others, Butt reads *SMBM* as an extension of Unamuno's overall project and style, rather than a fictional reflection on a particular decision or life event. "It is really not possible," he says, "to simplify or talk away the ambiguities and inconsistencies in [Unamuno's] work, for of all authors he is the most exasperatingly and deliberately contradictory" (9).

In his own reading of *SMBM*, Butt sees the possibility of an allegory pointing to the life of Christ as presented in the Gospels:

It is difficult not to conclude from the obvious parallels that Unamuno deliberately based his story on the New Testament; that he wishes to implant in our minds, in an oblique, allusive way, the idea that Jesus willingly became the chief martyr of a faith which he founded without really believing in it himself, and that he did so that we might all live contentedly like the parishioners of Valverde de Lucerna. Unamuno is implying that Jesus was no more (or less) than a human hero who suffered death in order to create and reinforce human illusions. (62)

Butt emphasizes, however, that rather than insisting on the viability of a particular manner of reading the story, he is most interested moving the criticism toward the text itself and away from analyses that are focused on links between the text and Unamuno's own biography.

Another branch of *SMBM* criticism moves the focus away from Don Manuel and onto Ángela and her role as narrator. Reed Anderson proposed in his 1974 article, "The narrative voice in Unamuno's *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*," that "we look at Ángela Carballino, not Don Manuel, as the novel's «main character» and that we regard her struggle with her own existence as the novel's most intriguing aspect" (68). Anderson emphasizes that the reader's only access to Don Manuel's story is through Ángela's account; he traces the ways that Ángela's biographical enterprise moves from glowing descriptions of the public, legendary figure of Don Manuel (the

one whose reputation was related to her by her mother, and whose ministry in the town has entered the annals of local legend) to an intimate portrait of her own personal interactions with Don Manuel. As the narration moves inward, from the public stage to Ángela's own personal reflections, it becomes more and more characterized by doubt and despair. In Anderson's reading, language that indicates the subjectivity of Ángela's biography is especially significant, such as her statement that "la imagen de Don Manuel" had been growing within her (Anderson 70). Most important to his interpretation of the story, Anderson points to the fact that Ángela insists—without having provided any evidence whatsoever—that both her brother Lázaro and Don Manuel died believing, even if they did not know that they believed. Anderson reads this as a reiteration of Don Manuel's own faith crises as described by Ángela, and, on Ángela's part, a pragmatic affirmation of the type of response to doubt modeled for her by Don Manuel.

While Anderson mentions the epilogue, he does not give attention to the episode from Jude or, therefore, to the idea of two conflicting accounts of Don Manuel's biography. "Finally," Anderson says,

Unamuno himself enters the narration by way of a short and surprisingly unobtrusive postlogue. He does not break the fictional framework within which he has set his tale, but neither does he reveal the details of how he gained possession of Ángela's manuscript.

What he does express most emphatically is his own unquestioning belief in the portrait that Ángela presents here... (75)

He goes on to cite the affirmation in the epilogue that "De la realidad de este San Manuel Bueno, mártir, tal como me lo ha revelado su discípula e hija espiritual, Ángela Carballino, de esta realidad no se me ocurre dudar. Creo en ella más que creía el mismo santo; creo en ella más que creo en mi propia realidad" (*San Manuel Bueno, mártir, y tres historias más* 59). Even in this

affirmation, however, Anderson stops short of asserting that the epilogue's Unamuno is accepting Ángela's narrative at face value. Instead, he says that the epilogue's Unamuno "recognizes that the portrait we have before us is the product of Ángela's individual consciousness, and in expressing his belief in that portrait, he is affirming his belief in the reality of objects created out of faith and love" (Anderson 75). This interpretation eyes Ángela as narrator a little warily, but without entering into the significance of the Jude anecdote to the interpretation of her testimony.

Expanding on Anderson's focus on Ángela as the protagonist of the story, C.A. Longhurst argues that Ángela is an unreliable narrator, and—most importantly—that the expression of the Don Manuel story through the voice of an unreliable narrator is crucial to its structure and significance. *SMBM* is, in Longhurst's reading, much bigger than a story about a doubting priest. It is in itself an exercise for readers in the experience of doubt and belief or disbelief, revolving around a kind of gospel-according-to-Ángela. Longhurst points to the epilogue as evidence that Unamuno has set up Ángela as the counterbalance to the bishop in the canonization process, a devil's advocate who is trying to desecrate the portrait of Don Manuel as a candidate for sainthood. Longhurst's analysis, first expressed in an article in 1981, grounds itself in part in a contemporary [postmodern] reading that "move[s] away from the novel based on events and towards the novel based on the *perception* of events" (581). Longhurst works from the premise that "there is no way we can get to know the truth about Don Manuel because we do not see Don Manuel directly; all we see is Ángela's reconstruction of him. We get absolutely no other view of Don Manuel, not even Lázaro's, because Lázaro's account of him is given through Ángela" (581). He describes Ángela's as a "portrayal of Don Manuel in which the overt aim of presenting him in a saintly light is undermined by a covert reprobation which has no very clear

cause but which reflects her lonely and unhappy situation at the time of writing” (593).

According to Longhurst, the ambiguity of *SMBM* is its strength:

[W]hile the work is certainly ambiguous, this ambiguity has its own internal justification: it is more than just a cheap attempt at fashionable obscurity; it is an integral part of the story, an essential dimension without which this particular novel would collapse. Another kind of narrator would write quite another kind of work. Ángela’s history, her personality, her circumstances, create the fiction. On this level the work is perfectly meaningful and intelligible and there is no need to resort to Unamuno’s own biography in search of the rosetta stone with which to decipher his novelistic hieroglyphics. (595-596.)

Attacks on Longhurst’s reading include M. Gordon’s objection that emphasizing the existence of the story as an artifact may have been interesting at the height of postmodern criticism but is now passé, and that to adopt such a perspective empties the story of any meaningful content.¹³ This reading is surprising in light of Gordon’s otherwise incisive reading of Unamuno, since the technique of creating an unstable story open to interpretation seems like an entirely Unamunian thing to do. Indeed, in *Don Sandalio*, the epilogue writer (often thought to be an Unamuno figure) boasts of having done exactly that, as I will discuss in more detail below.

In short, there are those readers who take Ángela’s description of Don Manuel as a biographical account, valuable for its truth-claims about the title character (the surprising majority), and those who do not. In the larger context of Unamuno’s other work, the second reading makes the most sense to me. Rather than giving his readers a story with one primary possible reading, it is much more likely that Unamuno offers a layered work, with a multiplicity of meanings, that requires his readers to perform their own exercise of belief or doubt in the way that they interpret the story. As Gonzalo Navajas has said, in Unamuno’s corpus “la ficción tiene

¹³ What Howard Mancing has called “Longhurst’s nihilistic conclusions” (Mancing, 362 n. 27).

como propósito dinamizar conceptos abstractos que, sin el componente ficcional aparecerían como desprovistos de *energeion* o vitalidad y, por consiguiente, dentro de los presupuestos teóricos unamunianos, también de significación” (75). *SMBM* breathes life into the idea of existential struggle by inviting the reader to experience a struggle occurring in Ángela’s unique personality.

The critics with whom I find myself most closely aligned (John Butt, C.A. Longhurst), are also those whose work delves deeper into the biblical allusions made by Unamuno and finds *SMBM* consistent with the treatment of faith, doubt, and authorship that runs through all of Unamuno’s work. They also create the space for a tension to exist in the reader’s mind between different interpretations of Don Manuel’s and Ángela’s words and actions. Finally, they create an intertextual space where the “gospel” of Don Manuel, as recorded particularly by Ángela, enters into dialogue with documents like the biblical Gospels, making statements about hermeneutical approaches generally and history-reading specifically.

THE PROBLEM OF ÁNGELA’S PERSONALITY IN SAN MANUEL, BUENO

Returning to the struggle-over-the corpse metaphor introduced in the epilogue to *SMBM*, my reading of *SMBM* is focused not on the characterization of Don Manuel’s belief or unbelief, but on Ángela’s personality as one with agency over the treatment of Don Manuel’s dead body. There are two places where the encounter with Ángela’s personality is evident as a central component of the reader’s experience in *SMBM*. The first is the contrast presented between Ángela’s account and the life-of-the-saint narrative being compiled by the local bishop. The second is the way that the text emphasizes Ángela’s emphatic personal need to find a way to

bury Don Manuel's memory in order to move on with her own life (specifically, as she approaches death).

As in the biblical image cited in the epilogue, there are two individuals struggling over the corpse in *SMBM*: Ángela and the bishop pursuing Don Manuel's canonization. The bishop's account exists in the background, but it is present from the opening sentence of Ángela's text:

Ahora que el obispo de la diócesis de Renada, a la que pertenece esta mi querida aldea de Valverde de Lucerna, anda, a lo que se dice, promoviendo el proceso para la beatificación de nuestro Don Manuel, o, mejor, san Manuel Bueno, que fue en esta párroco, quiero dejar aquí consignado, a modo de confesión y sólo Dios sabe, que no yo, con qué destino, todo lo que sé y recuerdo de aquel varón matriarcal que llenó toda la más entrañada vida de mi alma, que fue mi verdadero padre espiritual, el padre de mi espíritu, del mío, el de Ángela Carballino. (25)

From these first words, Ángela positions herself and her text in relation to the bishop and his. She implies here that it is the bishop's creation of a text that has inspired her own personal memoir; she does not trust the bishop's account to preserve her memory of Don Manuel.

Ángela has good reason to believe that her account will differ from the bishop's in significant ways. Although Ángela has been interviewed by the bishop as an eyewitness to Don Manuel's life, she admits in her memoir that she has left out some very important details. Ángela returns to her interactions with the bishop in the closing paragraph of her memoir:

Parece que el ilustrísimo señor obispo, el que ha promovido el proceso de beatificación de nuestro santo de Valverde de Lucerna, se propone escribir su vida, una especie de manual del perfecto párroco, y recoge para ello toda clase de noticias. A mí me las ha pedido con insistencia, ha tenido entrevistas conmigo, le he dado toda clase de datos,

pero me he callado siempre el secreto trágico de Don Manuel y de mi hermano. Y es curioso que él no lo haya sospechado. (58)

As far as veracity is concerned, Ángela's eyewitness account to the bishop amounts to nothing short of sabotage. She intentionally conceals the truth about what she believes to be Don Manuel's "pianos fraude" in all of her interviews with him. Through no fault of his own (except perhaps naive credulity), the bishop's account is tainted.

We also know that, without Ángela's help, there is not much to go on. Only Ángela remains to offer this kind of personal account. Neither Lázaro nor Don Manuel is alive to be called as a witness, and, as Ángela has noted, Don Manuel "[e]scribía muy poco para sí, de tal modo que apenas nos ha dejado escritos o notas" (31). Don Manuel's remains truly are limited here to his corpse, buried inside the planks of the walnut tree, and to the memories of those who knew him in life. It is true, as the epilogue-writer asserts, that "en lo que se cuenta en este relato no pasa nada" (60); it is the historian who lends meaning and dynamic significance to the now-lifeless body of Don Manuel's work. As it exists in the collective memory of Valverde de Lucerna, this body cannot be impeached or even reached by Ángela; it is a body of information that may be meaningfully employed by both Ángela and the bishop with disparate effects. The real action in the story, then, occurs in Ángela's choices about what to do with Don Manuel's body: it is the movement of Ángela's pen on paper as she produces her own history.

In contrast to the bishop's hagiography, Ángela's text is personal. The bishop, crafting a life-of-a-saint narrative as part of the canonization process, has obviously already cast Don Manuel in a particular light. The tension between faith and doubt that captures Ángela's attention will be collapsed in the bishop's account with the foregone conclusion of Don Manuel's orthodoxy. In each case, the historian places the corpse precisely where he or she wants it. For

her part, Ángela is using her memoir to situate Don Manuel in her own autobiography, analyzing his influence and what she believes or refuses to believe about him. The bishop, we can assume, is interested in determining the reality of any miracles that have supposedly been performed by the candidate for sainthood. He will, therefore, pay particular attention to the parts of Don Manuel's remains that relate to these matters. Ángela is most concerned with the priest's interactions with her and her family. Therefore, she places the spotlight on particular conversations with herself and second-hand accounts of conversations with her brother Lázaro. Ángela's account is fundamentally personal and subjective.

The subjectivity of Ángela's account does not make it arbitrary. However she decides to tell the story of Don Manuel's life and faith, she must anchor herself in the corpus of his lived life. Like the bishop, she approaches this corpus and seeks to find meaning in it. Unlike the bishop, however, Ángela has been indelibly marked by her lifelong relationship with Don Manuel; that encounter (like everything else about Ángela's personality) will shape all of her future creative product whether she intends it to or not. Rather than a free-floating subjectivity, it is helpful to think of the encounter as a type of autopsy, where Ángela must rely on the physical evidence, but still possesses the narrative authority. Her work is one of interpretation, similar to the work undertaken by Vattimo's truth-seeker, who recognizes that, "we can no longer conceive salvation to be hearing and applying of a message that does not stand in need of interpretation" (*Belief* 60). Ángela's memoir thus functions as a history on two levels: first, for what it says as a text about Don Manuel and what he said and did; and, second, for what it says in a meta-textual sense about who Ángela is and how she undertakes her work of interpretation in interacting with Don Manuel's memory.

Michel De Certeau has called historiography “the representation of the dead along a narrative itinerary” (100), and the text of *SMBM* illustrates the power wielded by an individual historian over that itinerary. Ángela does not hold Don Manuel’s physical corpse in her hands, but she does hold a mental image of his person which she, in turn, hands down to us. The reader is wise to bear in mind Unamuno’s own warning that there is an overlap between the act of belief and the creative act (“creer es crear,” as he declares in the prologue to *Tres novelas ejemplares*), so that Ángela’s remembering is also an act of creating or re-creating. Ángela’s memoir is no less a work of history for being a creative act; it is history indeed, but of a special kind. “The body,” says de Certeau, “is a cipher that awaits deciphering” (3), and, whatever her skill (and intentional or unintentional employment of spin) as a historian, Ángela is at work deciphering Don Manuel’s physical cipher and recounting or creating a version of his person.

The structure of *SMBM* also emphasizes the reality that “history is a discourse in the third person” (46). In de Certeau’s words,

Discourse about the past has the status of being the discourse of the dead. The object circulating in it is only the absent, while its meaning is to be a language shared by the narrator and his or her readers, in other words, by living beings. . . . The dead are the objective figure of an exchange among the living. They are the *statement* of the discourse which carries them as an object, but in the guise of an interlocution thrown outside of discourse, in the unsaid. (46)

In *SMBM*, Don Manuel’s life is an object circulating through the discourse those characters who populate the fictional world—Ángela, Lázaro, the bishop, the townspeople. It also circulates through the discourse of those contemporary men and women who are still reading the novel and writing criticism. There is a version of Don Manuel that is given by Ángela, a version ambiguous

enough that its meaning is still being debated and giving rise to ever newer versions of his identity. There is a material Don Manuel, now interred in his self-made coffin, but his reality is “thrown outside the discourse.” No one can actually re-tell the reality of the body as it existed in life. The reality that reaches the reader of the text is the reality of Ángela’s personality as she contemplates her spiritual father’s earthly life.

ÁNGELA’S MEMOIR AS A FIGURATIVE BURIAL

In a second parallel with the account from Jude, Ángela’s text functions as a type of burial.

Ángela seeks to bury Don Manuel in the paragraphs of her memoir so that she can move on with her own life and, figuratively at least, set her affairs in order before her death. Her memoir is an illustration of de Certeau’s assertion that, “Writing speaks of the past only in order to inter it. Writing is a tomb in the double sense of the word in that, in the very same text, it both honors and eliminates. . . . A society furnishes itself with a present time by virtue of historical writing” (101). The act of history-writing creates a demarcation between alive and dead, leaving the living with the freedom to define all that has come before and create the boundaries of the space for their own contributions. Ángela’s memoir functions as both an homage to Don Manuel’s influence on her life and a declaration of independence from it.

The importance of Don Manuel’s figurative burial for the existence and content of the memoir is made evident in the text by means of Ángela’s preoccupation throughout with the related ideas of maternity and legacy. The themes of maternity and legacy are, unsurprisingly, both backward- and forward-looking in *SMBM*. On one hand, Ángela’s mentions of maternity take her back in time to her interactions with Don Manuel and her understanding of his own relationship as a father figure to the faithful of Valverde the Lucerna. On the other hand, the

thought of maternity implicates Ángela's future in that her maternal desires remain unrealized: even though she refuses to take vows as a nun, she never marries and has children. Without the comfort of children, an aging Ángela looks back at the legacy that Don Manuel left to her and Lázaro and forward to the legacy that she is leaving in the pages of her own "confesión íntima."

Ángela's stewardship of the secret of Don Manuel's "piadoso fraude" belongs to the core of her identity; she sees herself first and foremost as a disciple and even a mother-protector of Don Manuel and a faithful sister to her brother Lázaro. To assert that she alone has successfully shared their secret, "que nunca dejé trasparentar a los otros su divino, su santísimo juego" (57), gives Ángela a sense of intimacy with the men she most admired. In asserting that she is the sole living witness of the priest's fraud, Ángela elevates herself and distinguishes herself from the rest of the townspeople. Her account of this history is fundamental to the formation of her identity as she looks back on her life and determines her legacy, particularly as a woman without surviving family.

While it is not particularly noteworthy that Ángela refers to Don Manuel several times as "mi padre espiritual," the first such mention, in the story's opening paragraph, is conspicuously emphatic: "...llenó today la master entrañada vida de mi alma, que fue mi verdadero padre espiritual, **el padre de mi espíritu, del mío, el de Ángela Carballino**" (25, emphasis mine). This emphasis suggests that Ángela is doing more than using a colloquialism to describe her relationship to the priest. She is indicating that her relationship with him is fundamental to her understanding of her own spiritual existence: without the begetting influence of the spiritual progenitor, she has no spiritual identity. Ángela repeats this point continuously toward the end of the story by linking Don Manuel's existence and legacy with her own valuation of her life:

Y ahora, al haber perdido a mi san Manuel, al padre de mi alma, y a mi Lázaro, mi hermano aún más que carnal, espiritual, ahora es cuando me doy cuenta de que he envejecido y de cómo he envejecido. Pero ¿es que los he perdido?, ¿es que he envejecido?, ¿es que me acerco a mi muerte? (56-57)

Clearly, Ángela is not writing about anyone else's San Manuel (definitely not about the San Manuel whose deeds are being recorded by the bishop); the San Manuel in her text is hers alone, even if she is bound to explain her thoughts in relation to the known corpus of Don Manuel's life work.

Ángela twice repeats the description of Don Manuel as "mi padre espiritual," present in the opening lines (25, 37); she also calls him "[el] padre de mi alma" (56). Other uses of the possessive seem to emphasize not Don Manuel's paternal authority, but Ángela's maternal possessiveness of *him*. One example is her description of her absence from Valverde de Lucerna when she leaves the village for a few days to visit a friend in the city: "Sentía, sobre todo, la falta de mi Don Manuel y como si su ausencia me llamara, como si corriese un peligro lejos de mí..." (37). And she introduces this maternal feeling in direct connection with a recognition of the priest's paternal authority over her: "Empezaba yo a sentir una especie de afecto maternal hacia mi padre espiritual" (Ibid.).¹⁴

That Ángela sees herself as a type of mother figure for Don Manuel is also an echo of the priest's own employment of possessive language to refer to the faithful of his village.¹⁵ Don

¹⁴ Ángela's connection, here and elsewhere, of her relationship to Don Manuel with motherhood and maternal instinct is a good indication, as C.A. Longhurst has argued, that her response to him is shaped in part by repressed romantic and/or sexual longing. While this reading seemingly stands at odds with Unamuno's own assertions about the celibate life and the longing for parenthood in *La agonía del cristianismo* ("El sufrimiento de los monjes y de las monjas, de los solitarios de ambos sexos, no es un sufrimiento de sexualidad, sino de maternidad y paternidad, es decir, de finalidad" (85)), it is important to keep in mind that Ángela has rejected a commitment to celibacy by refusing to take orders as a nun.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Don Manuel's declaration, "Debo vivir para mi pueblo, morir para mi pueblo. ¿Cómo voy a salvar mi alma si no salvo la de mi pueblo" (34). Ángela adopts the use of possessives to refer to the aldea and to the

Manuel has decided to wield his paternal authority to tell the townspeople what he believes will be best for them to hear, rather than the truth that he believes only he (and Lázaro) can handle. It is possible that Ángela's parallel use of possessives and maternal language suggests that, in the same way that he has deemed himself the only appropriate and informed arbiter for the village's interaction with the Christian faith, she is giving herself authoritative control over how Don Manuel will be represented in the future.

Ángela's gender and status as a single woman without children are significant to the way that her memoir is to be understood in an Unamunian context. Without providing commentary, Ángela records two instances where she discarded the idea of marriage and motherhood at significant times. The first is after a charged exchange with Don Manuel during confession, during which he seemed to indicate that he did not believe in the devil. Ángela comes home distraught, and her mother attempts to comfort her:

-Me parece, Angelita, con tantas confesiones, que tú te me vas a ir monja.

-No lo tema, madre -le contesté-, pues tengo hartito que hacer aquí, en el pueblo, que es mi convento.

-Hasta que te cases.

-No pienso en ello -le repliqué (36-37).

Without being willing to formally take vows (and, presumably, subject herself to the possibility of being removed from Valverde de Lucerna and Don Manuel's side), Ángela has decided to forego marriage and maternity in order to function as the priest's assistant in the village. In this exchange with her mother, Ángela makes clear that, for her, family life and work in the village are mutually exclusive; one replaces the other.

townspeople, using nearly identical language: "No vivía yo ya en mí, sino que vivía en mi pueblo y mi pueblo vivía en mí. Yo quería decir lo que ellos, los míos, decían sin querer" (57).

Ángela's election of a celibate life does not keep her from thinking in maternal terms. After she directly confronts Don Manuel in a tearful exchange about whether he believes ("¡Creo!" is his reply, although narrator-Ángela immediately casts doubt on the truth of the statement), the priest says,

-Y ahora...reza por mí, por tu hermano, por ti misma, por todos. Hay que vivir. Y hay que dar vida.

Y después de una pausa:

-¿Y por qué no te casas, Angelina?

-Ya sabe usted, padre mío, por qué.

-Pero no, no; tienes que casarte. Entre Lázaro y yo te buscaremos un novio. Porque a ti te conviene casarte para que se te curen esas preocupaciones (45).

Like Ángela's mother, Don Manuel suggests that marriage and family will keep Ángela from delving too deep into theological doubt (and, by extension, into her relationship with the priest). Ángela refuses this option at every opportunity.

Ángela *does* provide narrative commentary on the next part of her exchange with Don Manuel, and thus some more insight into her motivation:

Y cuando yo iba a levantarme para salir del templo, me dijo:

-Y ahora, Angelina, en nombre del pueblo, ¿me absuelves?

Me sentí como penetrada de un misterioso sacerdocio, y le dije:

-En nombre de Dios Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo, le absuelvo, padre.

Y salimos de la iglesia, y al salir se me estremecían las entrañas maternas (46).

Rather than abandoning the idea of maternity, she has displaced all of her wifely and maternal feelings onto the priest himself. Her she provides the (unsurprising) explanation for her refusal to

pursue marriage and the comforts of a conventional family; she wants to leave herself free to serve alongside Don Manuel, exercising her motherhood in her relationship with him—both in how she relates to him and to Valverde de Lucerna.

Charles Longhurst argues persuasively that the above dialogue indicates Ángela's suppressed sexual longing for the priest (which, according to Longhurst, lays the foundation for a bitterness that leads her to impeach the priest's work by insisting on his heterodoxy). Such an explanation makes sense, especially in light of the parallel drawn in the epilogue between Ángela and Satan the accuser. In *La agonía del cristianismo*, however, Unamuno disputes the idea that the main suffering of celibacy is frustrated sexuality. He insists, instead, that the heart of the matter is the loss of parenthood: "El sufrimiento de los monjes y de las monjas, de los solitarios de ambos sexos, no es un sufrimiento de sexualidad, sino de maternidad y paternidad, es decir, de finalidad" (*Agonía* 85). The main cost of celibacy, then, in Unamunian terms, occurs not during life but afterward; to deprive oneself of offspring is to decree that one's legacy will end at the grave. The loss of children is the loss of eternal life. As Unamuno explains it, one response to this loss is to make recourse to the eternal life of the written word. He says of the celibate, "tienen que hacer historia, ya que no hagan hijos" (142). The process of history writing is a grasping at eternal life, similar to the act of believing that one's children will carry on one's memory and legacy. This reaching for eternal life is one of the primary functions, then, of Ángela's memoir. The very existence of the text can be understood as Ángela's effort to extend herself into the future.

Time weights heavily on Ángela as she seeks to define her legacy. Her final reflections in the memoir indicate her own focus on her own mortality and the close connection in her mind between her own beliefs and those of Don Manuel. She says,

¿Seré yo, Ángela Carballino, hoy cincuentona, la única persona que en esta aldea se ve acometida de estos pensamientos extraños para los demás? ¿Y estos, los otros, los que me rodean, creen? ¿Qué es eso de creer? Por lo menos, viven. Y ahora creen en san Manuel Bueno, mártir, que sin esperar inmortalidad les mantuvo en la esperanza de ella. (58)

In effect, even though Don Manuel's body is already interred, Ángela must decide how to inter his memory before she can lay it to rest and rest herself. De Certeau speaks of the need for burial-by-writing in these words:

Writing can be specified under two rubrics. On the one hand, writing plays the role of a burial rite, in the ethnological and quasi-religious meaning of the term; it exorcises death by inserting it into discourse. On the other hand, it possesses a symbolizing function; it allows a society [in this case, an individual] to situate itself by giving itself a past through language . . . "To mark" a past is to make a place for the dead, but also to redistribute the space of possibility . . . and consequently to use the narrativity that buries the dead as a way of establishing a place for the living. (De Certeau 100)

In the act of writing the "confesión íntima," Ángela suggests that the burial about to be given to Don Manuel's legacy by the bishop may not be the burial that *she* needs in order to move forward. The physical corpse has been laid to rest in a particular location—no one disputes that—but it is the location of the corpse within a universe of language that is important to Ángela. Language is the vehicle for not only burying the priest but for creating her own past.

It is also important to note that the burial occurs not for the dead but for the living. The dead, by definition, no longer have authority over or awareness of what is happening to them. For the living, on the other hand, the manner and location of interment is significant, establishing the boundaries of the influence of the dead on the present. The explanation adopted by the living

is always colored by what is happening when the explanation occurs. De Certeau calls it “a patent truth” that “any reading of the past—however much it is controlled by the analysis of documents—is driven by a reading of current events” (23). In Ángela’s case, her increasing awareness of her own mortality, advancing age, and approaching death is the present into which her text is born. She must now wrestle with her convictions about life, death, and the afterlife in a way that are more pressing than when she was younger. She is now the one to whom the coffin beckons. In crafting this history of Don Manuel, Ángela is laboring over her own personal legacy and asserting a type of dominance over time by using writing to preserve her memory in the way she deems appropriate.

TRADING CORPSES FOR CHESS PIECES: *SAN MANUEL* AND *DON SANDALIO*

The connection between *San Manuel Bueno, mártir*, and *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez* has, surprisingly, not been the subject of much critical attention, despite Unamuno’s clear linking of the two in his foreword to the 1933 Espasa-Calpe edition. Answering the question why he united these particular stories in one book, Unamuno offers the following:

[F]ueron concebidas, gestadas y paridas sucesivamente y sin apenas intervalos casi en una ventregada. ¿Habría algún fondo común que las emparentara? ¿me hallaría yo en algún estado de ánimo especial? Poniéndome a pensar, claro que a retromano o *a posteriori*, en ello, he creído darme cuenta de que tanto a Don Manuel Bueno y a Lázaro Carballino como a Don Sandalio el ajedrecista . . . lo que les atosigaba era el pavoroso problema de la personalidad, si uno es lo que es y seguirá siendo lo que es. (19)

He goes on to explain what he means by “problema de la personalidad”:

Ese problema, esa congoja, mejor, de la conciencia de la propia personalidad—congoja unas veces trágica y otras cómica—es lo que me ha inspirado para casi todos mis personajes de ficción. Don Manuel Bueno busca, al ir a morir, fundir—o sea salvar—su personalidad en la de su pueblo; Don Sandalio recata su personalidad misteriosa... (19)

For both of these title figures, then, the problem driving the story is anxiety about the nature and persistence of the self. Julián Marías would later describe this category of Unamunian fiction as “la novela existencial” (Marías 54), “la expresión de una vida...no hay en ella conflictos de sentimientos, sino siempre un problema de personalidad” (54). In *SMBM*, Don Manuel is concerned with preserving himself eternally in the life of his pueblo, while the mysterious nature of Don Sandalio’s true self is the elusive shifting center of *LNDS*.

Despite Unamuno’s mention of the title characters under the banner of “problem of personality,” there is a fundamental obstacle to seeing Don Manuel and Don Sandalio as the twin personalities at the centers of their respective stories. The reader’s access, in both cases, is not to the title character but to the narrator. Access to any form of the title character’s self is twice removed: through the recollection of a second person (Ángela in *SMBM*; the letter-writer in *LNDS*) recorded in a found text or collection of texts.¹⁶ Accessible only through a documentary corpus, these texts cannot answer for themselves, and their title characters even less so. The problem of personality is compounded by an exteriority made even more exterior. At the same time, this emphasis on exteriority gives way to an encounter with the personality of an individual who—while not named in the title—influences the text at every turn: Ángela as narrator-author in *SMBM* and, in *LNDS*, the unnamed letter-writer.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that the same is also true of *Abel Sánchez*, another Unamunian novel that takes a character’s proper name.

SMBM is an encounter between the reader and Ángela as she works through a highly personal process of assessing Don Manuel's remains. While the text makes clear, from the first words to the epilogue, that Ángela's assessment of the priest's life is highly idiosyncratic and shaped at every juncture by her own personality, Don Manuel's corpus is at least partially visible to the reader in the inclusion of dialogue, records of his actions, and other of Ángela's memories of him. In contrast, *LNDS* almost completely obscures Don Sandalio's corpus. Rather than the metaphor of a corpse under consideration, *LNDS* introduces the metaphor of a chess board, populated by small, mysterious silent black and white bodies devoid of autonomy. The chess games in *LNDS* are, for the most part, characterized by silence.

The most interesting theoretical questions in *LNDS* are not conveyed explicitly, but implicitly by the demands the text places on the reader. More than a novel, *Don Sandalio* is a theoretical exploration of the meaning of the novel and its composition. Whose personality, the text asks, does the novel really reveal? The text explicitly repeats the theme common in Unamuno's work (what he is famous for saying about the Quixote), that the characters created by the author are more real than the author himself, at the same time that it emphasizes the author's pervasive presence and control. The manifold theoretical problems of *LNDS* are present from the story's title, "La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez." Despite the name, the text is an anti-novel about an anti-Don Sandalio. And the force of all of this *anti* lies in the figure of the narrator, who is not—like Ángela—writing a memoir, but instead a series of letters.

IMPRESSION OF A PERSONALITY: *DON SANDALIO'S* EMPTY SHELL

LNDS is a text presented in epistolary form, with a prologue and epilogue written by an individual who seems to hold himself out as a fictional Unamuno. The prologue begins by explaining the origin of the letters:

No hace mucho recibí carta de un lector para mí desconocido, y luego copia de parte de una correspondencia que tuvo con un amigo suyo y en que éste le contaba el conocimiento que hizo con un Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez, y le trazaba la característica del Don Sandalio. (61)

The person who submitted the letters, then, purports to be “Felipe,” the named recipient of a series of twenty-three letters written over a three-month span by an un-named correspondent. None of Felipe’s letters is included, although the letter-writer does at times discuss Felipe’s responses in his text.

Felipe in turn submits the letters to the fictional Unamuno with the suggestion that Unamuno may be able to use the letters in his work as a novelist. While the letters are described by Felipe as a character sketch of Don Sandalio, such a sketch is conspicuously—and, the reader finds, intentionally—absent. The letter-writer has escaped to a coastal retreat where he knows and is known by no one, “huyendo de la sociedad de los llamados prójimos o semejantes, buscando la compañía de las olas de la mar y de las hojas de los árboles, que pronto rodarán como aquéllas” (63). He breaks his attempted seclusion to visit a local casino, where he notices and eventually begins to play chess with a man known as Don Sandalio. Don Sandalio plays chess at the casino every day, but rarely speaks. The letter-writer contemplates finding out more about Don Sandalio, but at every juncture chooses to create his own imaginary version of Don Sandalio’s life and personality rather than finding out more about the flesh-and-blood man. The

book is, as the epilogue-writer proudly affirms, a novel without a plot, a character sketch without a character sketch. It functions as a shell, as the representation of the silent place where the author meets the reader in the creative and imaginative endeavor.

CHESS AS METAPHOR IN DON SANDALIO

The idea of the shell suggested by Unamuno's description of the problem of personality is paralleled by the chess pieces that are central to *LNDS*. The chess pieces, while each made of the same materials, have existences that are limited by certain basic rules: the bishop can only move diagonally, on squares that match his color; the pawn can only move one or two spaces, always forward; the knight must follow a lilted zig-zag pattern. Given those limitations, however, the chess player can move the pieces at will. Each game is different, even though it is played with the same pieces. The difference in this game is the work of the players, who each function as creative "authors" of their particular game plays. Don Sandalio was an author in that sense, although the specific nature of his stories is not given. Nevertheless, the fact that he told those kinds of stories—that he sat in the casino, silently and skillfully playing chess, day in and day out—is one of the defining characteristics of his existence as it has been given to us by the letter-writer. The image of Don Sandalio telling stories on the chessboard is the one that is preserved in the story's title; it is what we know even when there is nothing else to know.

The text suggests this connection between chess-player and novel-writer. The first time that the letter writer sits down to play with Don Sandalio, in the sixth letter, he says

Era como si yo no existiese en realidad, y como persona distinta de él, para él mismo.

Pero él sí que existía para mí... Digo, me lo figuro. Apenas si se dignó mirarme; miraba

al tablero. Para Don Sandalio, los peones, alfiles, caballos, torres, reinas y reyes del ajedrez tienen más alma que las personas que los manejan. Y acaso tenga razón (70).

Don Sandalio is focused on telling a story with his chess pieces, a story that gets its life from Don Sandalio's unblinking devotion to the pieces themselves. The observation that, for Don Sandalio, the chess pieces have more soul and are more imbued with life than the chess player who moves them, has a parallel in Unamuno's observation—most notably in *La vida del Quixote*—that fictional characters have a more real existence than their creators. This idea is also borne out in *LNDS* by the fact that the letter-writer's identity is never given; he has no name—but Don Sandalio, even given the little that we know about him, is perpetually memorialized in the telling of the story.

POSSESSIVES IN *DON SANDALIO*

LNDS deals directly with the bifurcation of personality between lived and perceived realities. This is almost certainly part of what Unamuno was signaling in his mention of the “problema de personalidad” at the heart of both of these stories: lived-life stands in contrast to life as captured by outside observer.¹⁷ In *LNDS*, the title character arrests the interest of an unnamed letter-writer, who begins to craft a fictional existence for the silent Don Sandalio whom he sees every day at the club. As the story progresses, the letter-writer has more and more opportunities to learn about Don Sandalio from personal experience. He begins to play chess with Don Sandalio at the club. Other club-goers try to offer details about Don Sandalio's life. He is visited by Don Sandalio's son-in-law. At each of these points, however, the letter-writer elects not to find out more about

¹⁷ This view is also supported by the epilogue-writer's final suggestion that Don Sandalio has actually authored the correspondence as a veiled autobiography: “[C]uanto más la leo y la estudio más me va ganando una sospecha, y es que se trata, siquiera en parte, de una ficción para colocar una especie de autobiografía amañada. O sea que el Don Sandalio es el mismo autor de las cartas, que se ha puesto fuera de sí para mejor representarse y a la vez disfrazarse y ocultar su verdad” (95).

the real Don Sandalio in order to allow the personality of his imagined Don Sandalio to flourish without impediment.

The use of and significance attributed to possessives in *LNDS* is more obvious than in *SMBM*. While the differences between the “real” Don Manuel and Ángela’s representation of Don Manuel are never specifically exposed by Ángela, the letter-writer in *LNDS* refers repeatedly and specifically to the unique and separate identities of “Don Sandalio” and “mi Don Sandalio.” The personalities of the real and the writer’s DS begin to bifurcate as soon as the letter-writer sits down for his first chess match against Don Sandalio, in his observation that, “Era como si yo no existiese en realidad, y como persona distinta de él, para él mismo. Pero él sí que existía para mí . . . Digo, me lo figuro” (70). Later in the same brief section, the letter-writer says, “Yo seguí hacia la playa, pero no ya tan solo como otras veces; Don Sandalio iba conmigo, mi Don Sandalio” (71). From this point on, both Don Sandalios are part of the story, each with a separate existence.

In the very next section, the letter-writer reflects on an anecdote he’s heard at the casino—an anecdote that offers a direct tie-in with *SMBM*. The letter-writer mentions a conversation he’s overheard about a priest who advises a dying woman to find his mother in heaven and to let her know that he is living a good Christian life in order to get to heaven himself and see her again. The letter-writer is struck by this priest’s simple belief in the afterlife, and remarks, “Y esto parece que lo dijo el cura, que es piadosísimo, muy en serio” (72). His reflections on the priest in the story move the letter-writer to think of his Don Sandalio:

Y como no puedo por menos que creer que el cura que así decía creía en ello, me di a pensar en la tragedia de la simplicidad, o mejor en la felicidad de la simplicidad. Porque

hay felicidades trágicas. Y di luego en pensar si acaso mi Don Sandalio no es un hombre feliz. (71-72)

The letter-writer's fascination with his proprietary Don Sandalio reaches to speculation about not only the external but also the internal life of the imagined man.

The letter-writer continues with the use of possessives in this same section. He says, with satisfaction, "Llegué a creer que a mi hombre le duele la tontería tanto como a mí" (72). He next refers to Don Sandalio as "mi jugador de ajedrez," saying, "...me quedé pensando si mi jugador de ajedrez creará que, terminada esta vida, se irá al cielo, a seguir allí jugando, por toda una eternidad, con hombres o con ángeles"¹⁸ (72). Lest the letter-reader confuse the proprietary Don Sandalio with the real fellow, the letter-writer clarifies: "Este mi Don Sandalio, no el que juega el ajedrez en el Casino, sino el otro, el que él me ha metido en el hondón del alma, el mío, me sigue ya a todas partes; sueño con él, casi sufro con él"¹⁹ (73).

The letter-writer's bifurcated encounter with two Don Sandalios—the living, breathing, man and the man who exists as a thought-creation—speaks to the constructed, fluid, linguistic nature of the self. The letter-writer's interactions with the second Don Sandalio are no less real, although they take place in a different dimension than the physical interactions. Interaction with the constructed Don Sandalio belong to what Lacan might call the Imaginary or Symbolic orders; by escaping into his creation, the letter-writer is (unwittingly?) exploring and crafting his own identity, mirroring himself in the imagined thoughts and experiences of Don Sandalio. It is not that Don Sandalio does not exist as a real flesh-and-blood man; but this person is not the one with whom the letter-writer wrestles. The constructed Don Sandalio is a testament to the desires

¹⁸ With a completely different tone, the letter-writer is asking the same questions about Don Sandalio as Ángela is about Don Manuel. Both writers share the same preoccupation.

¹⁹ This language of dreaming and suffering, in the larger context of Unamuno's work, makes a direct parallel between the letter writer and God (who creates and dreams us) and the created Don Sandalio and individual humans (who are invited to suffer with Christ).

of the letter-writer and his own preoccupations with life, happiness, and death. These desires and preoccupations are real, even if they are real in a different way than the physical Don Sandalio seated on the opposite side of the chessboard.

WRITING TO IMMORTALIZE PERSONALITY IN *DON SANDALIO*

The question of the letter-writer's power over his proprietary Don Sandalio becomes more pointed with the news of the chess-player's death. Death cements the separation between the real and imagined men, as the latter can continue existing while the former cannot. This is a question posed by both *SMBM* and *LNDS*: is there life after death? For Ángela, eternal life is found in committing her memories to the written word. Just as only the written woman is guaranteed eternal life in *SMBM*, the answer implied in *LNDS* seems to be that only the imagined man experiences eternal life; the real man, at least in the perspective of the reader/observer, cannot. For the letter-writer, the proof that Don Sandalio actually lived as a real human being and not only in his imagination, is that he actually died: “¿Pero es que mi Don Sandalio vivió? Pues que ha muerto, claro es que vivió” (85). Don Sandalio's death opens the door for a complete separation between the flesh-and-blood man and the imagined Don Sandalio.

But there is still a caveat. Others who knew Don Sandalio (his son-in-law, for example) could intrude and offer up some version of actual “fact” about the man's life. In order to avoid this, the letter-writer must take measures to protect himself. He recounts an encounter with the son-in-law, who has come to visit him:

—No siga usted—le interrumpí—, no siga usted. No quiero saber nada de los que usted va a decirme, no me interesa nada de lo que pueda decirme de Don Sandalio. No me importan las historias ajenas, no quiero meterme en las vidas de los demás...

—Sí —le interrumpí vivamente—, pero a mi Don Sandalio, ¿lo entiende usted?, al mío, al que jugaba conmigo silenciosamente al ajedrez, no al de usted, no a su sueño. Podrán interesarme los ajedrecistas silenciosos, pero los suegros no me interesan nada. (88)

The actual memory of Don Sandalio and the memory that the author has created for himself are conflated to the extent that the letter-writer must leave the place that he met Don Sandalio in order to escape the memory of him, even though he has insisted all along that his proprietary Don Sandalio is the only one who matters to him.

At one point not long after Don Sandalio's death, the letter-writer has an experience where he seems to meet the man's ghost. The bifurcation between personalities is clarified by his description of this encounter:

Y he dado en pensar si es que acaso no era Don Sandalio, pero otro Don Sandalio, el que yo no conocía, el no ajedrecista, el del hijo que se le murió, el del yerno, el que hablaba, según éste, de mí en su casa, el que se murió en la cárcel. Quería, sin duda, escapárseme, huía de que yo le reconociera. (90)

This anecdote highlights the experience of any historian at the realization that there is another side of the person about whom he is writing that is unknown to him. Whatever the tagline of a person's biography, be it "el perfecto párroco," "mártir," or "jugador de ajedrez," lived life is too big to fit into such a confining package. Every history also represents a hidden "otro," the inexpressible (or at least unrepresented) doppelgänger of the subject of the biography. While exaggerated, the letter-writer's refusal to find out more about Don Sandalio reflects a dilemma that is real to any historian: at some point one must stop asking questions and proceed to create one's own version of events. At the same time, the version created must be faithful to the corpus of evidence as it is encountered. Like the doctor performing the autopsy, the historian will not be

able to (or will not desire to) ask all of the questions possible. But he will ask the questions necessary to construct the narrative he needs to construct about the truth of the body as he encounters it.

THE NOVEL AND THE TRUTH OF THE AUTHOR

The final section of *Don Sandalio* provides insight into the use of possessives and how it fits in with Unamuno's theories of writing, creation, novels and history. The letter writer begins to respond to Felipe's requests for additional information about Don Sandalio with theoretical reflections:

[E]l problema más hondo de nuestra novela, de la tuya, Felipe, de la mía, de la de Don Sandalio, es un problema de personalidad, de ser o no ser, y no de comer o no comer, de amar o ser amado; nuestra novela, la de cada uno de nosotros, es si somos más que ajedrecistas o tresillistas o tutistas o casineros, o . . . la profesión, oficio, religión o deporte que quieras, y esta novela se la dejo a cada cual que se la sueñe como mejor le aproveche, le distraiga o le consuele. (91)

Here the problem of Don Sandalio's personality, reflected (or not) in the letter-writer's story, is offered by the letter-writer as a small example of the writing of the existential novel of one's life. Like the letter-writer making decisions about the parameters of the Don Sandalio whom he aims to represent in his document, each individual must make decisions about the parameters of his or her own personality, worked out in life. The creative process of writing a novel mirrors the creative process of crafting a life.

The letter-writer's take on the problem of creation echoes sympathy with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche at the same time that it opens space for a discussion of Christ-like incarnation of

self in the written word. The act of choosing what to write is an act of will. The choices that a writer (particularly a biographer, in this case) makes are never accidental; they in one way or another reflect a series of internal processes and the weighing of certain concerns over others. If, to quote Schopenhauer in “The World as Will,” “The action of the body is nothing but the act of the will objectified, i.e., translated into perception” (Schopenhauer 66), the action of a literarily constructed body (corpus), is a further objectification author’s will. Rather than flesh and bone, the actions of the literary body are carried out with paper and ink; but they are objectifications of authorial will translated into a form that can be perceived by future readers. The letter-writer points out in this section that both life and art pose the same set of existential questions, as both come down to a matter of will.

Having already expressed frustration at Felipe’s inquiries about the real Don Sandalio, the letter-writer invites him to take creative responsibility himself if he wants the story to be completed:

Escribela tú si quieres. Ahí tienes todos los datos, porque no hay más, que los que yo te he dado en estas mis cartas. Si te hacen falta otros, invéntalos... Aunque, en todo caso, ¿para qué quieres más novela que la que te he contado? En ella está todo. Y al que no le baste con ello, que añada de su cosecha lo que necesite. En esta mi correspondencia contigo está toda mi novela del ajedrecista, toda la novela de mi ajedrecista. Y para mí no hay otra. (91)

The letter-writer makes the point that Felipe could write his own novel using the documentary corpus composed by their correspondence. There is one set of “evidence”: the information that has already been presented about Don Sandalio and his interactions in the club. While the letter-writer has had access to Don Sandalio, Felipe would only have access to what the letter-writer

chose to write down about him. The dichotomy between corpse and documentary corpus—their overlap and also the vast distance between them—is visible here. As is the case with the historical record, eyewitnesses (here, the letter-writer) leave a record of what they have seen—complete or incomplete as the case may be—and those who come behind must work with what they are given. Interpretation and creativity are inherent in the historical enterprise. The historian can wish that the eyewitness had made an interview of Don Sandalio’s son, but he cannot go back in time and produce that interview. As the letter-writer makes clear, Felipe could invent that history, but that invention would always be based on his own creative will and not the facts themselves.

CONCLUSION

The texts of both *SMBM* and *LNDS* present the image of one person contemplating and writing about the corpse of the other. Ángela writes about Don Manuel’s corpse, staking her territory in what the epilogue suggests is a struggle between divergent characterizations of Don Manuel’s life and work. Ángela’s account stands in contrast to the bishop’s official history, casting doubt on Don Manuel’s religious faith and claims to orthodoxy. It is also—unlike the bishop’s text—a personal reflection, bearing the imprint of Ángela’s own desires to project her legacy into the future despite her lack of human offspring. *Don Sandalio*, while no less a study in personality, adopts a completely different perspective. The letter-writer in *Don Sandalio*, never identified, puts forward the problem of personality by playing around the edges of it. He presents a skeletal sketch of Don Sandalio’s character, at the same time that his story gives a complete picture of Don Sandalio as one thing (and only one thing): el jugador de ajedrez. Like its companion story—but more explicitly than *SMBM*—*Don Sandalio* invites the reader to consider the infinite

number of stories that could be created from the same sparse set of facts, in a parallel to the infinite number of chess games that can be played by the same 32 pieces on the same black and white board. The struggle that in *SMBM* was a tug-of-war between Ángela and the Bishop is multiplied exponentially.

Is there a possibility of truth in the middle of these accounts? I would argue that, to find the truth, one must follow Unamuno and Vattimo into the problem of personality. The answers gleaned from an encounter with personality are rarely simple and never one-dimensional. As with any lived reality, the experience of an encounter with personality is dynamic, as one learns more about what another person is like, a reality that will change over time. The truth of Heidegger's *Dasein* may be present and ready to be revealed (as he describes the concept of the *essent* in *Introduction to Metaphysics*), but that does not make it obvious or even completely accessible. There is a ground to the truth of personality, but it is a ground that shifts and yields to deeper investigation. It may be that Ángela has lied to the bishop in her characterization of Don Manuel's faith. And it may be that Ángela's aging memory is faulty or that she is intentionally coloring the facts. Each of these possibilities nevertheless provides dimension to the reader's understanding of Ángela's personality. In the same way, the letter-writer's refusal to find out more about Don Sandalio tells a truth about the creative encounter and the power of individual readers and writers to narratively position the components of reality like an adept chess-player positions the pieces on the board.

The reader's role in interpreting the materials that Ángela has provided is hinted at in *SMBM* (especially the epilogue), but placed in the forefront of *LNDS*. The image of a person contemplating the corpse (or literary corpus) of another multiplies like a series of Chinese boxes. Don Manuel's corpse is contemplated by Ángela, who is contemplated by the epilogue-writer.

Don Sandalio's corpse is contemplated by the letter-writer, whose corpus is contemplated [arguably first by Felipe and then] in turn by a second epilogue-writer. But, in the final analysis, the epilogue-writers of both stories are themselves enclosed in yet another Chinese box: the contemplation of the reader. Both of these texts resist flattening into plot summaries, since, as both epilogue writers emphasize in their closing words, in *SMBM* "en lo que se cuenta en este relato no pasa nada" (60) and in *LNDS* "mis lectores, los míos, saben que un argumento no es más que un pretexto para una novela, y que queda ésta, la novela, toda entera, y más pura, y más interesante, más novelesca, si se le quita el argumento" (96). The final act in both instances takes place in the reader's own perception and understanding and—in a further multiplication of the problem of personality—will probably be unique in some ways to each individual reader.

Like the doctor performing the autopsy, the history-writer must come away from his examination of the remains of history to craft some bottom line—a truth to which his readers can appeal. Fiction also has the potential to express truths about past historical moments, but in a different way. In his classic primer on reader response theory, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," Wolfgang Iser discusses the potential of literature to create a "living event." These events, he says, "must, to a greater or lesser degree, remain open" (296). He continues:

In reading, this obliges the reader to seek continually for consistency, because only then can be close up situations and comprehend the unfamiliar. But consistency-building is itself a living process, in which one is constantly forced to make selective decisions—and these decisions in their turn give a reality to the possibilities which they exclude . . . This is what causes the reader to be entangled in the text "gestalt" that he himself has produced. (296)

The various personalities of the author, text, reader, and the imaginative world inspired by the meeting of text and mind (what Iser calls the “gestalt”) come together in the reading experience to make it a “living event.” While the same set of past events may inspire both the historian and the novelist, the novelist does not enter into a pact with the reader to stay faithful to the veracity of certain pieces of collected data. This does not leave the question of truth behind, but functions as an aperture through which readers can step into the experience of a different kind of truth, no less real. It is the truth not of the corpse, but of the living body: the ambiguous, dynamic, idiosyncratic, mysterious, sometimes-contradictory truth of personality.

CHAPTER 2

Ethical Implications of Fiction's Potential Spaces

in Martínez de Pisón's *Enterrar a los muertos* and *El día de mañana*

There are many forms of writing; only in literature, however, can there be an attempt at restitution over and above the mere recital of facts, and over and above scholarship.

—W.G. Sebald, “An Attempt at Restitution”

The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are “still” possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable.

—Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”

Mientras no sea la historia una confesión de un examen de conciencia, no servirá para despojarnos del pueblo viejo, y no habrá salvación para nosotros.

—Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*

INTRODUCTION

In my research for this chapter, I encountered a 2013 *New York Review of Books* article by British novelist Zadie Smith, “Man vs. Corpse.” In this reflective essay—part art criticism, part literature review, and part cautionary meditation on the life-stealing qualities of cell phones—Smith finds herself captivated by Luca Signorelli’s charcoal drawing, *Man Carrying Corpse on His Shoulders* (c. 1500). The contrast between the dynamism of the living man and the limp presence of his lifeless burden gives Smith pause and leads her to a thought experiment into which she, in turn, invites her reader: “Imagine being a corpse.” She clarifies: “I mean: imagine this drawing represents an absolute certainty about you, namely, that you will one day be a corpse” (Smith 2013). This project, Smith suggests, is much more difficult than the project of

imagining being the live person carrying the corpse: “Imagining *that* reality—in which everybody (except me) becomes a corpse—presents no difficulties whatsoever” (Smith 2013).

This chapter, like Zadie Smith’s thought experiment, exists in the distance between Signorelli’s live man and the corpse on his back. History, to revisit de Certeau, “represents the



Figure 1. Luca Signorelli, *Nude Figure bearing Corpse* (c. 1500)

dead along a narrative itinerary” (100). Ironically, though, the types of events that make it into official histories are not the types of events that compose the vast majority of our experience in lived life. Eschewing the dangers of “existential noodling,” Smith takes the Signorelli as a springboard into the recent novels of Karl Ove Knausgard, whose six-volume *My Struggle* recalls in minute detail the “perfectly banal existence” of a mostly-autobiographical character named Karl Ove. Smith says of Knausgard’s work, “Every detail is put down without apparent vanity or decoration, as if the writing and the living are happening simultaneously.

There shouldn’t be anything remarkable about any of it except for the fact that it immerses you totally. You live his life with him” (Smith 2013). Life is carried out in these tiny motions, building what Smith calls a “cathedral of boredom” that “looks a lot like the one you yourself are living in” (Smith 2013).

Historical fiction offers a vehicle to recapture (even if in the imagination) these small-scale movements, along with the larger movements of which they form a part—especially to recapture the ordinary expression of the forward- and backward-looking emotions of daily

experience: hope, bewilderment, regret. The human experience is to stand always at the junction of the past and the future, where potential is alive and choices carry the weight of unknown consequences. The strength of the novel as a vehicle for existential history is the power to drop readers into a past “now” as a re-opened space of potentiality, where the outcome is undecided and choices that may not seem ethically ambiguous in hindsight belie their significance.

The “now” is an opaque moment in the flow of history: the “good guys” and “bad guys” await revealing, and there is no way to guarantee the outcome of one’s choices. This is the space in which we are accustomed to inhabit history as historical beings, but it is not normally how we encounter “finished” histories in texts. Fiction allows us to enter into this place of unknowable potential. Even when, as is the case with historical fiction, an account is bounded by the outline of certain past realities, the genre of fiction allows space for things to turn out differently. In this chapter, I will consider how an interplay of history and fiction reopens a moment of past potential in two texts by contemporary Spanish novelist Ignacio Martínez de Pisón: *Enterrar a los muertos* (2005) and *El día de mañana* (2011).

A THEORETICAL BACKDROP: ETHICS AND THE POTENTIAL SPACE

The ethical implications of the “now” were part of Unamuno’s exploration of the *intrahistoria* in *En torno al casticismo*, briefly considered in Chapter 1. It was in the day-to-day, Unamuno argued, that history actually happened, in the individual choices of ordinary people:

La tradición eterna española, que al ser eterna es más bien humana que española, es la que hemos de buscar los españoles en el presente vivo y no en el pasado muerto. Hay que buscar lo eterno en el aluvión de lo insignificante (29).

What was important in the telling of history, for Unamuno, was recognition of the human experience as continuing in similar patterns (what he called “la tradición”) that ultimately shows us that we are not essentially different from our forbears. Recognizing the universal nature of human experience, Unamuno argued, should cause us to examine our own involvement in what we consider the crimes of history. A society that examined its history in this light, he said, would be able to reach a truer level of existence:

Volviendo a sí, haciendo examen de la conciencia, estudiándose y buscando en su historia la raíz de los males que sufren, se purifican de sí mismos, se anegan en la humanidad eterna. Por el examen de su conciencia histórica penetran en su intrahistoria y se hallan de veras (35).

Without admitting our weaknesses on a collective, public, historical level, a society has no hope of overcoming those same weaknesses in the future. Unamuno emphasizes that historical weakness or error is not the mistake of a select few, but a product of the human fabric that makes up the day-to-day: we all participate in that fabric in one way or another. Thus, the multitude of mundane decisions of the day-to-day bear the same type of ethical weight as the great triumphs or tragedies of history, as either of those larger movements represents the cumulative effects of much smaller decisions.

Two decades after *En torno al casticismo*, José Ortega y Gasset also advocated the recognition of the contributions of history’s unnamed in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923), where he explained the philosophical approach that has come to be called “perspectivismo.” Like Unamuno’s *intrahistoria*, Ortega’s *perspectivismo* questions the truthfulness of history constructed as a totalizing, authoritative portrayal of past events. Rather than focusing on the acting-out of history on the individual level, however, Ortega focused on its perception by

different individuals and communities. According to Ortega, objective truth does exist, but each subject will perceive and interpret it differently. This subjective perception and interpretation should not be considered a deformation of truth, but an expression of the reality of truth in its multiple dimensions: “*La perspectiva es uno de los componentes de la realidad. Lejos de ser su deformación, es su organización. Una realidad que vista desde cualquier punto resultase siempre idéntica es un concepto absurdo*” (95, italics in original). A conception of history not filtered by a particular perspective would be, in Ortega’s words, “ultravital y extrahistórico” (92). It would be a denial of life: “*Vida es peculiaridad, cambio, desarrollo; en una palabra: historia.*” (Ibid.). Like the use of perspective in painting to produce a sense of visual realism, perspective can be used in history to show the depth and complexity of a period or event.

Because of the importance of subjective experience to all of life, Ortega affirms that each person, community, and epoch contributes its own perspective to history, which in turn becomes part of the way that history is composed:

Cada vida es un punto de vista sobre el universo. En rigor, lo que ella ve no lo puede ver otra. Cada individuo—persona, pueblo, época—es un órgano insustituible para la conquista de la verdad. . . . Sin el desarrollo, el cambio perpetuo y la inagotable aventura que constituyen la vida, el universo, la omnimoda verdad, quedaría ignorada (96).

History without subjectivity is impossible, as it would be history without life. In order to create this kind of history, however, it is necessary to access some kind of compilation of the multiplicity of different perspectives that exist.

Analogies can be drawn between Unamuno’s intrahistoria, Ortega’s perspectivismo, and Walter Benjamin’s condemnation of contemporary historicism (another two decades later) in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940). Benjamin, like Unamuno, contemplated the

relationship of tradition with the telling of history. In Benjamin's case, however, the tradition is that of the victors who appropriate the histories of the weaker and disenfranchised, rolling "history" into their own narratives of conquest. Benjamin makes this appeal:

Every age must strive anew to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is working to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as the redeemer; he comes as the victor over the Antichrist. The only historian capable of fanning the spark of hope in the past is the one who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has never ceased to be victorious (391).

Rather than succumbing to the traditions espoused by the victors, Benjamin advocates "[brushing] history against the grain" (392) by telling the histories of the oppressed (those whose lives are hidden in the *intrahistoria* or whose perspectives are overlooked by the hegemonic narrative). The time of lived experience is, for Benjamin, not "homogenous, empty time" (394), but time always shot through with the power of messianic hope; at any moment something might occur that would "blast open the continuum of history" (396). Hope and fear have transcendent qualities in any space of time. What the historian must do is to "blast" his subject "out of the continuum of history" by exposing the multi-dimensional life inherent in each historical period (*Ibid.*).

These three ideas—*intrahistoria*, *perspectivismo* and *Jetztzeit*—all share a kinship with the postmodern critique of "the metaphysical concept of history" launched by Jacques Derrida (among others) and described in the interviews collected in *Positions* (1972). This metaphysical concept is the idea of history in a linear development that develops, produces and fulfills itself, moving with a sense of Hegelian progress toward an end goal. According to Derrida, authoritative or "official" histories that follow this model should be subject to skepticism for the

way that they overlook the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people, and the way that they are wielded as instruments of control. Instead, the metaphysical concept of history should be replaced with “another concept or conceptual chain of ‘history’: in effect a ‘monumental, stratified, contradictory’ history...” (57, quotation marks in original). For Derrida, the concern is avoiding a metaphysical retelling of history that appeals to absolute “reality” and does not allow for differences of perspective (what he associates in this context with “the logic of repetition and the trace” (57)). Like Ortega, Derrida argues that history must include a multiplicity of perspectives, even when they contradict each other.

Without a doubt, there are points of disagreement between the different thinkers whose positions I’ve summarized here. Benjamin might take issue with Unamuno’s failure to interrogate the power structures behind tradition; Derrida might find the idea of a universal human tradition underlying history repulsive, and Ortega’s enthusiasm for perspectivism may be overshadowed by the growing popularity of such a position since the linguistic turn in historical discourse in the 1960s and ‘70s. Nevertheless, all of these philosophers—while they adopt different perspectives on the question—agree that a history told from the perspective of the powerful (the victors), or narrated in such a way that it leaves no opening for debate or disagreement, is not an accurate or ethically sound history. The story of the common man—often the marginal *Other*—needs to be told, not just as a supplement to the histories of larger characters, but with an understanding that this type of history undergirds and comprises all the rest.

Plato made a distinction in the *Phaedrus* between the “orphaned” written letter and the living *logos*—the spoken word whose father/author is present and can still be interrogated. This is a helpful dichotomy for understanding one of the distinctions between history (or historical

documentation) and the living presence at the center of a piece of historical fiction. We could think of all historical documentation or written testimony as orphaned: it serves as evidence of a pre-existing being (i.e., the person who recorded it, and the persons s/he described in the written record) whose contribution to the present is now limited to the dead letter. Plato's dichotomy also has a parallel in Michel de Certeau's description from *The Writing of History* of two ways of writing history. De Certeau distinguishes between the historian who considers history as an inventory of documents and artifacts, analyzed scientifically, and the historian who focuses on the possibility of "resuscitating or 'reviving' a past" (35). This second historian, in de Certeau's description, "would like to restore the forgotten and to meet again the men of the past amidst the traces they have left" (35-36). Such a project is similar to the work undertaken by the author of historical fiction. In de Certeau's resuscitated history—and in historical fiction—the author places himself within history in the space of a "here-and-now," where decisions are still being made. Rather than undertaking an inventory of orphaned artifacts, this kind of fiction simulates a history where the author/actor/narrator is still present and answering for his or her own actions. Identification with a fictional character places a reader in a now-time, where the act of living is fraught with implications: ethical choices must be made, political loyalties forged or broken, economic realities considered, physical needs, addressed, relational ties maintained, and more.

This chapter will consider the ethical potential of dropping a reader into the space of "now time" in *Enterrar a los muertos* and *El día de mañana*.²⁰ My purpose in pairing these two texts is to explore the ways that both draw attention to the reflection and refraction of the possibilities of a particular historical moment in subsequent textual representations, always with an eye toward the implications of freezing a historical account at any point in the story. While this kind of freezing has varied implications, including (particularly in these texts) both the

²⁰ Hereafter, for the sake of brevity, *EALM* and *EDDM*, respectively.

epistemological and the political, I choose in this chapter to focus on the ethical: how do perspectives on “right” or “wrong” choices at a given point in history shift if an episode is contemplated not from the end (i.e., what we now know about the eventual outcome), but from the middle? Both primary texts in this chapter highlight the existence of potential spaces in both their form and content, with *EALM* taking on the interplay of fictional and non-fictional representations, while *EDDM* makes no pretense at an actual historical account, although it clearly focuses on a particular period of time in post-Franco Spain. The following discussion will have two parts, the first focusing on *EALM* and the second turning to *EDDM*. In both cases, I will begin by considering ways that the structure of the text invites readers into the *intrahistoria*, before moving on to look at the way that the ideas of intrahistoria and potential space are presented in the content of each text.

MARTÍNEZ DE PISÓN’S WORK IN CONTEXT

Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, born in 1960, is a native of Zaragoza who has spent his adult life as a resident of Barcelona. His work includes screenwriting (*Carreteras secundarias*, *Chico & Rita*, *Las trece rosas*), novels, short fiction, historical narrative, and journalistic articles. *EALM* is joined in the category of historical narrative by *Las palabras justas* (2007) a collection of narrative essays that Martínez calls—with a nod to Javier Cercas—“relatos reales” (*Las palabras* 7). At the heart of each essay is the retelling of a historical episode connected in some way with the Spanish Civil War. Martínez’s career as a novelist has been both prolific and critically acclaimed; his long list of accolades culminated in 2015 with the award of the Premio Nacional de Narrativa (for which he had previously been a finalist) for *La buena reputación*. *EALM* received both the Premio Rodolfo Walsh (2015) and the Premio Dulce Chacón de Narrativa

Española (2006); *El día de mañana* received the Premio Hislibris al mejor autor español (2011), the Premio de la Crítica de narrativa castellana (2011), the Premio Ciutat de Barcelona (2012), the Premio Espartaco Semana Negra de Gijón (2012), and was a finalist for the Premio al Libro Europeo del Año 2011. Martínez's novels often focus on family relationships and are set for the most part in the recent past; as one critic has put it, "Su obra narrativa puede repasarse como un gran friso realista de los episodios más vibrantes de la historia de España: desde la guerra de África, la guerra civil, la posguerra o la Transición" (Antón Castro, *Heraldo*). To date, Martínez's work has received less attention in academic circles than that of authors like Javier Cercas or Javier Marías, but his flourishing career promises abundant material for future investigation.

Martínez de Pisón's texts considered here belong to a movement in contemporary Spanish literature that surveys the remains of the Civil War, Franco years, and the Transition to democracy through the lens of a postmodern historical viewpoint with emphasis on "el nuevo discurso de la memoria" (Juliá, *Hoy no es ayer* 341). This survey has generated a number of novels situated in the Civil War and transition periods but about which "se podría concluir que . . . no tienen como primer asunto la Guerra Civil, sino el modo en que un grupo de personajes nacidos con posterioridad a aquel evento adquieren conocimiento sobre éste. . . [L]a Guerra Civil se ha convertido en un problema epistemológico para escritores, narradores y personajes" (Gómez L-Quiñones 90). Another critic, with a nod to Unamuno, has called the guiding preoccupation of this group of novels "cómo se hace una novela sobre la Guerra Civil española" (Gómez Trueba 21).²¹

²¹ As Teresa Gómez Trueba has carefully documented, the novels centering on the Civil War also stepped into a movement that had started earlier of novels that defy the ordinary lines between genres by including testimony, photos, autobiography, chronicle, journalism, and other non-fiction work within the covers of a text marketed as a novel. While the texts studied by Gómez in her article cluster around the turn of the century, the anti-

As has been noted by historian Santos Juliá, the literary response to the Spanish Civil War is unique in that the war was followed by 40 years of Francoist suppression, followed in turn by official amnesties which encouraged (if ineffectively) a sort of cultural amnesia about the war and its aftermath. So the chain of events set off with the military uprising in 1936 did not really come to an end until Franco's dictatorship ended with his death in 1975. As suggested above, however, neither Franco's government nor the following amnesties was truly effective in wiping out commentary or attempts at memory of the War, and aesthetic approaches to the theme began to gain momentum during the Transition years. Juliá points to the domains of "cinema, literature, and personal memory"²² to observe that, at least in these arenas,

[I]t is completely false to say that the Transition was built around a kind of collective forgetting of the Civil War. Quite the opposite: the memories of Dionisio Ridruejo or Pedro Laín Entralgo, the novels of Juan Benet or Camilo José Cela, the theater of Antonio Buero Vallejo or the cinema of José Luis Borau and Carlos Saura were full of constant references to the Civil War and the years immediately after it, evoking memories of a time that many Spaniards had not experienced directly, but the effects of which they had suffered for a long time. (*Cambridge Companion* 112)

Like those active in the Transition years, the authors considered here join those who are picking up the pieces of memories suppressed during Franco's government.

genre movement began much earlier (in Spain, one could argue that Unamuno is a precursor) and has a much larger geographical reach, with notable U.S. participants including W.G. Sebald. Significantly, like the authors considered here, Sebald's work revolved in many cases around World War II, an event which personally affected Sebald's life's course, although he was too young to take part himself. He stands in many ways in a similar historical position to those who, like Cercas and Martínez de Pisón, were raised in Spain during the Franco regime.

²² It has taken much longer for reparations to be attempted in other contexts. There are several efforts currently underway, for example the recent work of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (memoriahistorica.org.es) to exhume physical remains and collect individual testimonies.

Simultaneously with Spain's liberation from Franco, the Western historical enterprise itself was undergoing²³ a kind of liberation in response to the challenge mounted by postmodern epistemology. The idea of "objectivity" came under attack, as thinkers from various schools exposed the historian's inherent inability to create a completely accurate picture of a past event. The unreliability of memory also became a key point for discussion.²⁴ At the same time that people all over the world were haunted by atrocities they wanted to forget, many scholars in the historical discipline began to question to what extent it was even possible for them to remember with any degree of credibility or relevance.

Javier Cercas is often credited with inaugurating the wave of Civil War novels in 2001 with *Soldados de Salamina*. *Soldados* follows a fictionalized Cercas as he searches for an elderly former Republican soldier named Miralles, whom he supposes to be the last living eyewitness to the aborted execution of fascist Rafael Sánchez Mazas. Cercas's text deals with the themes that would become common across the spectrum of the Civil War/Franco/Transition-reconsideration novels: collective and individual memory, diverging narratives, and self-fictions that include fictionalized versions of the author who will insert real-life "evidences" at different junctures in the story. It is the work of a generation seeking to recapture a legacy that in some sense belongs to them, even though they were not adults at the time that the events took place. Like *EALM*, Cercas's later work *Anatomía de un instante* (2009) obscures the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, contemplating the historical episode of the military coup of February 1981 from a number of different perspectives. To great effect, *Anatomía's* thorough historical documentation

²³ To state unequivocally that this revolution in historiography actually occurred would be naive. There are indeed challenges to the "objective," "true" idea of writing history. But the challenges have not necessarily led to a change in the ways that histories are actually written.

²⁴ The novels of Javier Marías, Enrique Vila-Matas, and Juan José Millás also study these questions (and in some cases also in the context of the Civil War/Transition), although they are not as often connected with the wave as Javier Cercas. Teresa Gómez Trueba's article is a helpful introduction to the consideration of the Civil War in the work of these other authors.

only exposes the work of subjectivity in the telling of history (even where there is photo or video of the event); it functions almost as a write-your-own story version of events: stopping, restarting, framing and reframing by stepping into the shoes of a series of persons involved in the event.

Soldados belongs not only to the wave of Civil War fiction, but also to the larger category of self-fiction, an offshoot of metafiction²⁵ that, in addition to self-consciously complicating the relationship between fiction and reality, explicitly theorizes about the figure—and the authority—of the author by presenting the author as a character within his (or her) own text. It is joined in this category by Jordi Soler's *La guerra perdida* trilogy, in which a fictionalized Soler retraces his own family history, exiled to Mexico during the war. The final novel of the trilogy, *La fiesta del oso* (2009), purports to tell the story of Soler's great uncle, Oriol, believed by the family to have died a hero in the final days of the Civil War. The fictional Soler's historical investigation into his uncle's life reveal that, contrary to what the family has believed for more than half a century, Oriol was not killed during the war, but in fact survived and—with horrifying consequences—survived by adopting a life of banditry and treachery, preying on other war exiles from an outpost in the Pyrenees. *La fiesta del oso* bears some striking similarities to Cercas's most recent novel, *El monarca de las sombras* (2017), which also tells the story of the author's great uncle—this time on the other side of the conflict—Manuel Mena, a teenage member of Franco's Falange who died at 19 at the battle of Ebro. In both cases, the novelist appears as the narrator and an active participant in the novel, which proceeds as a quest to find out the truth about a particular family member or family members. Along the way, both narrators wrestle with questions of personal identity and family legacy in light of their

²⁵ "Metafiction" is defined in Patricia Waugh's 1984 classic, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact [sic] in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2).

discoveries, and the possible ramifications of these discoveries for the reconsideration of the historical narratives of those momentous events for the country as a whole. In addition to functioning personal chronicles (both fictional and quasi-fictional), these novels take their place within a project to rewrite the history of the Civil War and post-Franco years.

While embracing the epistemological preoccupations of this literary wave, along with all of the questioning of memory and the legacy left to a current generation of Spaniards by their troubled past, Martínez de Pisón has not made an explicit leap into the realm of self-fiction. *EALM*, which comes the closest to a self-fictional account, is researched and written like a history; were it to be considered as a novel, the protagonist would not be really any particular character (not even the Martínez-narrator), but the quest for the narrative itself. The text relies heavily on primary sources, along with other histories and literary texts, but consistently declines to propose a historical “bottom line.” For its part, *El día de mañana* explores the epistemological problem with the contrast of twelve different narrative voices that sometimes hit harmonious and sometimes dissonant notes about a shared past with a particular individual—Justo Gil. Both texts highlight the ways that perspectives, loyalties, and political commitments shift over time, sometimes very suddenly based on dramatic changes in the political or cultural environment.

In addition to the two texts considered here, Martínez’s recent *oeuvre* deals over and over again with the same themes, situating each novel in a different significant point in recent Spanish history. Martínez’s preoccupation with the representation of a collective history, what he has called “esa verdad colectiva que surge de la suma de las pequeñas verdades de los demás” (Gascón 43) suggests a larger project aimed at considering the creation of history and possible alternatives to totalizing narratives of the past. Among Martínez’s considerations of these thematics are *El tiempo de las mujeres*, which like *Anatomía de un instante* considers the

intrahistoria associated with the Transition and the 1981 coup. Notably, *El tiempo de las mujeres* adopts a feminine perspective, exploring the history of one family through the individual testimonies of three sisters. *Dientes de leche* considers the legacy of the Civil War through the experience of one family and its Italian fascist-loyal patriarch. *La buena reputación* (2015) covers the period from the 1950s to 1980s in the life of one family with roots in the Spanish-Jewish community of Málaga in Morocco. And, most recently, *Derecho natural* (2017) returns to the Transition years with the first-person experience of Ángel, who comes of age in the Barcelona of the '70s and takes his first steps in the practice of law just as Spain is forming a new constitution and maneuvering the first chapter of post-Franco government. Like *EALM*, a number of Martínez's texts employ a choral technique, juxtaposing segments of first- or third-person narration by a variety of witnesses. *El tiempo de las mujeres* is divided into sections of first-person narration by three sisters, while both *Dientes de leche* and *La buena reputación* (2014) use third-person narration that shifts in different sections to the experience of different central characters. In each instance, the variety of narrators or narrative focuses functions to destabilize and throw each of the others into question, exposing intentional or unintentional gaps in memory and accounting.

EALM SYNOPSIS: TO BURY THE DEAD

Enterrar a los muertos is the story of a corpse and a corpus—or, more specifically, of a human corpse as constructed by a literary corpus. The corpse is that of José (“Pepe”) Robles Pazos, a leftist Spanish academic whose social ambit included some of the shining lights in early-twentieth-century literary circles on both sides of the Atlantic, notably Francisco Ayala, Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Ernest Hemingway, and John Dos Passos. *EALM* focuses particularly on the

relationship between José Robles Pazos and American novelist John Dos Passos, who were both close friends and professional colleagues (Robles translated *Manhattan Transfer* and others of Dos Passos's works into Spanish). Through their written record, Dos Passos and other literary figures testify in Martínez de Pisón's text, which is built around Robles's disappearance (and assumed death) in 1937, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Robles disappeared while working (first in Madrid and then in Valencia) as a Russian translator for the Republic's ministry of war and the USSR's Spanish embassy, but his exact fate was never confirmed. Far from the burial suggested in the title, Martínez de Pisón's text leaves Robles's corpse—both literally and figuratively—exposed, with no promise of complete closure. The truth at bottom of Martínez de Pisón's work is Robles's disappearance, but—although some hypothetical explanations are provided—the reasons for it elude objective confirmation.

The fact that Robles has not been buried means that his story can be preserved in indeterminate forms—for an Unamunian version of eternal life—in fictional texts. In fiction, history is buried alive. Hope can be brought to life again. The Robles that is memorialized in Dos Passos's *Journeys Between Wars* and *Century's Ebb* is a missing man whose family is still trying to find him. His status in these texts as *desaparecido* provides a place to memorialize not only his own individual life, but the lives of all *desaparecidos* of the war and their loved ones who looked for them and walked through the process of accepting their death in a type of closure-without-closure. The identification of Robles's story with the untold stories of so many of his contemporaries may well be part of what the amateur historian of *EALM* means when he mentions in the book's opening paragraph that the death has imbued Robles's and Dos Passos's friendship with a “trascendencia inesperada” (7). I analyze the presence of “now time” in this text two main ways: first is the way that the narrator/historian highlights the space of potentiality

in the presentation and construction of *EALM*; second is a detailed look at how Dos Passos's texts are used in *EALM* to recover an aspect of "now time" in their interactions with the ghostly presence of José Robles Pazos.

THE SPACE OF POTENTIALITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF *EALM*

Structurally, *EALM* is an unconventional history written in first-person by an amateur historian who gives every indication of being Martínez de Pisón himself. Nevertheless, Martínez's text lacks the clarity that would be provided with an explanatory foreword or epilogue.²⁶ Despite the first-person narration, the historian of *EALM* avoids *Soldados de Salamina*-type forays into his²⁷ personal life, limiting himself to an account of the search for the truth about Robles. The fact that *EALM* appears in the same format as Martínez's other offerings published by Seix Barral adds to the initial uncertainty (an uncertainty shared by some critics and reviewers) about the book's intended genre. Textual indications that Martínez de Pisón is the narrator notably include the reference in the footnote "El historiador Daniel..."²⁸ (234) to a journalistic article written by Martínez in the course of his research;²⁹ also, as Antonio Gómez L-Quñones has pointed out, the text makes verifiable references to the narrator's friendships with Andrés Trapiello and Anne Malean (Gómez L-Quñones 90, n.3). Extra-textually, Martínez has said of *EALM* that "es el primero de mis libros en el que no hay invención. Alguna vez me ha preguntado si ese libro era novela, si era ensayo . . . realmente es una cosa intermedia porque es una novela, pero una novela sin ficción" (Conocer al Autor interview).

²⁶ In Martínez's words, from the very brief "Prólogo" to *Las palabras justas*, "A la vista está que no soy muy amigo de prólogos. Lo mejor será, por tanto, que dé éste por acabado cuanto antes" (7).

²⁷ Absent textual explanation of the narrator's gender, I will use the male pronoun for ease of expression.

²⁸ The copious footnotes in *EALM* are not numbered.

²⁹ The article is "El periplo de Lydia Kúper," published in the *Culturas* supplement of *La Vanguardia*.

The amateur historian of *EALM* opens an often-hidden space of potentiality by exposing his writing process to the reader, revealing the times that he relies on assumptions to propel his narrative forward. Expressions like “no es aventurado suponer,” and limiting language like “es probable,” “imaginar,” and “acaso” abound throughout the text, marking places where the historian’s research has failed to carry him all the way to a conclusion. At times, the historian/narrator also intentionally shields pertinent information from the reader’s knowledge and then reveals it in an unexpected way, a practice put on dizzying display in the Appendix, where he traces the evolution of political commitment of the editors and participants in the Cenit publishing house. The Appendix guilefully guides the reader through a series of twists and turns, with the narrator perpetually pulling surprising details—the kind that upend expectations, turning loyalty to betrayal and trust to suspicion—out of the offing.

While it has been compared to a detective story, *EALM* is far from an attempt to comprehensively elucidate a mystery or to organize a set of facts neatly in a logical progression. Instead, the text reveals a complex web of interconnected textual nodes. A few key facts become apertures that slowly allow for more and more of the web to be exposed. This idea is present from the book’s preface, where the amateur historian recollects how, while reading a biography of John Dos Passos, he became fascinated by the writer’s friendship with José Robles and the “trascendencia inesperada” (7) lent to the story by Robles’s “desdichado final” (Id.): “La curiosidad me llevó a rastrear esa amistad en otras lecturas. Buscaba nuevos testimonios y noticias, que a su vez conducían a más testimonios y más noticias, y en algún momento tuve la sensación de que eran ellas las que acudían a mí, las que me buscaban” (7-8). The narrator is being pulled along by the flow of his research, but not necessarily to any clear conclusions.

These textual apertures pose a prismatic method of looking at facts, signaled by frequent reference to “pistas” to be followed. The book’s most significant underlying fact is that of Robles’s disappearance in the winter of 1936-7. The amateur historian contemplates both its cause and its repercussions, using a combination of textual material and informed speculation to craft an image of the possibilities. Chapter four, for example, details the various political intrigues at play in the USSR’s Spanish presence, relying on official documents, historical and fictional texts, and personal interviews by the narrator. It opens by posing a problem: “Pero para que haya un asesinato hace falta un asesino, y en algún momento de esta historia había que preguntarse quién mató a Robles” (87), and closes with what seems to be a conclusion, charging Robles’s death to the Soviet secret police: “A Robles se le detuvo para ejecutarle y, por perverso que parezca, era su ejecución la que debía convertirse en la principal prueba de su traición. No se fusiló a un traidor: se fusiló a un hombre para hacer de él un traidor” (110). Throughout the chapter, though, each approach at certainty dissolves to reveal conjecture in instances like the following: “¿Qué fue de Robles tras su eventual paso por Monteolivete? La Causa General no ofrece datos concluyentes al respecto, pero sí algunas pistas que pueden ayudar a conjeturarlo” (99). And later, regarding the eventual decision to execute Robles:

Fuera como fuese, esa decisión se tomó, y a partir de ese momento todo resulta más fácil de imaginar...¿Adónde? Sin duda, a alguno de los campos de tiro...Así debió de ser el lugar en el que Robles vivió sus últimos momentos. Luego alguien le descerrajó un par de tiros, y entre todos hicieron desaparecer el cadáver. Quién pudo ser el autor del disparo parece a estas alturas un enigma menor (107).

The question “who killed Robles?” is a gateway to an informative and emotive historical journey which may leave the reader better able to interpret the context, but which will lead, at best, to probable—never definitive—answers.

Returning to this chapter’s theoretical anchoring in Unamuno and Ortega, the structure of *EALM* invites the reader into the space of an *intrahistoria*, where the reality of experience is always filtered through the individual perspective of one or more (often conflicting) witnesses. Recognizing that—in any given moment—it may be hard to pin down historical “truth,” *EALM* creates an aura of what Gianni Vattimo might call “weak truth,” mixing the testimony of factual and fictional depictions, as well as highlighting the subjectivity eyewitness testimony. The amateur historian introduces the element of difference with “a self-surrender to the play of multiplicity and appearances” (Vattimo, *Difference* 3). Most of the testimony that comprises *EALM*, however, was not written as fiction. The amateur historian relies on several autobiographies and historical texts, and on letters and essays from a host of writers. While the word “testimony” implies the juridical pursuit of objective truth, the narrator seems just as interested in the witnesses’ subjective perspectives as in their textual product.

One of the narrative anchors of the text is the relationship between John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway and the influence of Dos Passos’s investigations into the Robles affair on both his political transformation and the rupture of his friendship with Hemingway. Both processes are reflected in the writers’ published representations of each other. Where not explicitly given, the *EALM*’s narrator furnishes personal motives that may have caused the men to act or speak in the way they did (e.g, Hemingway’s coldness to Dos Passos based on the latter’s disapproval of Hemingway’s marital infidelity [52]). Silences are at times also made to speak, as in the case of the 1937 *Ahora* interview with Hemingway and Dos Passos, “Dos

camaradas de América,” where, in Dos Passos’s noticeable absence, all of the answers are given by Hemingway.

In *EALM*, factual testimony as reconstructed through a later fictional depiction is no less reliable than factual testimony mediated by the author’s subjective experience. Ironically, the book gives credence to the idea that putatively fictional texts may actually be *more* reliable, as the anonymity that they afford may allow their authors to be more frank than they could be openly. More attention will be given to this in the analysis of Dos Passos’s appearances in *EALM*. In Vattimo’s terms, *EALM* suggests that the distinctions traditionally made between reliable “fact” and spurious “fiction” may be “subjection to rules that are at bottom gratuitous and unfounded” (3).

EALM emphatically objects to the common predilection of the historian to fit his account into a preconceived trajectory; the historian/narrator presents himself as a disinterested observer spurred only by his own curiosity. At times, the flow of the research completely overwhelms the narrator and takes him in unexpected directions, such as in chapter four, when he is introduced to the painter Carlos García-Alix, or in chapter seven, when a mutual acquaintance puts him in contact with José Robles’s daughter Miggie. Instead of immediately presenting the reader with the facts unearthed by these different encounters, the narrator showcases the serendipitous background of the encounters themselves.

The seeming innocence of the amateur historian’s quest of discovery stands in stark contrast to descriptions of the work of professional historian Stephen Koch, who in his book *El fin de la inocencia* (in English, *Double Lives*) aims to expose the infiltration of Soviet spies—among them the American writer Josephine Hersbt—into the transatlantic intellectual elite

during the Civil War. In a section of the text dealing with Herbst, EALM's narrator accuses Koch of twisting the facts to suit his own "prejuicios y fantasías" (74):

La tergiversación que Koch hace del relato original no se permite el menor descanso, pero su meticulosa traición a cualquier idea de objetividad nunca llega a ser tan alarmante como cuando se decide a dar rienda suelta a su inventiva y desliza . . . como datos contrastados lo que no son sino meras conjeturas (74).

The narrator continues to impeach Koch's conjectures with the work of other historians and, curiously, by referring to a passage from *Century's Ebb*. The reader is led to assume that Dos Passos is being more reliable in his fiction than Stephen Koch in his attempt at writing a history. According to Martínez de Pisón's narrator, Koch's putative objectivity is a "meticulosa traición" infinitely less reliable than Dos Passos's openly subjective fictional offering. Here again we meet weak truth. *Difference*, while it may not fit neatly into traditional categories, proclaims its liberty from the forced harmonization of the metaphysical tradition of "'violent' thinking" (*Difference* 5), and presents a fuller picture of truth in its multiple manifestations.

In addition to the explicit contest of this alternative way of writing history, *EALM* suggests the chronological ambiguity of lived experience and memories with its less-than-straightforward path through time. The chapters jump back and forth chronologically, and the focus varies from highlighting specific individuals (e.g., Robles Pazos and Dos Passos in the first two chapters), to investigating particular groups (e.g., the Soviet machine [Ch. 4] or the Cenit publishing house [Apéndice]), to gathering perspectives from significant locations, such as the Republic's Oficina de Prensa Extranjera (Ch. 7). What dictates the flow of the text is the narrator's investigation—and his desire to uncover and present an alternative historical path—even when that investigation has not followed the most logical trajectory. A peculiar example of

this fluidity is that the narrator's personal interaction with Miggie Robles, the daughter of the José Robles Pazos, is not revealed until close to the end of the book. Miggie's introduction, complete with what appears to be a present-day photo of her in a domestic setting (180), suddenly brings a much more personal dimension to the text. But the narrator does not seem to give any more weight to her testimony than to the textual contributions previously cited; she is just another voice in the chorus. Here and elsewhere, instead of reformulating the structure of the text according to later discoveries, the narrator merely adds another layer. At least according to appearances, Martínez de Pisón's narrator has not attempted to force the facts into his preconceived notions, but is allowing them to speak for themselves.

THE MANY WRITERS OF *EALM*

Although the second part of this discussion will focus on John Dos Passos, he is not the only writer (or only novelist) presented to the reader in *EALM*; the universe of *EALM* is populated by writers. As a professor, translator, and literary critic, Pepe Robles interacted with many of the great writers who have since come to define the literary output of the Spanish Civil War era, men like Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, and John Dos Passos. In many cases, the texts that are mentioned as in the process of being written are texts that will have informed Martínez's readers about the time period that he is discussing. To think of Hemingway as he is writing the stories that will later be collected in *The Fifth Column* or grow into *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, or Orwell as he is staying at the Hotel Florida in an episode that will later be memorialized in *Homage to Catalonia*, places readers in a historical moment that they already know, at the same time that it reveals the power that these particular personalities have wielded to shape our contemporary grasp of these historical events. It is a reminder, in Orwell's words, that, in the mundane spaces

of the *intrahistoria*, “if this was history it did not feel like it” (*Homage to Catalonia* 139). Encountering these texts in the germination process emphasizes the feeling of potentiality present in *EALM*.

In a way, the entire text of *EALM* is devoted to the interplay between silence and the written word. The significance of Robles’s life is his death. But even the fact of his death is shrouded in silence, as his disappearance has left his family without the closure afforded by knowing what happened to his body. The cause of his death is not known, and the person(s) who brought it about are also veiled in mystery. Not only that, but *EALM* hypothesizes that the death itself was an anticipatory silencing:

[E]s probable que a Robles lo asesinaran no porque hubiera hablado sino para que no hablara, y para Dos Passos, que nunca dio crédito a la tesis de la supuesta indiscreción, su muerte “tuvo el efecto deseado de hacer que la gente se volviera muy cautelosa cuando hablaba” de los rusos. Se trataba por tanto de una advertencia: quienes no quisieran correr la suerte de Robles tendrían que callar sobre todo aquello que vieran y no les gustara, incorporarse a esa inmensa conspiración de silencio con la que el propio Dos se había topado mientras investigaba lo ocurrido con su amigo (85).

EALM functions as a monument to the reality that, no matter how successful the physical silencing of Robles, his identity and story stubbornly persist—thanks to his persistence in the written word.

The reader of *EALM* encounters Robles himself as a writer, and the text highlights the ways that his death extinguished his creative potential along with his biological existence. A biographical look at Robles’s life in Chapter 1 traces his academic and literary career, preserving his aspirations to write a novel and a play—dreams that did not come to fruition. What Robles

did complete in his short life was more ordinary academic fare: a collection of Lope de Vega's work and a host of articles. He also wrote—and illustrated—a book of grammar exercises for Spanish learners. In fact, all of the drawn illustrations in *EALM*, with the exception of one,³⁰ are from this pedagogical exercise of Robles's, *Cartilla española*. *EALM*'s narrative follows the success of Robles's book of language exercises (“una obrita suya de carácter menos ambicioso,” (23)), along with the beginning of his work a sequel. In an artful exposition of the quiet undulations of the *intrahistoria*, the specter of this sequel becomes a bridge between Robles's quiet academic life at Johns Hopkins and his death. “La acogida de *Cartilla española* fue lo bastante favorable para que Pepe se animara a preparar un nuevo volumen de características similares. . . . Para la primavera de 1936 el texto y los dibujos estaban ya terminados, pero José Robles nunca llegaría a ver editado ese libro” (24). The narrator goes on to describe the Robles family's preparations to go to Spain for the summer: “En su equipaje llevaba el texto y los dibujos originales, a los que se proponía añadir las obligadas secciones de vocabulario y ejercicios. El estallido de la guerra civil le impidió hacerlo” (24). Then there is an immediate narrative leap, jumping over the site of Robles's disappearance and death to inform the reader that Robles's wife kept the manuscript, which was eventually finished by another professor at Princeton and published in April of 1938, “como un ‘homenaje al valeroso y apreciado autor de *Cartilla española*.’” The historian-narrator notes, “Acaso no sea casualidad que el prólogo del volumen, firmado por F. Courtney Tarr, lleve la fecha del 14 de abril de 1938, aniversario de la proclamación de la segunda República, un detalle que sin duda habría gustado al autor del libro” (24). The next paragraph begins with the question at the heart of the entire text: “¿Qué había sido de Robles Pazos?” (25).

³⁰ The single drawing *not* from *Cartilla Española* is from Robles's review of *Manhattan Transfer* for the *Gaceta Literaria*. See *EALM*, p. 16.

This ordinary account of quiet academic work—writing a sequel to a popular grammar exercise book—presents Robles in the middle of *intrahistoria* that composed his day-to-day life. The inclusion of the detail of *Cartilla*'s date of publication also highlights the way that moments in the *intrahistoria* have ethical and ideological implications across time. Even the ordinary act of choosing a date for a prologue can express personal and political solidarity. Encountering Robles as a creator in the middle of his creating (however mundane it may seem when compared to that of an Orwell or Hemingway) allows the reader to feel the loss not just of the man, but of the potential of his creative life. When he died, the books that he had left to write died with him. Or, as in this case, a book resuscitated by a colleague bears the significance of memorializing Robles's death for the future.

THE GHOST AND GHOSTS OF JOHN DOS PASSOS

Todo poeta, todo creador, todo novelador—novelar es crear—, al crear personajes se está creando a sí mismo, y si le nacen muertos es que él vive muerto.

—Miguel de Unamuno, *La novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez*

The assertion of *Don Sandalio*'s epilogue-writer that “si le nacen muertos, es que él vive muerto,” comes to life in the experience of John Dos Passos, the link in *EALM* between the dead (the casualties of the Civil War, notably his friend José Robles Pazos) and the living. *EALM*'s historian-narrator identifies the times that the search for Robles resurfaced in Dos Passos's later work, notably his travel accounts in *Journeys Between Wars* (1938) and then in two novels: *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939) and *Century's Ebb* (1970), published shortly after Dos Passos's death. The identification of Robles-type figures and what *EALM*'s narrator calls “la sombra de la[] muerte[] de Pepe Robles” in Dos Passos's fiction captures a truth about the

importance for Dos Passos's of his friend's disappearance—a truth that cannot be fully captured in any declarative statement about the experience. Dos Passos was preoccupied by what happened to Pepe Robles. Part of him was “viviendo muerto” as he tried to unearth the truth about his friend, and then as he considered the consequences of his investigations. For Dos Passos—and, to some extent, Hemingway—³¹Robles becomes a haunting presence in future fiction. The idea of “viviendo muerto” is particularly apt in a case like *Century's Ebb*, as the fictional Robles again becomes the subject of a search, sparking hope (always dashed) that this time he will be found—or at least given a proper burial.

Famously called “the greatest writer of our time” in 1947 by Jean-Paul Sartre (Sartre 61), John Dos Passos is one of the most forgotten authors of the Lost Generation.³² More prolific and with a longer career than many of his contemporaries (e.g., Hemingway, Faulkner, Fitzgerald), Dos Passos fell out of favor with the literary establishment and has been the subject of relatively little critical interest in the 21st Century. Now, at a distance of nearly a fifty years since Dos Passos's death, the critical aftermath suggests two reasons for Dos Passos's decline in popularity: one is his movement from the later '30s to the end of his life toward the political Right—it is hard to find a review of Dos Passos from the '60s or '70s that does not mention with some combination of bewilderment and scorn his support for Joseph McCarthy or contributions to William F. Buckley's *National Review*;³³ the second is what his contemporaries described as a

³¹ One example suggested by Martínez (135 *et seq.*) of Robles's appearance in Hemingway is in the 1938 story “The Denunciation” (in Spanish, “La denuncia”) published first in *Esquire* and then in *The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons: 1969 (89-100). A more thorough account of the sightings of Robles's ghost in Hemingway's work is beyond the scope of this chapter.

³² Dos Passos himself found the classification of literary “generations” “a crashing bore”: “Some huckster picks up some idiotic and misleading classification, like the 'Lost' or the 'Beat,' and drums it into everybody's ears until you'd think they'd vomit. The odd thing is that they don't. All these pigeonholes relieve people of the effort to use their own minds. I say to hell with them” (cited in Chase, 171).

³³ As far as its consequences for critical reception, Dos Passos's political commitments over his lifetime cut both ways. As Andrew Hook points out in his Introduction to *Dos Passos: A Collection of Critical Essays*, to a

decline in the quality of writing. Whether the souring of critical reception is due more to the latter or to the former is a difficult question to answer. Part of Martínez's work in *EALM* is to trace in some measure the ways that José Robles's death was instrumental in both Dos Passos's turn toward conservatism and his decline in popularity among his contemporaries, starting with Hemingway.³⁴ There are hints that Dos Passos's work may be ripe for critical reevaluation.³⁵

For Dos Passos, as for Unamuno, the borders between "fiction" and "non-fiction" were better kept at least slightly undefined. In his later years, Dos Passos re-organized and titled what he considered his canonical works as thirteen "contemporary chronicles," a genre that works as bricolage of travelogue, reportage, biography, and fiction. His most important work, the U.S.A. trilogy (*The 42nd Parallel*, *Nineteen Nineteen*, *The Big Money*) is an epic-scale look at American values and culture where an indefinable national hodgepodge of characters and disembodied voices functions as the protagonist. Jumping back and forth between fictional narrative, song lyrics, news clippings and historical biography, and using techniques like the stream-of-consciousness "camera eye," Dos Passos sought to find perspectives that would allow him to work in a realm of objectivity as he tried to capture the truth of particular historical moments.

Dos Passos demonstrated commitment to the idea that there may be a type of truth that is expressed experientially rather than in strict adherence to factual detail. Near the beginning of his career, in a paragraph-long manifesto for a feature titled "Statements of Belief"³⁶ in the September, 1928 edition of *The Bookman: A Review of Life and Letters*, Dos Passos described the novelist as "a sort of truffle dog digging up raw material which a scientist, an anthropologist

certain extent Dos Passos's avid commitment to leftist causes in his early work limited his critical reception, even by a liberal literary establishment.

³⁴ Others have previously made this connection, as the historian-narrator makes obvious.

³⁵ See, e.g., Samuel Hux in the *English Review*.

³⁶ Under the subheading "The 'Credos' of America's Leading Authors," an editorial comment explains: "We begin, in the pages below, a series of personal statements in which America's leading authors set forth their fundamental views on life and their own work. Other statements will appear in succeeding numbers of *The Bookman*" (25).

or a historian can later use to permanent advantage.” Although he referred to the novelist as “a sort of second-class historian of the age he lives in,” Dos Passos allowed that the novelist may have greater access than the “scientist” to a certain type of reality. He says, “The ‘reality’ [the novelist] misses by writing about imaginary people, he gains by being able to build a reality more nearly out of his own factual experience than a plain historian or biographer can” (26). This oblique approach to capturing reality is what the historian-narrator relies on when he calls Dos Passos’s work to testify in *EALM*.

ENCONTRARSE CON LOS MUERTOS: MEETING JOSÉ ROBLES IN *EALM*

In the book’s opening pages, the narrator-historian of *EALM* describes learning about Robles in Hector Baggio’s 1978 book *John Dos Passos: Rocinante pierde el camino*. Robles is “una figura algo borrosa y secundaria” (7), who becomes interesting by virtue of his death: “sólo su desdichado final acababa otorgando al relato de su amistad con Dos Passos una trascendencia inesperada” (7). Before 1937, there was nothing in particular about the life of José Robles Pazos to draw the attention of a professional historian or biographer. At a markedly turbulent time in Spanish history, Robles seemed a decidedly ancillary figure. Although *EALM* makes reference to Robles’s own literary aspirations as both a novelist and dramatist (e.g., p. 15), his work that made it to publication is secondary—if significant. Robles was the first to review *The Sun Also Rises* in a Spanish-language publication,³⁷ introducing Hemingway to many. He and his wife, Margara, also translated the novels of Dos Passos for the left-wing publisher Cenit: Pepe taking on *Manhattan Transfer* and Margara *Rocinante pierde el camino*. No matter what Robles’s

³⁷ Of the claim to the first review—not only of Hemingway, but also of Dos Passos—Martınez says “casi con toda seguridad se puede afirmar que fueron esas las primeras noticias que en Espana se publicaron sobre la obra de ambos escritores” (16).

aspirations, the texts that he actually was able to complete before his death were mostly reflections on the work of others.

The historian of *EALM* begins to look for more information about Robles and becomes engrossed in investigating the man's life in almost Unamunian terms:

Buscaba nuevos testimonios y noticias, que a su vez conducían a más testimonios y más noticias, y en algún momento tuve la sensación de que eran ellas las que acudían a mí, que me buscaban. Para entonces esa curiosidad inicial se había convertido ya en una obsesión... (7-8).

Robles's death, rather than becoming a place of silence, becomes for the amateur historian the beginning of a voyage of discovery.

As is the case for the autopsied corpses that Michel Foucault discusses in *The Birth of the Clinic*,³⁸ Robles Pazos's death has an illuminatory function despite its silence. "That which hides and envelops, the curtain of night over truth, is, paradoxically, life; and death, on the contrary, opens up to the light of day the black coffer of the body" (166). Because of Robles's disappearance, a historian following his story can begin to identify some significant relationships between people and events. Foucault says the following of the post-mortem examination of disease:

Disease is no longer a bundle of characters disseminated here and there over the surface of the body and linked together by statically observable concomitance's and successions; it is a set of forms and deformations, figures, and accidents and of displaced, destroyed, or modified elements bound together in sequence according to a geography that can be followed step by step (136).

³⁸ See a fuller discussion of this section of Foucault in Chapter 1 (pp. 18-21).

Of course, rather than exposing a physical illness, Robles Pazos's death, as a window into the *intrahistoria*, exposes human relationships in all their strengths and weaknesses. Mentions of Robles's disappearance in biographical sketches of Dos Passos nearly always refer to him simply as Dos Passos's "friend" (rather than his colleague or translator). The strength of Robles's friendship with Dos Passos sustains *EALM* and propels Robles's memory into another century. At the same time, Robles's death exposes weaknesses in relationships (e.g., the friendship of Hemingway and Dos Passos) and in political alliances (e.g., the troubled relations between the USSR, the Republic, and the POUM)—weaknesses that would later become evident on a much larger historical scale. Robles's death furnishes a documentary trail that illuminates the *intrahistoria* beneath a chapter in history that in many ways remains opaque to contemporary readers.

ROBLES'S REAPPEARING GHOST

EALM subtly blurs the line between fiction and fact in its presentation of and citations to Dos Passos's texts. The relative value that *EALM* gives to narrative approaches over declarative statements is put on display with the minimization of Dos Passos's 1939 letter to the editor of *New Republic*, in which he directly and concisely tells what he knows of the José Robles story. While trying to trace the way in which Dos Passos learned the news of Robles's death (and to dispel the myth that Dos learned the news from Hemingway), the historian-narrator first considers fictional accounts before mentioning the *New Republic* letter:

Si nos guiáramos por lo que se cuenta en Century's Ebb, habría sido Pepe Quintanilla quien so lo habría dicho. "Lo han fusilado", le dice Juanito Posada (Pepe Quintanilla) mientras beben whisky...Del mismo modo, en una carta al director publicada en el *New*

Republic en 1939, Dos Passos dejó escrito que la ejecución de Robles no le había sido confirmado por Hemingway sino por un tal Carlos Posada (curiosa coincidencia), al que había conocido en 1916 y que en 1937 era uno de los responsables del contraespionaje en Madrid (como Posada-Quintanilla). (78)

Rather than exalting the letter as the clearest expression of Dos Passos's assessment of the Robles situation, *EALM* almost buries it, privileging instead certain sightings of a Robles-type ghost (veiled to greater or lesser degrees) in Dos Passos's subsequent work. This section will look, in chronological order, at the three texts from which *EALM* draws the most material:

Journeys Between Wars, *Adventures of a Young Man*, and *Century's Ebb*. As it contains the most detailed portrait of a Robles-type character, *Century's Ebb* will merit the longest discussion.

Journeys Between Wars and Adventures of a Young Man. The historian-narrator of *EALM* introduces an early Robles-type story in *Journeys Between Wars* (1938), a record of Dos Passos's own travels between World War I and the Spanish Civil War, with four chronologically-ordered sections called "The Discovery of Rosinante: 1919-1920," "Orient Express: 1921-1926," "Russian Visa: 1928," and "Introduction to Civil War: 1916-1937." Allusions to Pepe Robles's disappearance appear in the fourth and final section, and comprise the most general of the Dos Passos accounts considered in *EALM*. In a section near the end of book titled "Thoughts in the Dark," Dos Passos says,

Lying in bed it's hard not to think of what one has heard during the day of the lives caught in the tangle, the prisoners huddled in stuffy rooms waiting to be questioned, the woman with her children barely able to pay for the cheap airless apartment while she waits for her husband. It's nothing they have told her, he was just taken away for

questioning, certain little matters need to be cleared up, wartime, no need for alarm. But the days have gone by, months, no news. The standing in line at the police station [sic], the calling up of influential friends, the slowgrowing terror tearing the woman to pieces (359).

This vaguely-recalled scene, which is followed by some equally vague musings on the plight of prisoners awaiting execution, focuses on the family left behind. This was the part of the Robles experience in which Dos Passos personally participated, as one of the “influential friends” called by Robles’s wife, Margara, in the days after her husband’s disappearance. The ambiguity of the situation as described in *Journeys Between Wars* expands the experience beyond that of the Robles family (which had come to a conclusion by the date that appears at the end of this segment—April 1937). Dos Passos’s brief description of the experience of those who wait for their *desaparecidos* suggests, in addition to the Robles family, a much larger group of those “caught in the tangle,” multiplying Pepe Robles’s experience and using it to create a memorial to a missing multitude, making a statement about the extensive and ideologically varied cruelty of the war.

Considering this passage in *Journeys Between Wars*, the narrator-historian suggests that Dos Passos has been less than straightforward about the distinction between fact and fiction. He says, “Sin dar nombres e incluyendo, acaso de forma deliberada, alguna leve imprecision, Dos Passos escribio sobre la tragedia de los Robles en un texto de *Journeys Between Wars*” (58). The lack of names is forgotten a few sentences later, where the narrator says that Dos Passos’s novelistic description “da rienda suelta a los peores augurios sobre la suerte de Pepe Robles...” (58). There is, on one hand, nothing noteworthy about linking a novelist’s output with his biography. Of course Dos Passos’s experience during the Spanish Civil War would provide

material for his future writing, just as his experiences during World War I already had. This is especially unsurprising where a story is as gripping as the disappearance of Robles Pazos, who left behind a sympathetic young wife and two children. What is significant is the way that the fiction, even when colored by “alguna leve imprecisión,” tells truths about its author’s life that are not contained anywhere else—and thus may be illuminating (and potentially even more accurate) than formal history itself.

The second Robles-ghost called to account in *EALM* appears in the fictional *Adventures of a Young Man*, originally published the year after *Journeys Between Wars*. *Adventures*, a coming-of-age novel, follows its young protagonist, Glenn Spotswood, from his boyhood in Washington, D.C., through his death on a Spanish hillside during the first months of the Civil War. *Adventures* is the first of the Washington, D.C. trilogy, which follows multiple generations of the Spotswood family and their lives in and out of the title city. Glenn’s life bears many resemblances to Dos Passos’s, and the accounts of his travels throughout Europe are largely autobiographical. Like the real Dos Passos, Glenn Spotswood begins his political involvement as a communist, before becoming involved with offshoot labor uprisings. Frustrated with the way that things are going at home, Glenn joins a group of American communist friends on a trip to Spain to see the Civil War for themselves. For the most part, the friends stay out of the conflict.

At a certain point, though, the novel veers from the autobiographical. Glenn, who has been passing some mostly uneventful months in Spain working at a gas station, is abruptly arrested by Communist Party officials (at least one of whom is a former friend from the U.S.), accused of Trotskyism, and imprisoned. It is in this turn of the plot that *EALM*’s historian-narrator identifies the veiled figure of Robles: “La sombra de las muertes de Pepe Robles y Andreu Nin sobrevuela todo el capítulo, y bien pronto el propio Glenn es detenido por dos

miembros de la Brigada Especial (141). Like Robles (and unlike Dos Passos), Glenn becomes an early (and unsuspecting) casualty of the war. Of this passage in the novel, Martínez says, “Las similitudes con el caso Robles saltan a la vista” (141), continuing with one of EALM’s characteristic leaps into the realms of conjecture and imagination: “No parece aventurado suponer que, cuando Dos Passos escribió esas páginas, estaba en realidad recreando los interrogatorios que habían puesto a su amigo ante el paredón de fusilamiento” (141). Glenn never faces the firing squad—although he never escapes his imprisonment. As the war reaches the place where Glenn is being held, he is sent on what Martínez aptly calls “una misión suicida” (*Id.*), carrying water to the communist troops through the middle of a firestorm. The novel ends with Glenn’s death (cited here in its original English; Martínez cites it in Spanish):

He was halfway up the hill before they brought him down. For a second he had no pain. He thought he’d stubbed his toe on a stone. Too bad the water was all spilled in so much blood. Must get out of this, he said to himself, and started to drag himself along the ground. Then suddenly something split and he went spinning into blackness. He was dead. (*Adventures* 322).

With no chance at an appeal to justice, Glenn’s life has ended.

The fluidity of the movement between likely-autobiography and definitely-not-autobiography, as it appears in *Adventures of a Young Man*), is a good example of the presence of the potential space afforded by fiction. Robles’s own interrogation and time in detention are lost to history; in many ways, *EALM* is a record that confirms the repeated historical silence on the topic. Nevertheless, Dos Passos uses fiction in this passage from *Adventures* to capture many of the truths about his friend’s death: the bewilderment, the unpredictability, the turning of one’s old friends against one. Glenn Spotswood’s death does something that the letter to *New Republic*

could not do: it forces the reader to experience the shock of a life suddenly extinguished, of a life with which the reader has been forging a connection for the last 300+ pages. It is hard to know what another person is thinking or has done. But fiction allows Dos Passos to put his readers inside the mind of a particular character whom we know was wrongfully accused. Martínez's use of Dos Passos's fiction here aptly captures an emotional truth about the event that would be much less powerful rendered in third-person historical narrative.

Century's Ebb. The final Robles-ghost episode cited in *EALM* is from the very end of Dos Passos's career: his posthumously published novel, *Century's Ebb*. This is the most detailed of the three accounts, although it was not published until more than 30 years after Robles's initial disappearance. Of the Robles accounts cited, *Century's Ebb* is the only one where Dos Passos actually describes—and provides dialogue for—his encounter with Robles's wife, Mária. Although the names have been changed, as Martínez points out, the likenesses between the episode in *Century's Ebb* and the Robles case are clear. The missing man of *Century's Ebb*, Ramón Echevarría, has left behind a wife and two children in Valencia. The novel's protagonist, a lawyer named Jay Pignatelli,³⁹ travels to Spain to work on a documentary film and becomes involved in the search for Ramón, an old friend. The relationship between Jay and Ramón is much more developed than in the Robles-like accounts from the two texts previously discussed.

Century's Ebb begins its Robles account by lingering on the anxiety about Echevarría's condition at a time when he is still thought to be alive. The reader encounters Jay and his wife, Lulie, days before they leave for Spain⁴⁰ so that Jay can work on a documentary film remarkably

³⁹ Jay Pignatelli, widely recognized by critics of Dos Passos as a stand-in for the author, is also the protagonist of the earlier *Chosen Country* (1951).

⁴⁰ Despite the couple's original plans, Lulie ends up staying in France after friends warn the Pignatellis that things in Spain are becoming chaotic, unpredictable, and dangerous.

like Joris Iven's *Spanish Earth*, on which Dos Passos also collaborated. As husband and wife discuss their anxiety over possible threats in Valencia to Ramón Echevarría, Lulie expresses her concern for the Echevarría family:

“Maybe we could bring them home with us. . . . I know Amparo won't leave Ramón if there's any danger, but the little ones . . . after you have arranged about the film.” She tugged at him pleadingly. “I'd just love to have Paco and little Lou for a couple of months. They are cute as bugs' ears. . . .” (36)

While all of Dos Passos's account of the plight of the family members of Spain's *desaparecidos* draw strongly on human pathos, this scene in *Century's Ebb* makes that plight come alive by giving the Pignatellis the apparent power to intervene before something bad happens—even by offering something as simple as a place for a couple of their friends' children to stay. This possibility is at once mundane and emotionally gripping, placing the reader—via Jay and Lulie's experience—in a space of making ethical choices in the middle of an unsettled historical moment. When is it a good time to intervene for a friend you believe might be in peril? When is suspected danger great enough to separate a family with young children? *Century's Ebb* draws its reader to ask these questions along with Jay and Lulie.

There is to be no rescue, however, as Jay finds it nearly impossible to find out any news of Ramón on his arrival in Spain. Eventually, an anonymous informant slips Jay Amparo's contact information, and he goes to visit her. The dialogue between the two characters reveals that they are both bewildered and uncertain in the face Ramón's disappearance, a problem that still seems completely opaque. Jay goes to Amparo to find out where Ramón is. But as soon as she cautiously opens the front door, her first impulse is to press him for information: “Hay,⁴¹

⁴¹ Amusingly, none of Dos Passos's Spaniards can pronounce his protagonist's name, referring to him almost universally as “Hay” instead of “Jay.”

what do you know?...You can speak freely. The children are at school” (78). Jay tells her that he knows nothing, and asks her what happened. She says that Ramón was arrested, and then explains what she knows about Ramón’s work for the Republic.

As Jay sits in Amparo’s tiny apartment, listening, the text gives the reader access to his emotions:

Haltingly, she explains what little she knows of Ramón’s work for the government. Jay feels a consoling sense of competence come over him. He’s been in this position so often before. Attorney for the defense. The more he feels himself the lawyer the less he suffers as a friend. He snatches at the hope that his professional air may give Amparo a little courage. He starts jotting down her answers to his questions in his notebook.

She really knows nothing. (78)

Jay is torn between his ignorance, his fear, and his desire to appear strong for his friend. He finds refuge in his professional experience, eliciting information from a distraught eyewitness. But the reader is fully aware of the flimsiness of Jay’s confidence in his ability to support Amparo.

The sense of ambiguity and opacity continues to color the exchange. Jay asks,

“Could he have made enemies? He was pretty freespoken.”

“Not recently. You wouldn’t have known him. He became quite careful how he talked.”

“Is there anything else, anything they could have against him?”

“Who do we mean by ‘they’?” asks Amparo.

“I wish I knew.” (78)

Nevertheless, as the dialogue continues, it becomes apparent that Amparo has walked further than Jay down the path of destabilization and uncertainty. Jay exclaims,

“It’s ridiculous. There must be some way of appealing to the process of law.”

Amparo looks at Jay as if he's lost his mind. "Law!" she mutters. "You don't know the Spain of today." (78)

The refrain "You don't know the Spain of today" is repeated several times in the text that follows, as Jay tries to make good on his promises to Amparo that he will find a lawyer and "get him [Ramón] out" (79). The frustration of Jay's quest painfully illustrates that "the Spain of today" is not something that can be reduced to a simple explanation, but rather something that Jay must experience by means of thwarted investigations, mysteriously reticent acquaintances, and bureaucratic frustration.

As Jay tries—at first optimistically, and then with increasing pessimism—to find his friend, the reader walks with him, looking over his shoulder as he writes to Lulie that "there is something absolutely horrible about the atmosphere of Valencia" (79). The invitation to enter that atmosphere is the strength of Dos Passos's account in *Century's Ebb*. Just as Jay's inquiries do not follow a predictable path, the narrative leaves the reader with little clue about what will happen next. In contrast to an actual history—where the bottom line is already known—the fictional text has an unlimited range of possible endings. Dos Passos selected an ending for the Echevarría case that mirrors that of Robles. But, as one is reading the novel, that place of potentiality is opened once again, and the reader is, like Jay, unaware of the identities of heroes or villains, unaware of how the story will end. The reader of this fictional account stands with Jay in the "now-time" of his discovering.

The revelation about Ramón's death seems to come at an entirely unexpected moment. Depressed after a frustrating day, Jay is brooding on the scenic balcony of a friend's apartment when, along with a glass of scotch, Jay's acquaintance Juanito, a one-time Republican operative, casually delivers the news, "The man has been shot" (91). Juanito refuses to provide more

explanation than to say, “[W]e are living through terrible times. To overcome them we have to be terrible ourselves” (91). The juxtaposition of the balcony, the lovely evening, the scotch, and the accompaniment of someone inside the house playing Chopin with the inhumanity of Juanito’s delivery only serves to highlight, in Hannah Arendt’s language, the banality of the evil at play. The jarring nature of the revelation can be experienced (or re-experienced) differently in fiction than in a narrative that says, for instance, “The nature of the revelation was jarring.” Readers of *Century’s Ebb* are able to experience a small piece of the historical moment by stepping with Jay into the space of ignorance yielding suddenly and reluctantly to revelation.

Being informed of Ramón’s death does little to alleviate the tension between known and unknown. Jay sets out on a quest to get Ramón’s death certificate so that Amparo can collect on his life insurance policy back in the U.S. Officials in Madrid refer him back to Valencia. At this point, the chronology of Jay’s investigation becomes confused, as the text skips ahead to his next (and final) visit to Amparo before circling back to tell how the death certificate was obtained.

His first agonizing duty was to tell Amparo. He climbed the grimy stairs in a cold sweat. He didn’t need to tell Amparo. She already knew. The children were out. She was sitting with bowed head on one of the tumbled cots like a woman of stone, her handsome brown hands hung limp between her knees. Jay tried to interest her in the problems of Ramón’s insurance and of taking the children back to America. He couldn’t get her to look up at him. The ambassador was a good friend of his, said Jay coaxingly. He would certainly be helpful. She let out a dry laugh.

She broke out again into that same laugh when he showed her the certificate. Death by misadventure. It had taken a last painful interview with Hernández. They both behaved with a sort of poisonous cordiality, though Jay knew that Hernández hated him

and that he hated Hernández. Suddenly Hernández brought the certificate out of his desk drawer. It had been there all along. “So they admit,” was all Amparo would say, “the men of the Republic, that they are cowards and fools” (94).

With this declaration from Amparo, the text abruptly leaps out of the conversation, out of Amparo’s apartment, and out of Valencia, to an episode widely recognized as a fictionalization of a real encounter between Dos Passos and George Orwell: “In Barcelona he at last met a man he could talk to” (94): “Jay never forgot the Englishman. An extraordinary sense of relaxation came over him when he realized he was talking to an honest man. . . . He found himself, almost against his will, pouring out the sorry tale of his misadventures” (*Id.*). Confused, disheartened, and discouraged, Jay finds solace in the companionship of a fellow outsider; he and the Englishman delight in speaking openly with each other. The interplay of flesh-and-blood writers with their fictionalized selves and with their later literary production offers readers multiple levels of interpretation and understanding, as this encounter is haunted not only by Robles Pazos but by *Homage to Catalonia* and a host of later essays by both Orwell and Dos Passos. Corpse and corpus intermingle as this exchange suggests the many ways that Robles/Echevarría’s death will have influence on future accounts of the Spanish Civil War both in England and in Dos Passos’s U.S.A

CLOSING THOUGHTS ON *ENTERRAR A LOS MUERTOS*

The phrase “enterrar a los muertos” is an injunction from the Catholic tradition, the last of the seven corporal acts of mercy. The placement of “bury the dead” at the end of the list of seven reflects the fact that it is the final physical deed that can be performed on behalf of a fellow human being. The mandate to bury the dead is an act that recognizes the sanctity of human life

and, particularly, of the human body—even after life is gone. Beyond physical burial, the principle of this final act of mercy extends to acts that honor the dead and preserve their memory, such as attending funerals or wakes and maintaining and visiting graves. Burial implies the participation of a community: one cannot bury oneself. The command functions as a preservation of the influence of the dead over the living. The rituals surrounding burial speak of legacy and preservation of memory. Burial provides closure, but it also establishes a baseline for memory and creates a site where remembering is located. To establish a burial site is both closure and aperture, inviting future acts of memory (and even investigation).

Although the Catholic origin of the title phrase is not mentioned in the text, *Enterrar a los muertos* touches on each of the aspects of this tradition mentioned above. The story's point of origin is the ordinary friendship between Pepe Robles and John Dos Passos, a friendship that blossomed into a professional relationship—but that probably would have had its most significant memorial on the title page of *Manhattan Transfer* were it not for the death that imbued it with a “trascendencia inesperada.” Moving outward from Dos Passos's preoccupation with finding his friend, *EALM* travels through fictional and historical records, considering both the testimony of others and their silences. *EALM* indicates that there are many existing memorials to José Robles, ranging from the memories of his daughter Miggie to the record of Amparo's bitter chuckle in *Century's Ebb*. Rather than focusing on the large-scale implications of the plight of those who were disappeared in the Spanish Civil War, *EALM* puts its focus on the small, day-to-day decisions of those Dos Passos characterized as “caught in the tangle,” and the ideological battles of the tumultuous time of which Robles was a victim. The text creates an aura of ambiguity that reflects the often confusing and unresolved nature of lived experience. Furthermore, by highlighting the work of writers who spoke into a silence, *EALM* acts as a

continuation of and an invitation to participate in a perpetual memorial of a man whose physical burial will most likely never take place

THE ETHICS OF HISTORY-MAKING IN *EL DÍA DE MAÑANA*

El día de mañana, in contrast to *Enterrar a los muertos*, makes no pretense of being an actual history. The novel employs a multiplicity of perspectives to create a fictional documentary history of Justo Gil Tello, whose life spanned the last three decades of Franco's dictatorship and the first years of the Spanish Transition—allowing his character to function as a sort of prototype of the period. While Justo was not an actor on the world stage, he is recognized in small-scale versions of the “official” history (e.g., in the newspapers) as “el Rata,” a police informant for Franco's Brigada Política-Social. The novel, however, complicates this type of neat labeling, digging into the lives of Justo's friends and acquaintances and into the forces that motivated Justo himself. Both in its composition and its content, *El día de mañana* situates history not as a “yesterday,” the significance of which is determined once and for all, but as a “today,” saturated with unknowns and possibilities. The novel reminds the reader that, in Benjamin's words, there is no “homogeneous, empty time,” just waiting to receive historical events (261). History is made up of “the presence of the now” (*Ibid.*), the lives of individuals who each have distinct memories, experiences, hopes and expectations for the future—and who may or may not find themselves on the same side as history's victors.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore the ways that *El día de mañana*, both through its structure and content, creates apertures for considering the ethical consequences of the way history is composed. Not only is the novel composed in a way that presents an alternative to an authoritative narrative voice, but the ethical repercussions of the choices made

in the process of history-making are implicated by the novel's characters as they live through the Spanish Transition to democracy after the death of Franco in 1975.

FORM: THE ABSENT HISTORIAN

Considering *El día de mañana* as a history, the most significant absence is the voice of the historian as an authoritative third-person narrator. In *El día de mañana*, the narrative voice is multiplied: twelve different individuals who each clearly expose their subjectivity by speaking in the first person. There is no authoritative voice giving background or commentary; the only obvious interventions are the brief attributions beginning each section (e.g., “Sí, éramos medio parientes, dice Martín Tello” (7)) and the organization of the individual witnesses' testimonies in chronological order. Some witnesses speak repeatedly, with their testimony broken up and placed between other testimony covering a similar time period. What unites each of the testimonies is that each narrator was in some way connected with Justo Gil Tello, although all of the testimonies place these connections in the much broader context of each narrator's life story. When, in the “Epílogo” at the end of the novel, the reader realizes that s/he has been reading testimonies collected by Toni Coll, the grandson of a government official who knew “el Rata” as a young man, it comes as a surprise: Toni Coll was just one voice (who spoke only briefly) in the course of the novel. Toni is also, significantly, the only narrator who never knew Justo personally. Even the revelation of the Toni's identity is made indirectly, as the epilogue is narrated by Carme Román:

Toni me pidió que le contara todo lo que sabía. Al principio no entendí los motivos de su curiosidad. Luego intuí que se sentía el deber de completar una investigación que su abuelo había dejado a medias.

—Cuéntamelo todo —repitió—. Háblame.

—¿Pero de qué?, ¿de qué quieres que te hable?

—De lo que te apetezca. De tu vida. De ti, de Justo...

Respiré hondo, me arreglé el peinado y comencé:

—Se puede decir que Justo y yo fuimos socios (377).

With these first sentences of Carme's account, the narrative circles back and repeats the first lines uttered by Carme earlier in the novel. Toni himself, as the historian, never addresses the reader directly. Interestingly, the circularity created by the repetition of Carme's lines does not tie all the way back to the beginning of the novel, as Carme is not the first witness but the fourth, emphasizing the sensation of a narrative *in medias res*.

Carme's testimony also starts with an immediate diversion from the theme of Justo Gil, as she begins by describing the loss of her family in a flood and her subsequent move to Barcelona. These kinds of diversions occur frequently throughout the novel, as with Carme's description of her cousin's suicide (153-155), Elvira Solé's account of her courtship with her husband (129-130), Marc Jordana's explanations about why he pursued interpretive dance (261), Mateo Moreno's recollections of shopping for a home with his fiancée (278-279), and Noel Leon's extended foray into his parents' obsession with palindromes (306-311). These diversions into the *intrahistoria* stray from the investigation into Justo's life, all while creating a rich context around it. None of these events are particularly characteristic of the moment in history known as the "Transition," but they made up the day-to-day experience of it for each of these narrators.

The diversions into details of each narrator's life story also emphasize each person's unique perspective, allowing the reader a window into that person's subjective experience. The

diversions, along with the juxtaposition of a varied set of texts, also give the reader a sense that Justo was passing in and out of the lives of these individuals as they happened in real time—lives that were populated by other anxieties, other pleasures, and other distractions. There is no “empty time” in the lives of these narrators, and the wealth of information provided only serves to remind us of how much of their lives is still necessarily left out. At the same time, the reader’s knowledge of the personalities and experiences of the individual narrators helps him or her to sort through and interpret what they *do* say about Justo.

Although Toni does not describe the process of composing his history in the novel, he provides material for a parallel between the book’s composition and the process employed by Toni’s grandfather for trying to recapture the identity of “el Rata.” The grandfather, Ferran Coll is given, as a curiosity, an old file of photos and notes provided by the informant “el Rata” to the Social Brigade in the years before Franco’s death. The information in the file focuses on a group of young people with anti-Francoist loyalties who frequented the bar Bocaccio. Now, decades later, Ferran, who was part of the Bocaccio group, becomes obsessed with trying to determine the identity of the mysterious informant behind the file’s contents.

The objects in the file that were created by el Rata (e.g., photos and handwritten notes) prove unhelpful, as they only create a negative picture of who the Rata was not—he obviously does not take photos of himself or transcribe his own conversations. Rather, Ferran must try to paint a mental picture based on what is left out of the photos and in the file (the photographer’s/author’s identity). This process of reasoning-from-a-negative is reflected in the drawings that he makes while trying to decipher the identity of el Rata. Toni describes the impression given by looking at all of his grandfather’s drawing as a group:

Los rasgos podían coincidir o no, y sin embargo saltaba a la vista que todos esos rostros eran siempre el mismo rostro, como en esos sueños en los que se te aparece un familiar o un amigo con un aspecto que no es el suyo: sabemos que es él aunque no sea él, aunque no se le parezca en absoluto. A lo mejor el arte del retrato consiste en eso: no en captar el alma de una persona a través de sus rasgos, sino a pesar de sus rasgos. (113)

Speaking of his grandfather's motives in creating the drawings, Toni says, "Él no buscaba tanto ilustrar como conocer, averiguar. O tal vez comprender. Comprender al enemigo, al traidor, a la persona que se había acercado a él y a los suyos para delatarles" (114).

The novel's collection of narratives provides a parallel to Ferran's collection of drawings. The multiple narrative testimonies reveal Justo's identity "a pesar de sus rasgos," helping the reader to understand him as a multidimensional person instead of merely illustrating him as a treacherous informant. Having the narration revealed through the different testimonies invites the reader to participate in his own exercise of *perspectivismo*, as the reader's conclusion on Justo is constructed, not received from the historian, and thus also colored by interpretation. The reader begins to see the characteristics of Justo that consistently surface in a number of different narrations. Justo's dishonesty and egoism surface repeatedly. But so does the theme of his love for his mother, which dominates the testimonies in the novel's first section and resurfaces to explain both Justo's blighted efforts with women and the financial desperation that led him to beg Mateo Moreno for work as an informant. As with any of the other personal characteristics revealed in the novel, to say that Justo was motivated by his love for his mother would be simultaneously saying too little and saying too much. Instead of neat explanations, comprehension begins to occur as the events speak for themselves.

Instead of merely following the logic of an authoritative historian, the reader of *EDDM* is required to take an active role, deciphering and deciding what is consistent across the stories, or which perspectives may be colored by the experience of the particular witnesses. In this way, the reader comes to participate in the crafting of the story, instead of receiving it as “the truth” from the mouth of the historian. Significantly, the historian here—Toni Coll—possesses no specialized knowledge of his subject; he never met Justo. He does, however, serve as a mediator between Justo and the reader, providing a space for the other narrators to elaborate their own individual perspectives on Justo’s participation in their life stories. *EDDM* recognizes and materializes the interpretative role of the reader, a literary approach that has been explored and expounded not only by Iser, but by scholars like Hans Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and Stanley Fish. This experience of reading informs Wolfgang Iser’s use of a memorable celestial metaphor in his 1972 article “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach”:

[D]uring the process of reading, there is an active interweaving of anticipation and retrospection . . . The impressions that arise as a result of this process will vary from individual to individual, but only within the limits imposed by the written as opposed to the unwritten text. In the same way, two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The “stars” in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable. (287)

The individual narrations point out the stars in the sky of Justo’s life, and some narrators do their best to identify the patterns that make up its constellations. But the overall effect of reading all of the varied narrations together is to push each individual reader to question whether the lines that have been drawn between the data points or “stars” have been drawn in the right places.

CONTENT: LA BÚSQUEDA DE UN ESPACIO PROPIO

While the structure of *El día de mañana* affords fertile vantage points for considering history that approximates the truth by inhabiting the *intrahistoria*, its content highlights the collective perspective of a unique moment in time: the final years of Franco's dictatorship and the first years of the Transition toward democracy. Historian Santos Juliá has taken issue with those who describe this period in Spain's history as "un periodo de lo más pacífico, silencioso, consensual y aproblemático de nuestra historia" (274), instead affirming that the *zeitgeist* in Franco's last days was "un simple interrogante sin respuesta...una inseguridad que quedó condensada en la pregunta que resumía todas las inquietudes pero también todas las expectativas: "Después de Franco ¿qué?" (*Ibid.*). The answer to this question was complex, and over the next several years the Spanish experience was one of

un mundo en movimiento, caracterizado por la presencia de decenas de posibles actores a la búsqueda de un espacio propio en el que se cruzaban, enfrentaban o coligaban gentes de varias generaciones, con muy diversas biografías políticas, cargadas o ligeras de experiencias tanto de poder como de oposición, sobre un fondo de crisis política... (275).

This is the reality inhabited by the characters of *El día de mañana*. And their responses to this uncertainty teach us both about the uniqueness of a historical moment and the universality of ethical questions across human history.

The title phrase "El día de mañana" is a citation to one of the pieces of testimony from Mateo Moreno, the police officer in the Social Brigade for whom Justo works as an informant. While it is easy to label Justo, "el Rata," as an informant and traitor (el "enemigo...traidor...la persona que se había acercado a [Ferrari] y a los suyos para delatarles" (114), in the words of Toni Coll), Moreno is insulated from moral reproach by force of his position as a police officer.

Throughout the novel, his testimony reveals his ideological ambivalence and spirit of pragmatism about the political changes at work in Spain.

Raised as an orphan by “las monjas de la Casa de Caridad” (114), Moreno describes his youthful loyalty to Franco as an inevitable product of his position and experience in life:

¿Cómo no íbamos a ser franquistas si fue Franco el que nos sacó de la calle y nos dio cama, comida, educación, trabajo...? dice Mateo Moreno. Para los chavales de familia bien, para los que tenían padre y madre y casa propia, era muy fácil ser antifranquista. A nosotros, a los que nos criamos en los Hogares Mundet, ni se nos pasaba por la cabeza (114).

For Moreno, loyalty to Franco is what makes sense, what allows him to survive. This spirit of pragmatism spills over into his thoughts surrounding the Transition.

And Moreno is not alone in his expressions of pragmatism. As news spreads that Franco’s death is imminent, Moreno observes,

En jefatura, lo que más preocupaba a unos y a otros era poner el culo a salvo. Por lo que pudiera pasar o, como se decía entonces, por si se daba la vuelta a la tortilla. Esa expresión se utilizaba mucho, y nadie quería significarse demasiado, por si de verdad acababa dándose la vuelta a la tortilla. ¿Quién te aseguraba que los mismos tipos a los que enviábamos a incomunicados no fueran a ser nombrados el día de mañana directores generales o ministros? (273)

Everything may change “el día de mañana”; those who are on the top today may be on the bottom tomorrow. In this atmosphere, Moreno recognizes that he—along with his co-workers and compatriots—just needs to make the choices necessary to survive. Pragmatism comes before

ideology. In the transition toward democracy, the idea of “democracy” doesn’t seem to be even on the radar.

Moreno notices the same ambivalence in others as the Transition unfolds and people begin to define their new political positions. He greets the turning tide of political loyalty with skepticism and derision:

Luego, tras la muerte de Franco, parecía que todo el mundo era demócrata de toda la vida. Salían demócratas de debajo de las piedras... ¿De verdad crees que, si hubiera habido tanto demócrata y tanto antifranquista, el régimen habría acabado como acabó, con Franco muriendo de viejo y en la cama? No me hagas reír, hombre (274).

Regardless of this skepticism, though, Moreno adapts to the new political climate and continues his work in the police department (“La Brigada Político-Social se había convertido ya en Brigada de Investigación” (345)). In doing so, he provides a window into the *intrahistoria* of the Transition, and to a fundamentally human urge that Unamuno might have called part of “el sedimento de las verdades eternas de la eterna esencia” (27): the desire for self-preservation.

Another example of ambivalence in the novel is the character of Manel Pérez. Pérez is the witness with first-hand knowledge of Justo’s participation with right-wing Catalanian political groups and his turn toward violently exposing those who fund the same groups. But, while Pérez, as an active member of the Fuerza Joven, would seem to have a determined political position, he reveals that his motives are quite different from loyalty to a political ideology. He is motivated by a desire to distance himself from his parents and family, whose pragmatism he despises:

Mis padres ni eran ni habían sido franquistas . . . y en la historia de la familia, que durante la guerra había apoyado por pragmatismo el bando nacional, no había hazañas

que conmemorar ni martirologios que vindicar. Además, desde la muerte de Franco mi familia se encontraba, como en general en España, en pleno proceso de adaptación a los nuevos tiempos, y buscaba la fórmula mágica que le permitiera mantener su conservadurismo esencial pero liberado de todas las embarazosas connotaciones que se le habían ido agregando durante los casi cuarenta años de dictadura (321)

Manel says of his “acercamiento a la ultraderecha” (321) that it must have reminded his parents of their own mediocrity: “En el fondo, puede ser que me juntara con esa gente sólo para echar en cara a mis padres su cobardía y su mediocridad” (*Ibid.*). Ironically, Pérez only repeats the pattern of disloyalty and self-serving detachment, transforming his involvement with right-wing politics into the springboard for a successful career in journalism. He becomes an informant. Like Justo years earlier, Pérez is now the one who hides his camera in order to capture at his [supposed] colleagues’ expense the information that he knows will sell in the papers. Under the ethical cover of journalism, Pérez becomes an informant for the sake of advancing his own career. And he reluctantly finds in Justo a partner in uncovering needed information.

Against the backdrop of characters like Mateo Moreno and Manel Pérez, condemning Justo’s position as “el Rata” becomes more ethically complicated. Through Ferrar Coll’s drawings and [the reader presumes] Manel Pérez’s journalistic product in the *Tele/Exprés*, Justo becomes preserved for history as a “confidente de la policía que le llamaban el Rata” (377). He is the traitor, the scapegoat in this chapter of history (so it is no wonder that his execution at the hand of *ultraderechista* mercenaries is compared to that of “un Cristo con su corona de espinas” (374)). That is not to say that the novel gives an impression of Justo as an ethically upstanding person. He lies; he uses people; he seeks vengeance. Justo’s ethical choices are, however, not very different from those of the others who formed his circle of influence. Like Moreno and

Pérez, Justo was motivated by his own survival. *El día de mañana* highlights the reality that history is composed not primarily of heroic figures but of passive participants. In order to ethically condemn Justo, we must condemn not only others such as Mateo and Manel, but the very social and cultural framework of Spanish society at the time.

CLOSING THOUGHTS ON *EL DÍA DE MAÑANA*

El día de mañana places the onus of history on the individual ethical choices of the persons involved, much like Unamuno suggested in *En torno al casticismo*. The novel also exposes the ways that history protects certain members of society—those who fall in league with the victors—the way that it will protect Mateo Moreno as an officer of the law or Manel Pérez as a journalist. Brushing history against the grain can reveal those who are not protected by the official narrative. It also shows how the cumulative decisions of the unnamed persons in the intrahistoria can have vast implications. The reader is left asking what Justo would say if he, like all of the other narrators, were provided with a platform to justify himself and characterize his actions.

In the laboratory of fiction, *El día de mañana* asks what it would be like if history were constructed in a different way from the authoritative texts that follow one storyline. As Ortega argued, reality is not one- or two-dimensional, but can be considered from a variety of perspectives. The twelve narrators in *El día de mañana* demonstrate the ways that testimonial histories can move us further towards comprehension and empathy, precisely because they lack the clarity and cohesion of an authoritative narrative.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the epigraphs at the beginning of this paper, it is clear that both Unamuno and Benjamin are arguing for an ethically-conscious construction of history that contemplates the reality of human decisions made in the moment, not colored by the outcome as we now know it. According to Unamuno's argument in *En torno al casticismo*, this type of history challenges us to confront—rather than distancing ourselves from—what is shameful in our history; time alone does not guarantee a safe distance from the mistakes of the past. There is no progress until we are honest about the causes of history's dark passages. For Benjamin, we can begin to redress the moral horrors of our time when we recognize the way that they are vindicated by an “untenable” construction of history characterized by “empathy with the victor” (256) instead of a thorough and thoughtful interrogation of the facts. Both of Martínez de Pisón's texts considered here create a space where readers are invited to think about history in small- instead of large-scale movements, creating the potential for empathy⁴² with those on all different sides of a particular historical outcome. Fictional history in this vein resonates not only with Unamuno and Benjamin, but with the aims of 20th-century historians like Fernan Braudel and his predecessors and successors in the Annales School. Contemplating the reality of life in the day-to-day—affected by the social, economic, and geographic realities into which each individual is thrown—sheds light on the human experience in a way that makes far-off lives relatable.

Giorgio Agamben highlighted the ethical weight of small decisions in the intrahistoria in the introduction to *Remnants of Auschwitz*, giving an account of a soccer match between SS

⁴² For a provocative look at the rise of the imperative toward empathy in the field of historiography, see Samuel Moyn's review in *History and Theory* of Carolyn J. Dean's *The Fragility of Empathy after the Holocaust* and Dominick LaCapra's *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, and Critical Theory*. Moyn makes the argument that there is a cultural leap to value, prioritize, and even mandate “empathy,” even where the concept is poorly defined and potentially conflated with other older and more established virtues, such as sympathy. Susan Lanzoni's *Atlantic* article “A Short History of Empathy” provides a complementary overview of the evolving meaning of the term.

soldiers and a group of prisoners who had been recruited into the Sonderkommando. “The match,” he says,

might strike someone as a brief pause of humanity in the middle of an infinite horror. I, like the witnesses, instead view this match, this moment of normalcy, as the true horror of the camp . . . But also hence our shame, the shame of those who did not know the camps and yet, without knowing how, are spectators of that match, which repeats itself in every match in our stadiums, in every television broadcast, in the normalcy of everyday life. If we do not succeed in understanding that match, in stopping it, there will never be hope (26).

By making recourse to fiction, the texts considered in this chapter return to a time of “normalcy of everyday life” where those who are actors in history and the intrahistoria are represented in a kind of gray area where winners and losers are still to be decided. This type of living approach to history is one of the places where I find the strongest link between my literary research and the concerns of existentialism—specifically the struggle of each individual person to establish his or her unique identity at a particular moment in history, in relation to but without being defined by historical circumstances. Rather than relying on one linear narrative, the kind of history offered by these texts reveals the way that lived-life functions as a web of interrelated stories that inhabit the real time between yesterday and tomorrow.

CHAPTER 3

Embodied Experience at the Intersection of Inheritance and Legacy:

Family Memory and History in *Corazón tan blanco*, *Dientes de leche*,

and *El tiempo de las mujeres*

History is other people; it is the interrelationships we establish with them, outside of which the realm of the ideal appears as an alibi.

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception”

INTRODUCTION

Maurice Merleau-Ponty opens one of his final published essays, “Eye and Mind,” pitting “scientific thinking” (160) against what he calls a return to “the soil of the sensible and opened world such as it is in our life and for our body” (160). This contrast between a type of thinking that deals in disembodied generalities and a type of thinking firmly anchored in the physical experience of being-inside-a-body lies at the heart of Merleau-Ponty’s interest and published works. For Merleau-Ponty, incarnation is the fundamental aspect of human experience. To think of a generic body, of any human body, is not sufficient for Merleau-Ponty: it must be “that actual body I call mine, this sentinel standing quietly at the command of my words and acts” (160). For Merleau-Ponty, even Husserl’s invitation to return to “the things themselves” falls short when it comes to actual acknowledgement of the role of real, specific, concrete human bodies in mediating human experience of the world.

In this third and final chapter, I expand my contemplation of fiction as existential history by reading a handful of novels by Javier Marías and Ignacio Martínez de Pisón in light of embodiment, centering my analysis on the works of Merleau-Ponty and related thinkers. Unlike

traditional historical narrative, fiction can place the reader inside the body of a fictional character, whose experience of perspective, space, and time is mediated by his or her own corporeal reality. This chapter will approach a vast field of possible analysis (where there is consciousness, there is embodiment too) by paying particular attention to the placement of fictional protagonists within families, the family being in these novels the fundamental human unit of shared experience between bodies.

Javier Marías's novel *Corazón tan blanco*, in keeping with his other work, often focus on the ways that his character's bodies (e.g., via the always-imperfect senses of sight and hearing) mediate their interaction with the world. Marías also frequently contrasts the reality of live bodies with dead ones, which have lost their powers of sensation but not of expression. The aspect of *Corazón tan blanco* that makes it uniquely interesting for this chapter is its treatment of the psychological landscape of its protagonist, Juan, as he navigates the shifting ground of his relationships with his father and his wife during the first year of his marriage. Likewise centered on family relationships, Martínez de Pisón's *Dientes de leche* and *El tiempo de las mujeres* will be considered alongside *Corazón tan blanco*. Martínez de Pisón's novels deal with some of the same themes as Marías's while employing different styles and narrative techniques that foster an atmosphere of existential tension. Merleau-Ponty, who in the pantheon of existential philosophers has been hailed as "something like the patron saint of the body" (Shusterman 151), provides a helpful theoretical backdrop for my reading. I am particularly interested in his examinations of perception in the essays "The Primary of Perception" and "Eye and Mind," and his consideration of temporality in *The Phenomenology of Perception*.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, born in Rochefort-sur-Mer in 1908, was educated in the German

existentialist tradition and is an integral part of the French one. He was a friend⁴³ and colleague of Jean-Paul Sartre and the political editor for *Les Temps modernes*. Reluctant to accept all of the Sartrean connotations of the term “existentialism,” Merleau-Ponty preferred related but distinct terms such as “the philosophy of existence.”⁴⁴ Like his German predecessors, and along with contemporary compatriots like Sartre and Gabriel Marcel, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical field was the individual experience of the world through individual consciousness. But he had his own unique focus on what he called the “primacy of perception”—the inescapable reality that anything contemplated by a consciousness must first be perceived in a very physical way by means of the senses. Merleau-Ponty aimed to shine a light on the bodily experience that always mediates consciousness, even if the character of that mediation—experienced through the senses—remains in many ways veiled in mystery. He says in “Eye and Mind” that,

[t]here is a human body when, between the seeing and the seen, between touching and the touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand, a blending of some sort takes place—when the spark is lit between sensing and sensible, lighting the fire that will not stop burning until some accident of the body will undo what no accident could have sufficed to do. (E&M 163-164).

This “spark” of consciousness cannot be divorced from the bodily experience that accompanies it in human experience, no matter what the philosophers seem to believe on their journeys into the extremes of abstraction.

⁴³ Their friendship soured over political differences (see Carman and Hansen, 3), which did not keep Sartre from writing a much-cited tribute, “Merleau-Ponty *vivant*,” following the latter’s untimely death. It opens with the lines, “I have lost so many friends who are still alive. No one was to blame. It was they. It was myself. Events made us, brought us together, separated us. And I know that Merleau-Ponty said the same thing when he thought of the people who haunted, and then left his life. But he never lost me, and he had to die for me to lose him” (Sartre, “Merleau Ponty *vivant*” 565).

⁴⁴ See Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosophy of Existence,” republished in *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*, edited by Jon Stewart. Northwestern UP, 1998, pp. 492-503.

Merleau-Ponty's call to return to the reality of embodied experience is set out most completely in his philosophical treatise *Phénoménologie de la perception* (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945), but elucidated in a host of shorter works and essays. In contrast to idealistic Heideggerian conceptions of "Being" or subject-object dichotomies, Merleau-Ponty argued that "all consciousness is perceptual, even the consciousness of ourselves" ("Primacy" 13); what we see and know is necessarily shaped by our embodied experience and limited by our physical capabilities for perception. While the focus on the individual subject is a trait of existentialist thought, Merleau-Ponty's framing of existential principles brought the idea of embodiment to the forefront. Where Husserl and Heidegger retreated to technical terminology and Sartre to ideological expositions on the exercise of "freedom," Merleau-Ponty called for a philosophy grounded in the idea that "[t]he perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence" ("Primacy" 13). His thesis, he said, rather than attempting to destroy "either rationality or the absolute...only tries to bring them down to earth" (13).

Merleau-Ponty's call to come back down to earth unites the two essays considered most heavily in this chapter, essays that mark the bookends of his career. "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences" was a 1946 lecture (first published in 1947) delivered to the Société française as a summary of the arguments presented in the recently-published *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945). "Eye and Mind" (1960), on the other hand, was the last essay that Merleau-Ponty saw published, and presented some of the ideas developed more fully in his unfinished book *Le Visible et l'invisible* (1964). Both texts address the issue of embodiment, with "The Primacy of Perception" situating itself more generally in the contexts of philosophy and science, and "Eye and Mind" considering the centrality of perception to the work of the painter, with special emphasis on the sense of vision.

MEMORY VERSUS HISTORY

If fiction can be an existential take on history—as I argue that it can—it is important to think about how history is experienced from the “down-to-earth” reality of life within the body, and how fiction can uniquely bring this experience to life. The initial chapter in this study approached this kind of contemplation by following Unamuno into the *intrahistoria* and the profoundly spiritual (for Unamuno) relationship between the writer’s physical existence and the written corpus. The second chapter considered another facet of lived-out reality by focusing on the undecided potential of “now-time” as it is actually experienced in the decisions we make from moment to moment. This final chapter examines the capacity of fiction to recreate the experience of a person’s existence in history as a body and as a member of the inherently corporeal group known as the family. Expanding the contemplation of existential history from the individual to the family unit means taking a step *away* from philosophical abstraction or scientific generalization and a step *toward* history as we each enter its stream: as babies—naked and speechless, but indelibly determined in many ways by our parents, our geography, and our genetic heritage.

The way that individuals relate to the past, in day-to-day embodied life, is not through the enterprise of formalized history, but through memory. Although they are certainly interrelated, memory and history are not the same thing. Memory exists for each individual whether or not that person participates in a history-creating enterprise. Whereas history is always directed toward an audience, memory need never leave the world of the internal. This distinction is important for existential history, since the way that people relate to time in their own experience is through the lens of memory. Memory is the currency of each of the novels considered in this chapter, providing provocative juxtapositions where a character’s memory overlaps with the

conflicting memories of others or with an event lifted from the records of large-scale histories (e.g., the 23F military coup appearing as a decisive event in *El tiempo de las mujeres*).

In many respects, “history” is now considered a science and its reliance on scientific rigor is privileged above the imperfections of memory. Still, the problem is perplexingly circular, since eyewitness memories are often key to the construction of history itself. Pierre Nora delves into the perceived “fundamental opposition” (Nora 8) between memory and history—and argues against the disparagement of memory—in his 1989 article “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*.”⁴⁵ As history has been adopted into the social sciences, memory has been increasingly relegated toward the realm of the personal. “In a country such as France,” argues Nora, “the history of history cannot be an innocent operation; it amounts to the internal subversion of memory-history by critical history” (Nora 9). Decades after the beginning of this transition,⁴⁶ even laymen with no ambition to participate in the creation of large-scale histories strive to preserve the remains of their own lives according to the perceived rules of History as a scientific undertaking, archiving photos and documentary evidence, in many ways “outsourcing” their own memories to impersonal receptacles—photos, collections of documents, external hard drives—under the assumption that this material evidence of the memory can be permanently and accurately preserved. But, even as an archive is being created, memories are being lost.⁴⁷ The enterprise of individual or collective memory no longer means what it meant in previous times, when memories were preserved in the realm of personal reflection and shared by being told and

⁴⁵ This is the same topic explored more thoroughly in his multi-volume collection *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-92), partially translated into English as *Realms of Memory* (Columbia UP, 1996).

⁴⁶ Nora makes the argument for France, but it is obviously applicable beyond the French border.

⁴⁷ Nora’s warnings about the outsourcing of memory seem uncannily relevant to the development, use, and abuse of technology—especially social media—since the essay’s publication nearly 30 years ago. “Imagine,” he says, “a society entirely absorbed in its own historicity. ... Living entirely under the sign of the future, it would satisfy itself with automatic self-recording processes and auto-inventory machines, postponing indefinitely the task of understanding itself” (Nora 18).

retold, rather than primarily accessed through recourse to an outside archived object. Nora argues that it is a mistake to dismiss the importance of memory, at the same time that it is likewise a mistake to assume that memories are always individual and not shared within a community. This is part of Nora's impetus to study the role of *lieux de mémoire*: memory places that function as sites of memory for a group of people—physical or intellectual loci “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (Nora 7).

For most people, memory and history first coincide in the realm of the family unit. Thinking about history in relation to family relationships is a common entry point for interest in one's place within a larger-scale history. The blood circulating through a family tree inevitably links each person with a known or unknown past, and many are curious to uncover it. The recent explosion in home DNA-testing kits—and the marketing circus propelling that explosion—are symptoms of this natural curiosity.⁴⁸ Family histories, which are often preserved primarily through oral retelling, are meeting places for the memories of many individuals. In contrast to a large-scale history, which, as Nora says, “belongs to everyone and no one” (8), family histories are grounded in the flesh and blood of a particular tribe, united by genetic material even when it may be separated by time and place.

“HAUNTOLOGY” AND FAMILY GHOSTS

Jo Labanyi's essay, “History and Hauntology; or, What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past?” is part of the critical canon discussing the aesthetic response to the Spanish Civil War and Transition periods. Borrowing from Jacques Derrida's terminology in *Spectres of Marx*, Labanyi

⁴⁸ For insight into this phenomenon, see, for example, Mark Williams's piece for *The Guardian*: “The lucrative rise of DNA testing: ‘we created the market for what we do.’” <https://www.theguardian.com/small-business-network/2017/may/25/dna-testing-we-created-the-market-for-what-we-do-living-dna-dnafit-geneu>. See also, Gina Kolata, “With a Simple DNA Test, Family Histories are Rewritten,” in the August 28, 2017 edition of the *New York Times*.

contemplates the idea of “hauntology,” what she calls “a new philosophical category of being . . . appropriate to describe the status of history: that is, the past as that which is not and yet is there” (66). In the face of the Spanish “Pacto del olvido” and a collective drift toward forgetting or obviating a painful past, the ghosts of this past nevertheless refuse to be silenced. Taking in turn artifacts from contemporary novel and film, Labanyi examines the connections between the spectral presence of the past in certain physical sites (often ruins), and in an imaginary populated by otherworldly monsters such as vampires and werewolves.

Labanyi remarks with surprise on the way that trends toward collective forgetting influence individual, personal memories: histories received from family members are also marked at times by a seemingly self-imposed censure. She says, “When teaching adult Spanish students who grew up under Francoism, I have frequently been struck by the fact that the only historical knowledge they had about Spain’s immediate past was transmitted to them by their families (and “family” here means a collective, extended family network)” (67). She revisits this idea of “personal inheritance” in the essay’s final paragraphs, citing novels whose plots “insert the ghosts of the past into the family” (79), directly connecting the ghost of told or untold histories with the idea of family inheritance and legacy. She refers to Roland Barthes’s observation in *Camera lucida*, that the photographs that move him most have always been family photographs (Labanyi 79).

Labanyi’s movement from national perspective to the intimate space of the family parallels that of Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1980), a contemplation of photography that was his last published work. This short book is part critical approach to photography and part eulogy to his mother, whose death he is obviously ruminating in the act of writing the book. Barthes narrates the process of trying to find “the essence of [his mother’s] identity” (66) in the photos

left behind, a process that proves frustrating at every turn. Eventually, he finds “the truth of the face [he] had loved” (67) in a photo he calls the “Winter Garden Photograph,” referring to the name of the home—his mother’s childhood home—where it was taken and which appears in the background of the photo. While *Camera Lucida* includes reproductions of most of the photos that Barthes specifically discusses, he refuses to include a copy of the Winter Garden photo, insisting,

I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousand manifestations of the “ordinary”; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term (73).

Barthes’s insistence on the idiosyncrasy of his interaction with the photo, along with Labanyi’s final musings on ghosts and inheritance, signal a truth about our individual relationships to history. Even where the connection of one’s own life space within large-scale history is not carefully considered, the involvement in a family history is an inescapable facet of human experience. This participation is universal—even in the case of an orphan who knows nothing of his/her biological family, that lost history is always seen as lost: by virtue of the child’s existence in the world, that history must also exist, although it may not be known. Each person is the physical product of some kind of family history, and most of us leave behind our own physical products in the form of daughters and sons. Family histories follow us through our lives as specters, perhaps the most widely understandable expression of Derrida’s variation on ontology.

The material of family history is varied, but should in any case be familiar: stories passed down in oral tradition, photos, other physical objects, and places—pieces of land, homes, automobiles. In many cases, the home of an older family member acts as a kind of container for

family history. A grandparent's home may contain photos of family members from several generations, including family members long dead or who live in faraway places. There are also likely objects with value as historical artifacts within the family—toys, documents, and even pets can function as sites where family memories coincide and continue to develop.

In a sense, all social groups have histories built around similar types of artifacts. Clubs, groups of friends, academic classes—all of these groups may generate memory-stories which are passed down (formally or informally) as a history of the group. Family, however, differs from all other social groups in that family members themselves—their very physical beings—are evidence of the family's prior and future existence; they are physical markers of family legacy. Embodiment and family go hand-in-hand. Through the miracles of genetics, family members share physical characteristics, even personality quirks or propensities for illness. They may have similar voices, gaits, or tastes in food. Childhood memory is powerful and may be inescapable, but very little of it is based on conscious choice in the sense that adults consider choice. Children participate in the family group long before they ever have a choice of which people they want to associate with and which they want to avoid. Just as one does not choose one's parents, grandparents, siblings, or other blood relatives, one does not choose the environment or the substance of one's childhood.

As Barthes indicates with his refusal to publish the Winter Garden Photograph, it is difficult to capture the emotional weight of the presence of one's own family ghosts in a historical narrative intended for a general audience. Symptoms of positive or negative family dynamics may be recorded, but their experience is inevitably flattened by the inability to get inside the minds of the people living out those family dynamics, or to share their formative life experiences. This is where I see unique potential for fiction to tell these kinds of stories, by

invoking the type of emotional involvement characteristic of actual family relationships. The stress of relating to a maturing child, an enigmatic sibling, or an aging parent can be fleshed out in a story that allows a dynamic understanding of these personalities over time. The tensions and decisions that compose family life may be buried in the *intrahistoria* of seemingly-insignificant day-to-day experience, but they can be brought to life again in fiction.

FROM HAUNTOLOGY TO HODOLOGY

A complementary way of thinking about the lived space of family history and legacy is Kurt Lewin's idea of hodological space. Built on the Greek word for "path" (*hodos*), hodology relies on the idea that individual lives take place in uniquely shaped psychological spaces, which in many ways determine individual paths. Lewin, a Gestalt psychologist whose practice had its heyday in the 1930s and 40s, worked to express the limitations of this "life space" in mathematical terms, moving outward from the basic formula $B=f(P,E)$, *Behavior = a function of the Person and the Environment* (Rodgers 1.2). Lewin's "environment" was psychological rather than physical, "the environment as it is perceived by the person" (Rodgers 1.2). While Lewin's research into the hodology of what he called "life spaces" was focused on an attempt to quantify and describe them mathematically, the idea of these individually-tailored psychological environments was also placed in productive dialogue with the inquiries of existential philosophy, as noted by Jean-Paul Sartre.⁴⁹ There are obvious parallels between Sartre's engagement with Lewin's hodological space and Merleau-Ponty's focus on embodiment. In Sartre's words,

⁴⁹ Both *Being and Nothingness* and *Cahiers* make reference to Lewin's work. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre refers to the "human space" (372) that mark's a person's "location in transcendence" (*Id.*). "Thus I am situated by the infinite diversity of the roads which lead me to the object of *my* world in correlation with the immediate presence of transcendent subjects. And as the world is given to me all at once with all its beings, these roads represent only the ensemble of instrumental complexes which allow me to cause an Other-as-object to appear as "this" on the ground of the world, an Other-as-object who is already implicitly and really contained there" (*Being and Nothingness* 373).

following a citation to Lewin, “For human reality, to be is to-be-there. . . It is an ontological necessity” (*Being and Nothingness* 407). The psychological space within which a person exists is as dynamic as his/her own *physical* existence, and will exert its influence in one way or another. This space will be different not only for distinct individuals but also for the same individual over time. Although—as Sartre would likely argue—a person is capable of asserting his own will within this space, there are certain paths that are, for a host of reasons, easier to traverse than others. Family relationships, predispositions, and genetic programming all feed into the physical and psychological factors that affect these paths.

An obvious example of the intersection of hauntology and hodology would be the plot of *Hamlet*: a father’s ghost appears and directly mandates his son’s actions. The son is left asking himself whether the ghost is “real” or a product of his imagination. But not every example is as obvious as *Hamlet*. What I intend to do by considering the interplay of hauntology and hodology is to highlight ways that these concepts are always already present in the common consideration of family histories. Historical happenings—whether in the *intrahistoria* or on a larger scale—are experienced from within the limitations of a physical body, inhabited by ghosts and birthed into a particular life space where some paths are better marked than others. The novels considered here build on the familiar interactions of family life, putting the commonplace on display to underscore transcendent themes like loyalty, shame, fear, and love.

OVERVIEW OF THE NOVELS CONSIDERED HERE

The novels considered in this chapter focus on family histories and the lived-out tension of being born into a family history veiled in mystery. In each case, the plot turns on the characters’ relationships with other family members and the obscuring or revealing of facts about a past that

affects everyone in the family. They share many of the characteristics of the *Bildungsroman*, but in all cases the protagonists begin their journey from naiveté to knowledge when they are already on the threshold of adulthood—it is a kind of second defining developmental phase, marking the time when one encounters the need to take the reins of adulthood away from one’s parent and accept the mantle of family responsibility.⁵⁰

While family tensions are a common theme in the novels of Martínez de Pisón, they are not as common in the literary corpus of Javier Marías, who is more likely to rely on romantic relationships to advance a plot. *Corazón tan blanco* (1992), which will be considered here, takes up both a father-son relationship and a young husband’s relationship with his wife during their first year of marriage. With publications reaching back to the 1970s, Marías’s prolific work is well-known and has received more popular and critical attention than Martínez de Pisón’s. Marías is known for writing words about words: the ambiguous nature of language, the shifting ground of meaning, the vagaries of translation. The majority of his novels are protagonized by people of letters: translators, interpreters, writers, professors. His novels offer the type of linguistic play and metafictional meat that interests critical theorists, at the same time that his dramatic plots and tantalizing fare attract and entertain popular readers.

Corazón tan blanco predates the two Martínez de Pisón novels considered here by more than a decade. While the Martínez de Pisón novels are set during the Spanish Civil War and Transition, *Corazón tan blanco* floats in a more timeless space (although references to technology like personal ads built around camcorder-recorded video place it around the time of

⁵⁰ In a book-length study, I would add to the texts considered here additional texts by Martínez de Pisón (notably *La buena reputación* (2015) and *Derecho natural* (2017), which both focus on family relationships in a wider cultural/political context); Jordi Soler’s *La guerra perdida* trilogy, wholly devoted to capturing and reevaluating family history; Javier Cercas’s new novel, *El monarca de las sombras* (2017); and *El mundo* (2007) and *La soledad era esto* (1990) by Juan José Millás. All of these texts make unique contributions to the topics discussed here, as they are each historical fictions told through the lens of family histories. More particularly, each details a protagonist’s struggle with family legacy and inheritance, both physical and psychological.

the book's publication). The novel is narrated in first-person by Juan, whose enigmatic father Ranz haunts the entire story. It is largely a detective novel, with Juan gathering data not only from outside witnesses and participants in his father's life, but from the abandoned or ignored corners of his own memory. The mystery at the heart of the novel is Ranz's involvement in the deaths of his two first wives: first a Cuban woman, and then a Spanish one—the sister of Juan's mother (who then becomes Ranz's third wife). While the setup for *Corazón tan blanco* is more lurid than the average person's family history, the mystery is one that is probably more familiar: Juan wants to know who his father truly is and what his father's experience has to do with his own. As a newlywed, he worries that his father's marital bad luck will taint his own newly-minted marriage to Luisa. He puzzles over things his father has said in the past, trying to parse their meaning. Meanwhile, Luisa's own developing relationship with her father-in-law prompts further realizations by Juan as he begins to see his father through his wife's eyes.

Themes of embodiment and family legacy are intertwined with the fundamental tensions in *Corazón tan blanco*. Because of the father-son relationship, Juan's interaction with Ranz is distinct from his interaction with any other person. He knows that his connection with Ranz is unavoidable and inescapable. Like it or not, he carries Ranz's genetic legacy, and—Juan fears—may even share in a sort of familial curse. As Lewin's framing of hodological space suggests, the tensions in Juan's mind do not need to be evident to anyone else or shared with anyone else in order to be real. What is important is that, in Juan's life-space, his father's mysterious past casts an inescapable shadow over his own past, present, and future. Memories intermingle with present-day interactions with Ranz over the course of several years' worth of narration.

Dientes de leche (2008) bears many similarities to *Corazón tan blanco*. It, too, takes on the theme of a son confronting a father's mysterious past. Rather than being narrated by one son,

however, *Dientes de leche* portrays the diverging and intersecting experiences of three separate sons, along with their mother. Also, instead of first-person narration, *Dientes de leche* employs third-person narration that shifts its focus from one character to another. The father at the center of *Dientes de leche* is Raffaele Cameroni, an Italian who comes to Spain as a young man to join forces with Franco as part of Italy's fascist *Corpo Truppe Volontarie*. Raffaele is driven, more than by political loyalty, by a desire to escape a depressing life with his wife and young disabled daughter. After being wounded in battle, Raffaele breaks his ties to Italy by manufacturing the story of his own death and begins to build a new life in Spain. As time goes on, his Spanish life includes marriage, business ownership, and parenthood. Things seem to be going well until the birth of his third son revives the specter of the "mala sangre" behind his Italian's daughter's mental handicap. The same handicap has resurfaced in Spain, exposing Raffaele—at least to his own knowledge, if to no one else's—as the common denominator in the children's conditions. The unraveling of the Cameroni family in indirect response to this revelation is the novel's driving force. Raffaele's Spanish wife, Isabel, and his three sons—Rafael, Alberto, and Francisco (Paquito)—must each come to terms with the specters of Raffaele's past and their effects on the present.

El tiempo de las mujeres (2012) also relates a complicated interplay of family dynamics, but—as the title suggests—with a decidedly feminine emphasis. Instead of the three sons in *Dientes de leche*, the collective protagonist of *El tiempo de las mujeres* is a family with three daughters—María, Carlota, and Paloma—each of whom contributes a first-person account of her memories of family and individual life. The trope of the three sisters is a long and distinguished tradition: in Spain there is García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, in Russia Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, in England Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Though arising out of the same set of

circumstances, each sister moves within a life space shaped by different perceptions and motivations. Given this spotlight on individual difference, the trope of the three sisters is ripe for examination by ideas like Merleau-Ponty's that rely on the influence of the infinitely varied characteristics of embodiment.

The plot of *El tiempo de las mujeres* follows the rhythm of the three sisters' family life across several decades, beginning with the father's death during the girls' adolescence and moving with its protagonists into early adulthood. Along the way, it sheds light on one family's sojourn through the *intrahistoria* of the Spanish Transition. The general cultural and political climate of the Spanish Transition, along with specific accounts of episodes like the 23F attack on the Spanish Parliament, impact the characters' experiences in significant ways. The parents in *Dientes de leche* do not participate in the narration, but their daughters must wrestle with their legacy and find a way to define their own identities in relation to their parents.

In each of these novels, parents are a puzzle to be solved as part of the characters' development toward full-fledged adulthood and the discovery of their own individual purposes. Hauntology meets embodiment in the sphere of family life, as the specters of one's progenitors are a fundamental part of one's own physical being. Often, the legacy of the parent is primarily an obstacle to be overcome on the way to understanding one's place in the family. In each case the inescapability of one's connections to one's parent (or parents) becomes part of a new adaptation to reality, where the character is able to incorporate both good and bad aspects of a parent's tendencies and personality into a more mature, adult perspective on life.

As vantage points for considering the role of embodied experience in each of these novels, I will take up in turn three areas where this experience becomes central: first, questions of physical inheritance and legacy raised by family relationships; second, the relationship of

embodied characters with family homes; and, third, the relationship of embodied characters with mirrors (both literal and metaphorical), since mirrors are places where we explicitly encounter both our *connection to* and *separation from* our own bodies. In each of these areas, Merleau-Ponty, in conjunction with other theorists, will provide a thought vocabulary for contemplating the theme of embodiment.

PHYSICAL INHERITANCE AND LEGACY

“Además, los hijos son un parte separado de tu cuerpo y eso, aunque estemos acostumbradas, es muy raro.”

—Elena’s mother in Cuaderno #4, from Juan José Millás, *La soledad era esto*

In *La agonía del cristianismo*, Unamuno argues that the real agony of the monk or nun is not celibacy and sexual repression but childlessness, which he equates with finality.⁵¹ The finality of not sending one’s own physical legacy into the future, by means of a child, signifies a living death. The stories considered here present another, inverse agony: the agony of continuity. I use “agony” here in the Unamunian sense of struggle and not merely suffering. The act of bringing a child into the world works a physical alteration on reality, which not only projects the parent’s identity forward in time as a legacy, but alters that parent’s relationship with time as it is being lived. At the same time, to raise that child, especially into adulthood, is to realize that one’s control over that legacy is uncertain at best. It is also to realize how little control one has even over one’s past when that past is no longer private property. Despite the reality expressed in *Corazón tan blanco* that, “los hijos ignoramos todo sobre los padres, o tardamos en interesarnos” (88), once a new generation is tasked with carrying forward something out of the past, a mining of memory is a natural result. These stories have characters who have left behind most of their

⁵¹ Discussed above (pp. 41-48) in the discussion of Ángela’s relationship with Don Manuel.

past selves (including their secrets), but whose persistence is linked to their body—a reality emphasized by their connections with their children. Blood connections provide continuity even when everything else changes. In this section I will consider the representation in fiction of the bodily legacy of parents: the fathers in *Corazón tan blanco* and *Dientes de leche*, and the mother in *El tiempo de las mujeres*.

“La mala sangre”

The continuity of bodily presence is the lynchpin of the plot in *Dientes de leche*, in connection with Raffaele’s two mentally handicapped children. The story does not work without the presence of Raffaele Cameroni’s own physical body and its particular genetic traits. Raffaele’s primary motivation for abandoning his first wife and daughter in Italy is his bewilderment and shame at having a daughter with special needs. At the moment that Raffaele leaves Italy, and for years afterward, he has no reason for thinking that his daughter’s condition has anything in particular to do with him (or that it is genetic at all). All of that changes, however, soon after the birth of Paquito, Raffaele’s third son with Isabelita. Raffaele recognizes his son’s condition before Isabelita does, and long before she is prepared to admit it. The weight of the child’s condition now falls squarely on Raffaele as the genetic link between these two children. He becomes aware that he is the carrier of “la mala sangre” that is limiting the development of his daughter and son.

Raffaele wants to create his own narrative of his identity as a war hero and successful family man and businessman. He is thwarted over and over again, however, with what in Heideggerian terms might be called his *Geworfenheit* or “thrownness” into a particular set of circumstances. As Daniel Dahlstrom describes Heidegger’s concept of “thrownness,” “We are

thrown into the position of having to take responsibility for ourselves, to ground our respective being-in-the-world, yet we are not responsible for being in this position” (212). Merleau-Ponty might emphasize that Raffaele has been thrown not only into a certain set of circumstances and kinship relationship, but into a particular body with a particular genetic composition.

In response to the revelation of his “mala sangre,” Raffaele begins the process of abandonment once again, in both a mental and physical sense. His air of detachment toward Paquito propagates a sense of detachment in the marriage itself, with Isabel distancing herself from Raffaele’s perceived coldness. Raffaele makes an aborted attempt to escape with his two older sons, motivated by his souring relationship with Isabel. Of their deteriorating relationship, the text says, “En el fondo de todo estaban los eternos reproches de Isabel a Raffaele con respecto a Paquito, con el que según ella nunca se mostraba tierno ni afectuoso” (155). Raffaele cannot bear to be faced with the effects of his own mala sangre. Paquito’s presence and bodily condition stir up memories for Raffaele that are lost to history, but that shape him in the center of his being—and, in turn, shape his interactions with his wife. They remind him of the worst, most inescapable things about his past. No matter how adept he may be at abandoning his children, he can never free himself from carrying the “mala sangre” that runs through his veins.

The novel elaborates the many ways in which Raffaele has both literally and figuratively always been the man “atusándose el pelo ante el espejo” (129). Consumed by the desire to create narratives of his own prowess, Raffaele goes out of his way to describe himself as a war hero and to place himself at the center of the Italian Fascist veteran community in Spain. In his life as a businessman, he strives to develop the right connections, feigning interest in activities like bullfighting in order to spend time with the right people. These efforts to be something other than what he is on the inside fall apart, however, in the domain of his family. As his three sons find

out about his past, the relationships begin to break down, with both Rafael and Alberto disowning him by the end of the novel.⁵²

There is a stark contrast between the pride that Raffaele feels when he looks into a mirror and the shame and fear that he feels when faced with the possibility of spreading his “mala sangre.” The inside and outside realities can be curated and kept separate most of the time, but they inevitably collide when it comes to his physical legacy. The physical legacy threatens to be a more accurate vehicle for history than any of the stories that Raffaele has tried so hard to keep alive for himself and his sons and grandson. When Alberto and Elisa tell Raffaele that he is becoming a grandfather, the excitement that they expect is delayed in coming:

Raffaele había tardado algunos segundos en felicitarles sólo porque de golpe le había asaltado el mayor y más secreto de sus miedos. El miedo a su mala sangre. El miedo a que ésta se hubiera transmitido a su hijo y éste pudiera transmitirla a los suyos. Durante esos instantes de silencio de había sobrecojido la posibilidad de que también su primer nieto fuera deficiente, como Paquito y como aquella niña que había dejado en Italia y que todavía en algunas pesadillas se le aparecía para acusarle con su llanto. (248)

There is no “pacto del olvido” that can remove these fears from the core of Raffaele’s being.

The novel juxtaposes the results of Raffaele’s criminal (bigamous, deceptive) past with the past of El Rubio, a young man from Isabel’s home town who joined the Falangists and participated in the assassinations and disappearances of Isabel’s brother and many others. Several years removed from the civil war, in the heyday of Francoism, El Rubio has become a successful pharmacist in the same community. El Rubio’s crimes have occurred in the context of large-scale History, and his particular deeds are intentionally forgotten by the community. At the

⁵² Ironically, it is Paquito—the very inheritor of the “mala sangre”—who retains the most faithful love for his father.

time the novel takes place, History has left El Rubio on high ground. By contrast, Raffaele's crimes took place on the intrahistoric stage of family life, and for the most part only impacted his immediate family. By the end of the novel, Raffaele's life is coming apart at the seams and he finds himself turning himself in to the bewildered local authorities in an attempt to make amends. This juxtaposition of these two characters and their criminal pasts suggests—as the oldest son, Rafael, maintains—that there are parallels in El Rubio's and Raffaele's treachery. Raffaele's is brought to light because those with a blood relation are too close not to notice, whereas El Rubio's is hidden by a complicit culture and government regime. While El Rubio may be able to hide behind the amnesiac acceptance of Spanish culture, Raffaele cannot escape the disdain shown him by the offspring of his own body.

The sons' rejection of Raffaele precludes their granting him the forgiveness he requests. And their rejection is complete to the level of absurdity. Narrating from Alberto's perspective, the text recounts a family outing in which,

nadie mencionó en ningún momento a Raffaele. Era como si no existiera. Como si nunca hubiera existido. El rechazo a su figura había sido lo que finalmente había unido a los hijos, que en poco más de medio mes habían construido un mundo sin él, un mundo sin Raffaele. Y ese mundo era armonioso y consistente, o al menos lo parecía. (337-8)

This might be a more comfortable version of reality, but the fact of the shared *sangre* shows the fruitlessness of this kind of forgetfulness. Raffaele's existence is the reason that these three very different men exist and operate in the same sphere. They cannot escape Raffaele's influence by pretending that he did not happen. Their memories and physical existence both testify to the fact that they are the offspring of their father. He is haunting them—even directing, inadvertently, their paths—even as they seek to deny that he is there.

In a world where characters like El Rubio can live long successful lives without fear of public recrimination (and without needing to ask for forgiveness), stories that bring the betrayal back to the context of an immediate family are helpful for raising questions about justice, forgiveness, and restoration. Family relationships mean continuity, welcome or unwelcome. Alberto's son may still bear a physical similarity to his father, and a future child may usher the *mala sangre* into a new generation. By the same token, Raffaele cannot ignore his past as long as his children bear living witness to it. The legacy of family is inescapable, as inevitable as one's own blood.

“La mala sangre” could also be said to run through *Corazón tan blanco*. In this case, though, rather than the “bad blood” of a genetic defect, the *mala sangre* refers to a moral deficiency—a deficiency fundamentally interrelated with Juan's existence. Juan is the product of a marriage that occurred because of his father's previous murder of his first wife, and his second wife's suicide upon finding out what happened to her predecessor. As such, Juan's existence—the fact that any blood runs through his veins at all, and that its maternal component is particularly his mother's—is indebted to this *mala sangre*. Juan worries that his father's moral defects will be transmitted to him, even before he is actually aware of what those defects are. Rather than an explicit explanation of Juan's premonitions about the future of his marriage being related to a haunting by Ranz, the text reveals this aspect of Juan's hodological space obliquely throughout the narration. The text also suggest that Ranz and Juan's connection, in addition to being biological, extends to the realm of memory. Ranz's memories intermingle with Juan's, extending the chronology of Juan's life into a time before he was born, and—to borrow biblical language—visiting the iniquity of the father on the child.

Dealing with many of the same ideas as *Dientes de leche*, *Corazón tan blanco* takes a

much more philosophical approach, providing reflections like the following on the relation of parents and children:

No es solamente que los hijos tardan mucho en interesarse por quiénes fueron sus padres antes de conocerlos (por lo general ese interés se produce cuando esos hijos se acercan a la edad que tenían los padres cuando en efecto los conocieron, o cuando a su vez tienen hijos y entonces se recuerdan de niños a través de ellos y se preguntan perplejos por las tutelares figuras con que ahora se corresponden), sino que los padres se acostumbran a no despertar curiosidad alguna y a callar sobre sí mismos ante sus vástagos, a silenciar quiénes fueron o acaso lo olvidan. (125)

In keeping with these reflections, Juan's experience of early marriage makes him wonder about Ranz's own journey through a parallel period. Learning about his father teaches Juan about himself, and their connection seems both genetic and mystical, with their two stories converging at times into what seems the same story.

In order to find out Ranz's secrets and discover what really happened to Teresa and her predecessor, Juan must move into a place where the past is still contingent—where these women were still alive and their stories were not finished, where they could still speak and act, see and be seen. Significantly, in order to do this, he must reopen the chain of events that led to his own existence, since, as he notes, “Eso fue hace mucho tiempo, cuando yo aún no había nacido ni tenía la menor posibilidad de nacer, es más, sólo a partir de entonces tuve la posibilidad de nacer” (17). His mystery solving efforts are not just an attempt to understand another person, but to understand the character represented by the blood that runs through his veins. The narration takes place in a present that moves at times between past and future, where Juan simultaneously knows and does not know what will happen next. The future of the past is already decided: both

of Ranz's first wives died, which is what allowed him to marry Juan's mother and conceive Juan. Not only that, but when the narration begins, Juan anchors it concretely to a time when he already knew the content of Ranz's secret: "Ahora mismo yo estoy casado y no hace ni un año que regresé de mi viaje de bodas con Luisa, mi mujer, a la que conozco desde hace sólo veintidós meses" (17), even though he will delay the revelation of that secret until the final section of the novel.

The sense of futurity in the novel is introduced in the initial pages in Juan's description of the identity crisis corresponding with the "cambio de estado" of moving from singleness to marriage. He describes himself as haunted by the question "¿Y ahora qué?" (19), which, at the same time that it is directed towards the future, is infused with a pessimistic belief that the choice to marry has already foreclosed future options. In fact, Juan says that the renegotiation of his identity instigated by his marriage makes it difficult for him to even think about the future. That a newly-married person has this kind of crisis of identity is understandable, but Marías complicates the gestures of Juan's "¿Y ahora qué?" by revealing that it was actually Ranz who first posed this question, in his bizarre exchange with his son on the latter's wedding day:

—Bueno, ya te has casado. ¿Y ahora qué?

Fue él el primero en hacer esa pregunta, o mejor dicho, en formular esa pregunta que no me venía haciendo desde por la mañana, desde ya ceremonia y aun antes, desde la víspera. (90)

Ranz's gesture toward Juan and Luisa's future in this wedding-day exchange rapidly becomes a gesture towards his own past, once he delivers his advice to his son:

Este fue el consejo que Ranz me dio, fue un susurro:

—Sólo te digo una cosa—dijo—. Cuando tengas secretos o si ya los tienes, no se los

cuentes. —Y, ya con la sonrisa devuelta al rostro, añadió:—Suerte. (101)

The wedding day episode with Ranz acts as the spark that sets off Juan's curiosity about his father's secrets. It is as if this question of Ranz's forces Juan to look at himself in Ranz's own blood-spattered mirror, in the presence of Teresa's body and all of the questions raised by her death.

Although the reader does not know until near the end of the novel that Ranz is a murderer, Juan's view of himself in Ranz's mirror acts to spatter the two wives' blood on the entire narration. It is present in Juan's sense of foreboding, which begins on his wedding day: "empecé a tener toda suerte de presentimientos de desastre, de forma parecida a como cuando se contrae una enfermedad, de las que jamás se sabe con certidumbre cuándo uno podrá curarse" (18). The reader, without knowing the future that is already-apparent to Juan as narrator (a future that includes a growing sense of contentment in marriage and of camaraderie and partnership with Luisa as they together uncover about Ranz's secrets), is able to participate in Juan's existential angst as he sees danger lurking at every corner—in the suspicions of an affair between Luisa and Custardoy, in the intimate exchanges between Juan and Berta—able to return to a past where Juan does not know that he will not lose his identity in marriage, that he will in fact be able to say in less than a year that "Ahora mi malestar se ha apaciguado y mis presentimientos ya no son tan desastrosos" (293).

Despite the looming sense of foreboding, Juan's narration provides reassuring clues that he will not repeat his father's mistakes—only these are clues that cannot be interpreted until the novel is complete. One example of this is the scene during Juan and Luisa's honeymoon in Havana when, sitting on the bed next to his sleeping bride, a smoking Juan inadvertently drops ashes on the sheet and stops to watch them burn (significantly, he invokes the mirror in his

account of lighting the cigarette: “encendí un cigarrillo, la brasa brilló en el espejo, no quise mirarme” [56]):

Sacudí la ceniza del cigarrillo con mala puntería y demasiada fuerza y sobre la sábana se me cayó la brasa, y antes de recogerla con mis propios dedos para echarla al cenicero, donde se consumiría sola y no quemaría, vi cómo empezaba a hacer un agujero orlado de lumbre sobre la sábana. Creo que lo dejé crecer más de lo prudente, porque lo estubo mirando durante unos segundos, cómo crecía y se iba ensanchando el círculo, una mancha a la vez negra y ardiente que se comía la sábana. (56)

This account both prefigures and echoes Ranz’s account during the climax of the novel of how he stabbed his first wife to death and burned her body in their bed. Juan’s written record of Ranz’s confession account is interspersed throughout in the form of citations to statements he had previously made in the text, each time included within quotation marks and punctuated with the verb “pensé.” The effect of this is to make the narration fold in on itself, collapsing past and future and bringing them all to the present site of Juan’s memory. His father’s memories mingle with his own; at times the borders between the two are imperceptible.

The idea of remembered experience folding in on itself in a constantly self-referential way mimics the way that our minds operate within temporality but still always inhabit the present. In the same way, family experience operates in a field of shared memories that can intersect with shared experiences and common predispositions. While Merleau-Ponty affirms that “it is incontestable that I dominate the stream of my conscious states and even that I am aware of their temporal succession” (E&M 20), he also points out that, “[a]t the moment when I am thinking or considering an idea, I am not divided into the instants of my life” (Ibid.). Moving through time, I am “a self . . . caught up in things, that has a front and a back, a past and a future”

(E&M 162), and although I bear the marks of the influence of those things that have touched me in the past, my perception of them always takes place in the present. Part of that front-back-past-future is the family relationships that define our tenure in our bodies. Ranz and Juan's father-son relationship here creates a situation where one person's actions affect not only genetic inheritance but the memories, fears, hopes, and premonitions of another person in the same family tree.

El tiempo de las mamás

The parent at the center of *El tiempo de las mujeres* is not the father but the mother.⁵³ There is no narration from this unnamed woman's perspective; rather, fragments of her personality are revealed in the distinct impressions left on her daughters—María, Carlota, and Paloma. Even in the mother's incapacity, lack of self-confidence, and self-destructive habits, her presence bears a controlling influence on the lives of her daughters. But *El tiempo de las mujeres* goes beyond demonstrating the mother's influence on her children, underscoring the mutuality of the relationship between the generations. How have these three daughters changed this woman's understanding of her own life and identity? The novel presents the mother as a haunted woman, tied up in what Labanyi calls "the past which is not and yet is there" (Labanyi 66). She looks backward rather than forward, anchoring her voyages into the world of memory by clinging to physical relics of her family's past.

The title *El tiempo de las mujeres* is shared with the Spanish translation of a 1979 essay by Julia Kristeva, originally published as "Le Temps des femmes," where Kristeva argues that women's time does not fit neatly into the masculine conception of linear history. Rather than

⁵³ The father is also a ghostly presence in *El tiempo de las mujeres*. His personality—and indiscretions—leave marks on his wife and daughters that surface in the course of the story. But the young women's interaction with their mother is better developed and more interesting for a conversation about embodiment.

being defined by time as we view it in historical understanding, the maternal is conceived in spatial relation. When thinking of women, Kristeva says, “one thinks more of the space generating and forming the human species than of *time*, becoming, or history” (15). Feminine time, according to Kristeva, is characterized by the modalities of *repetition* and *eternity*. Repetition comes to bear in the biological rhythms of fertility and childbearing. Eternity, for its part, meets femininity in “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” (16). *El tiempo de las mujeres* touches on both these ideas of time.

At the opening of the novel, the three teenage daughters live with their newly widowed mother in the family home, Villa Casilda. The opening episode introduces the family recovering their deceased father’s car from his final parking place at the White Horse, a club.⁵⁴ The mother is forced to drive, a responsibility that proves too heavy. Crossing herself and shouting, “¡Dios mío, ayúdanos!” she drives the car into a ditch. In the pages that follow, the novel follows each of the three daughters through the figurative car wrecks of their first steps of adulthood, with each mapping a fresh start at the story’s end. Meanwhile, their mother is having her own struggles with mental breakdown, substance abuse, and debt that impact each of her daughters. At the novel’s close, the three young women once again live all together with their mother (and Carlota’s young son, Germán), in a rented apartment not far from the site of the former family home, Villa Casilda. A family life that had become increasingly fragmented and disunified comes to find a Phoenix-like unity, surprisingly, around the destruction of Villa Casilda.⁵⁵ On a family excursion in novel’s final pages, María is at the wheel during an accident. Once again, in

⁵⁴ Marías statement that her mother “siempre creyó que su marido había muerto en el coche al volver de una cena de negocios” (11) seems naive at best.

⁵⁵ A parallel could be drawn between *El tiempo de las mujeres* and *Dientes de leche* in the demise of Villa Casilda and the demise of Raffaele Cameroni. In both cases, the downfall of a central pillar of family life unites a formerly-fragmented family.

an echo of the opening scene, the mother must drive. But this time she does so forcefully, without any of her former reluctance. The story ends with the four women exchanging stories in the hospital cafeteria. The mother is now the center of attention:

La noche caía al otro lado de los ventanales, las enfermeras iban y venían con bandejas de plástico y vasos de café, y nosotras no nos cansábamos de escuchar a nuestra madre. La escuchábamos con el mismo embeleso con que los niños escuchan los cuentos de ogros y fantasmas, dejándonos cautivar por la épica menor de su aventura, participando de su modesto heroísmo, sintiendo como propia su victoria. Qué pocos nos importaban entonces los pequeños problemas de nuestras pequeñas vidas y cuánto la felicidad de nuestra madre. Sin duda, aquél había sido uno de los grandes días de su vida. (374-5)

The story is circular. On one hand, the mother's character proves dynamic over time. She has finally heeded her own admonition, repeated throughout the novel, to "coger el toro por los cuernos." On the other hand, no dynamism of personality has altered the fundamental orientation of the characters to each other. The three women have reverted to childhood, spellbound by their mother's story of triumph in the face of adversity. However small this woman's influence may prove on the grand scale of History, she still occupies the space of Kristeva's eternal Maternal, a larger-than-life position in her daughters' estimation of reality.

One of the key insights into the mother's personality is María's account of the 23F coup in 1981. The most obviously historic moment in the novel becomes the most deeply mired in the seemingly inconsequential details of *intrahistoria*. María and her mother are home alone, trying not to be anxious about the whereabouts of Carlota and Palmona. While they attempt to pass the time, María's mother offers to show her something she has never shown to anyone before:

Sonrió con sonrisa de niña y sacó un grueso libro encuadernado en piel. En el lomo ponía

Obras completas de D. Miguel de Cervantes, pero luego lo abrió y resultó ser una de esas cajas en forma de libro que se ven en las estanterías de las tiendas de muebles. . . .

En su interior había varias bolsitas de plástico transparente como las que utilizan los coleccionistas de monedas, cada una de ellas con una pequeña etiqueta. Algunas parecían estar vacías. Pero no lo estaban. (327)

The nature of the revealed treasures surprises María and, for the most part, garners her contempt. The mother has saved a piece of her dead husband's hair, her daughters' baby teeth and fingernails, recordings of the girls' voices as children, and even pieces of their umbilical cords. María relates her mother's collection of treasures to her grandfather's hoarding. She attributes her mother's case to emotional paralysis at the idea of taking responsibility: her mother would rather hang onto things than deal with the responsibility of actually getting rid of them. What María overlooks is that, while her grandfather's hoard is made up almost entirely of free promotional knickknacks, her mother's treasures are intimately connected with the bodily existence of the different family members. Unable to keep her family from moving away from her chronologically, the mother grasps at the tangible remains of her memories.

María records her sensations at hearing her mother singing along to a recording of María's voice as a child.

Entonces se puso a canturrear, . . . y yo oía su voz y mi propia voz de niña, las dos juntas, cantando la misma canción, y regresaba a mí sensaciones del pasado que creía olvidadas para siempre. Y pensaba en mamá, y me decía a mí misma que era como cuando en un tren ocupas uno de esos asientos que no miran para adelante sino para atrás y por la ventanilla ves no lo que viene hacia ti sino lo que pierdes, un paisaje que escapa y desaparece. Así era ella, incapaz de mirar el futuro, pendiente sólo del pasado.

Luego la canción concluyó, y mamá dijo:

—Si volviera a nacer, tendría también tres hijas y se llamarían igual, María, Carlota, Paloma, y serían como vosotras... La que no sería igual sería yo. (328-9)

The mother can imagine changes to the timeline perspective of her life, but she cannot imagine her life without the three daughters whose existence defines her. The monumental reality of her identity as Mother eclipses the importance of significant historical events in the day-to-day.

The idea that the three daughters have swallowed the mother's identity and reconfigured her relationship to time appears elsewhere in the novel in a section narrated by Paloma:

Miraba mamá a cualquiera de sus hijas y no nos veía crecidas sino que nos veía creciendo. Veía en nosotras el paso del tiempo, y viendo el paso del tiempo veía también lo que había sido su vida, lo que había hecho y dejado de hacer en todos esos años, lo que había ganado y perdido, lo que había quedado en el camino. Y eso alimentaba su sensación de infelicidad y hacía que le constara contener el llanto en las cenas de Nochebuena, en los cumpleaños, en sus aniversarios de boda. (291-2)

The mother does not see herself as a discrete being moving through history, and this seems to be because she has not actually encountered life as a discrete being. Instead, her existence and relationship with time are enduringly to the fates of the three daughters born of her womb. She sees her choices prescribed and proscribed by the existence of her children.

Merleau-Ponty signals the importance of remembering that time, for embodied beings, is always encountered in relation with the other, affirming that

associated bodies must be brought forward along with my body—the “others,” not merely as my cogeners . . . but the others who haunt me and whom I haunt; the “others” along *with* whom I haunt a single present, and actual Being as no animal ever haunted

those beings of his own species, locale or habitat. (“Eye and Mind” 160, italics in original)

In *El tiempo de las mujeres*, María expresses a similar idea, saying of her family that “cada uno de nosotras formaba parte de un todo mayor e inseparable, y sólo con relación a las otras éramos capaces de interpretarnos a nosotras mismas” (69). Return to a “primordial historicity” (“Eye and Mind” 160) in Merleau-Ponty’s words, takes these interrelationships into account as an intrinsic reality of Being-in-the-world. *El tiempo de las mujeres*, along with the two novels contemplated earlier, provides illustrations of mutual hauntings in the ways that the family members depicted relate to each other.

FAMILY HOMES

The spaces that we inhabit have their own character and are both influenced by and influential to our journeys through life.⁵⁶ Following Kurt Lewin’s line of thought, it is true that unique individuals will perceive spaces in different ways, so that there is not a perfect correlation between a physical space and its psychological perception. Shared spaces, however, cannot help but exert related influences on all who inhabit them. In concert with an overlap of physical presence, they exert power over the construction of the psychological space in which memories form and significant emotional events unfold. Because of this influence of shared spaces, family homes are integral to family histories. The same pieces of furniture, art objects, and photos may inhabit a family member’s home for decades, creating a sense of familiarity and even security.

⁵⁶ The significance of embodied experience is attracting much attention from theorists and practitioners of architecture. Finnish architect and architectural theorist Juhani Pallasmaa specifically relies on Merleau-Ponty’s work to make his arguments about the need for architecture to abandon “ocularcentric” thinking and embrace the contributions of *all* the senses to the experience of place. His best-known work is the critically acclaimed *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (1996). Peter Zumthor is another architect whose focus on what he calls “atmospheres” is fundamentally tied to the way that a place is experienced from within a human body.

Significant events in family life—births, birthdays, holidays, deaths, arguments, announcements—take place in the family home, as do the multitude daily events that pass without much notice—waking, eating, acquiring and storing possessions, sleeping. Because they serve as the sites for so many significant (catastrophic or consistently laid down over time, like sediment) events, homes become *lieux de mémoire*, stirring up the memories of those who have forged a connection with them.

Each of the novels considered here deals with the idea of the family home and its significance as a historical marker, kindling memories within family members and others. The power of fiction, as used here, is to introduce these readers to the spaces unobtrusively, the way one may be introduced to a physical space in conjunction with making a new acquaintance. These are not curated tours of spaces of particular historical value, but incidental brushes with physical spaces that come close to simulating those that occur in lived experience. The benefit of novelistic portrayals of spaces is related to the benefits of histories that encounter their subjects in the midst of ordinary experience and social, economic, and geographic realities (as advocated by members of the Annales School and others). If, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, the material remains of our lives creates a sediment that in turn becomes its own expression of personality, then objects like Isabel's collection of baby teeth or Raffaele's mirror in *Dientes de leche*, or the promotional hoard of the grandfather in *El tiempo de las mujeres*, may also have significance as historical personalities. These ephemera are the currency of family relationships, running between and outlasting them. The emotional charge of the objects comes from relationship and story, not from its inherent character or material value. In the fictional cases considered here, spaces develop and exert their own character, influencing the paths that the various literary subjects take through life. For the protagonists of all three novels, family spaces have a particular

character that is shaped by and holds shaping power over bodily life and expression. To state the connection with Merleau-Ponty's ideas and this chapter's theme explicitly, it is not possible to *be* and embodied consciousness without *being* in a particular place, always already affected (if not effected) by the presence or noticeable absence of other similarly embodied beings. This reality of *the place of being*, and how it converges with family identity, is what I will consider here.

The opening scene of *Corazón tan blanco* takes place within the family home—the home of Ranz's in-laws twice over—with the suicide of Teresa in front of the bathroom mirror. The ambiance of warmth and familiarity in the home provides a startling backdrop with the despair and isolation of Teresa's suicide. When Teresa's father walks into the bathroom and turns off the still-running faucet “con gesto automático” (12), the effect of this detail is to highlight the incongruence of Teresa's sudden and untimely death with the smooth, familiar pace of the *intrahistoria*. Although it is rarely expressed in these terms, this juxtaposition between comfortable familiarity and sudden tragedy haunts the novel's protagonist throughout the entire story. In the early months of his marriage, he is consumed by the fear that his marriage will somehow bring him under the same cloud that engulfed his father's first two marriages and precipitated his aunt Teresa's death.

Even before Juan has been informed that his aunt died by suicide (a revelation that occurs after his marriage), his ideas of family history are shaped by the photos that have been displayed in family homes—a portrait of his aunt that originally belonged in the very house of her suicide, and portraits of his mother that he was accustomed to seeing in his own childhood home with Ranz. The very familiarity of the portraits obscures the truth of their subjects, since one becomes accustomed to their presence and begins to ignore them. Juan observes of Teresa's portrait,

es de muy pequeño tamaño, está en un marco de madera, sobre un estante, y desde que

ella murió nadie la habrá mirado más que de tarde en tarde, como se miran las vasijas o los adornos o incluso los cuadros que hay en las casas, dejan de observarse con atención y con complacencia una vez que forman parte del paisaje diario. (128-9)

Relationships with objects in a family home can become passive to the point that they almost seem to cease to exist, even though they are simultaneously familiar. This inverse relationship between familiarity and attention also attaches to our relationship to our own family histories. It is obvious to us that they exist, but the very proximity of their actors can inhibit or delay rather than incite curiosity or investigation.

Nevertheless, homes, like family heritage, anchor and ground their inhabitants. For the protagonist of *Corazón tan blanco*, the shared marital home becomes a locus of identity and the material representation of two lives becoming one. Reflecting on his transition into married life with Luisa, Juan says, "[e]se cambio de estado, como la enfermedad, es incalculable y lo interrumpe todo, o al menos no permite que nada siga como hasta entonces" (19). Just as illness autonomously takes over the body and limits its potential, marriage takes over one's identity and reconfigures one's interactions with the outside world. While pondering this reconfiguration, Juan contrasts a dating relationship, where the lovers separate to go to their individual homes, with marriage and its assumption of a shared home:

Una vez casados, a la salida del cine los pasos se encaminan juntos hacia el mismo lugar[...]pero no porque yo haya decidido acompañarla o ni siquiera porque tenga la costumbre de hacerlo y me parezca justo y educado hacerlo, sino porque ahora[...]no hay duda de que vamos al mismo sitio, querámoslo o no esta noche. (19)

The assumption of a shared physical space echoes the interruption wrought by marriage on each participant's hodological space. Identity and physical space go hand in hand, with the latter

suggesting new paths that will in turn shape the former.

Because of work responsibilities, Juan must spend much of his first year of marriage traveling while Luisa stays at home. The sense of alienation provoked by returning to a mostly-unfamiliar home (with which Luisa is much more familiar) contributes to Juan's sense of identity confusion during his early marriage. There is an added element, though, in Juan's case that augments his discomfort. Luisa's disproportionate familiarity with the home coincides with her developing acquaintance with Juan's father, Ranz. Against the backdrop of Ranz's deepening friendship with Luisa, Juan encounters Ranz in his new home at every turn. A desk commissioned by Luisa looks uncannily like the desk Ranz had commissioned for Juan's childhood home. During one of Juan's many absences, it is Ranz who unpacks his books, leaving an idiosyncratic mark on the library:

Ranz . . . se había tomado la molestia de desembalar las cajas que me aguardaban y colocar mis libros como él había tenido siempre los suyos, divididos por lenguas y no por materias y, dentro de aquéllas, en orden cronológico de autores según el año de su nacimiento. (85)

Juan evaluates his home's relationship with his father based on the artwork on the wall:

[Ranz] nos obsequió con dos valiosos cuadros que habían estado siempre en su casa...y así pasaron a estar en la mía . . . y sin embargo yo habría preferido seguirlos viendo donde habían colgado durante lustros y no en el salón de mi casa, que con Venecia y Trouville allí, aunque fuera en pequeño . . . se asemejaba indefectiblemente a mi juvenil recuerdo del salón de la suya." (86)

Perhaps as a result of Juan's particular paranoia that his life will repeat his father's, he attributes changes in the home to Ranz's intentional interference, and sees the condition of his home as yet

another example of his inability to escape from his father's influence.

Juan's preoccupation with his father's shadow on his life—part of the hodology of his life space—colors the way that he interacts with his married home. By contrast, his wife Luisa does not have the type of history with Ranz that might project unpleasant memories onto a desk or the arrangement of a library. Even though the two spouses inhabit the same physical space, their interpretations of its meaning and their experiences of its affect differ. Merleau-Ponty might say that Juan's and Luisa's understanding of the world play out within different “horizons.” They are in the same world, but it is a world that is always already being interpreted by each of them, with that interpretation in turn becoming formative.

Dientes de leche

The first extended reflections on a family home in *Dientes de leche* appear in a scene framed by a uniquely embodied context. Isabelita, a young mother to the infant Rafael, is summoned by her infant's cries into the room where he has been sleeping. She offers him the breast, smiling “al ver cómo buscaba afanosamente su pecho con la boca” (74). The brief record of the connection between Isabel and Rafael during nursing is one not often encountered in literature, where it is [still] more likely to only see a mention of a woman's breast somehow connected with sex. It is while Isabelita is sitting perched on the edge of her bed, nursing and caressing her infant son, that her gaze settles on the opposite wall, where a series of small, framed pieces of artwork ignites her reflection. This embodied context for Isabelita's contemplation of her home is significant. As a mother, she is offering her body for the nourishment of her young son. Isabelita's schedule and needs have become secondary to the needs of her son, to whom she responds in a very physical way. Because of the physical demands of nursing, she is required to

sit and forced into a silence that begets reflection. The moment resonates at once with the many ways that Isabelita is limited in the story and the parameters put on her life by the intertwining roles of wifehood and motherhood. The physical act of bearing her children has changed her identity and altered her sense of self. Isabelita's connection to her family is different than her husband Raffaele's by virtue of her relationship to her children as their mother. At the same time, the narration allows space for Isabelita's intellectual life to find expression and take shape, even as her body is literally restrained by her child.

Looking up at the pictures of the wall, Isabelita considers the friendly takeover of her childhood home by herself and her new family with Raffaele. As she notices with regret, her family's inadvertent sprawl is beginning to edge out the memory of her father Modesto, who is away convalescing from the respiratory illness that will soon kill him. She specifically focuses a set of framed pictures that she had bought in anticipation of marriage and that are now hanging in her father's bedroom. Tracing her thoughts, the novel says,

Dejó que su mirada se posara en los cuadritos de las paredes. . . . Isabelita los había comprado semanas antes de la boda para alegrar su habitación . . . Entonces la idea de la pareja era instalarse en esa habitación sólo durante unos meses, mientras buscaban su propio piso. Pero luego las cosas salieron como salieron, y ahora ella veía sus cuadritos en aquella habitación, la de su padre, y no podía reprimir una mueca de extrañeza.

Saltaba a la vista que aquellos cuadros no estaban pensados para esas paredes. . . . estaban ocupando un dormitorio que no era el suyo. ¿Llegaría algún día a sentirlo como propio?

(74-75)

In noting the tentative but definitive takeover of Modesto's rooms, Isabel recognizes a contrast with the way that her younger brother's childhood room was preserved for many years after he

moved away. She attributes this discrepancy in the treatment of these two spaces to an innate intelligence located within the home itself, surmising that “las casas se comportaban como organismos vivos y complejos, y no siempre reaccionaban del mismo modo” (76). Her speculation becomes almost mystical: “¿Podía ser que tuvieran una especie de alma y que esa alma intuyera hasta el estado de salud de los ausentes y supiera cuál de ellos iba a volver y cuál no?” (76).

As Isabelita observes, the home functions as a type of remains that, while not belonging to a human body, nevertheless create a sensation of encounter with a personality. Merleau-Ponty addresses the power of lived-in space in an essay called “Other Selves and the Human World,” saying, “Just as nature finds its way to the core of my personal life and becomes inextricably linked with it, so behaviour patterns settle into that nature, being deposited in the form of a cultural world” (146). This “cultural world,” in an individual context, includes spaces like the home, where the objects around us are “moulded to the human action[s] which [they] serve[.]” (146). Merleau-Ponty speaks of “an atmosphere of humanity” (146), which operates on a sort of sliding scale of determinacy. Every object “spreads round it an atmosphere of humanity which may be determinate to a low degree, in the case of a few footmarks in the sand, or on the other hand highly determinate, if I go into every room from top to bottom of a house recently evacuated” (146). The latter is what Isabelita and her family have been doing, as they move through Modesto’s [putatively] temporarily-evacuated home and displace his items, replacing them with their own. Not only are Modesto’s walls and furniture being repurposed but, in a sense, the “atmosphere of humanity” which had spread around him over the decades of his life in the home is being erased by the revisions of the home’s new inhabitants. Isabelita’s melancholy meditations are the first steps of her grief over her father’s death, even before he has died.

Where, as Merleau-Ponty describes it, “the spontaneous acts through which a man has patterned his life [are] deposited, like some sediment, outside himself and lead an anonymous existence as things” (146), these now-anonymous things are a true expression of personality. Isabelita mourns the loss of Modesto’s personality even before his death: she sees it disappearing abruptly in her own changes to his bedroom furniture.

In this account and throughout the novel, Isabelita—soon to lose the diminutive and remain “Isabel”—is a woman figuratively trapped within her home, tied down by nostalgia and the memories that she cannot leave behind. The novel moves with Isabel from her childhood home to the fashionable downtown *piso* she and Raffaele purchase in mid-life, to the dingy apartment where she moves after she has abandoned her family for a short-lived and blighted independence. Isabel’s inhabiting of each of these spaces receives specific attention, as her interaction with the different spaces reflects her own character at the various stages of her life. Isabel’s childhood home is the last space she shared with her mother, the place from which her brother and father were each taken by the fascists. It is the site of the family business and the place where Isabel first took on the responsibilities of managing a home. It is the place that marks her initial encounters with Raffaele and the contracting of her marriage to him. Likewise, her two subsequent homes—and her interactions with them—represent different life phases. The home on the Calle Bolonia marks the beginning of her definitive separation with Raffaele, as the decision to change homes coincides with the point where their marriage begins its rapid disintegration. Finally, the dilapidated apartment that she is able to afford when she separates from her husband emphasizes the imperfection of her plan to live on her own and, eventually, the unintentionally self-destructive nature of her decision to ignore the perils of her situation.

The related relationships between family spaces and the past set up a contrast in *Dientes*

de leche between Isabel and Raffaele. As much as Isabel wants to cling to the past and what she believes are happier memories, Raffaele is trying to escape the secret life that he has left behind in Italy. Rather than preserving a particular past represented by certain objects, Raffaele's orientation toward the past is characterized by his desire to rewrite it, to make himself a better and better fascist with the passing of the years, to replace what is true about the past with a manufactured story with which he can comfortably move forward into the future. While Isabel's most prized possessions point to the reality of her sons (their very baby teeth), Raffaele's suggestion for a family heirloom is a very large mirror, emphasizing the extent to which his sense of continuity with his own past is intimately interrelated with the act of looking not at others but at himself.

The spirit of the home is connected to the spirit of the family, as the apartment that Isabel rents after separating from Raffaele carries none of the emotional weight of her previous homes (even where, as in the case of the home at the Calle Bolonia, that emotional weight is negative). Isabel decides to adapt to the questionable habitability of her new home on the calle San Miguel rather than to exercise a will to change. After inventorying the many defects of the small apartment, the narrative observes that,

Isabel no tenía prisa. Una vez que hubo adecentado todo un poco e instalado los muebles y enseres estrictamente necesarios, consideró que el pisito reunía unas condiciones mínimas de habitabilidad y optó por dejar para más adelante cualquier reforma que implicara algún tipo de obras. . . . Y pronto descubrió que, viviendo sola como vivía, no resultaba difícil adaptarse a aquella precariedad. (168)

The home is intimately and inevitably connected with a family history of which all members are an integral part—separated from the other members of her family, Isabel is separated from this

significance of home; it has disappeared. Like Isabel's adaptive method of bathing herself in the sink, "que consistía en proceder por partes" (168), the move spurs a fragmentation that eventually, if indirectly, hastens Isabel's death.

El tiempo de las mujeres

The life cycle of the family home is the backbone of *El tiempo de las mujeres*. A family home for generations (on the mother's side), Villa Casilda has accompanied the family through births and deaths, its familiarity providing structure and stability in chaotic times. But that stasis is not immutable. The family's troubled trajectory implicates the home as well, carrying it to eventual destruction. The circumstances of Villa Casilda's loss are gloomily banal: the mother makes Villa Casilda collateral for a mortgage she neglects to pay. The novel's final chapter opens as a demolishing crew destroys the house in preparation for new development. As the drama over the home's loss demonstrates, Villa Casilda is more than a generic piece of real property. The stories of a family, over multiple generations, are tied up with the material substance of the home. It is shaped by and also shapes the personality of the people who live there, and of those who remember having lived there. The loss affects not only the remembering of a past, but its potential remembering in the future, as María reflects while witnessing the home's destruction: "Me acordé entonces de lo que el abogado Esponera había comentado a propósito de la demolición de su antiguo colegio, de cómo al tirarlo habían destruido también muchos de sus recuerdos, de sus futuros recuerdos" (368).

In the opening narrative segment, María introduces the bed in her grandparents' room, "la pesada cama de hierro forjado con adornos de bronce" (13), in which many members of the family have been born and have laid in repose after death. María's memories of the bed help her

to cope with the immediate aftermath of her father's death: by completing a memorized choreography of furniture, clothing and people, she is able—even as a young girl—to orchestrate his wake in her mother's emotional and intellectual absence. This memorized choreography is stronger than María's own feelings or intuitions. Even as she wonders, “¿A quién se le pudo ocurrir la idea de velar a los difuntos en la biblioteca, donde la presencia de una cama (y no digamos de una cama con un muerto) siempre tendría algo de insólito y estrafalario?” (14), she works hard to make sure that everything is arranged just as she's seen it done before. The objects in the family home have become sites of memory that are powerful enough to override actually-human personalities in a crisis.

María is the first to find out about Villa Casilda's impending foreclosure, and her melancholic reflections on her soon-to-be former home are a powerful expression of how memories of significant places affect life in our bodies. Memory unites time space, and a host of sensations, crystalizing them in details of a particular site, to the point that the site itself seems to become imbued with life (marking perhaps its identity as a *lieu de mémoire*). María thinks about taking photos to capture the memory Villa Casilda, but realizes that this would be futile. She says of these imagined photos that, “ninguna de ellas me devolvería jamás todo el cúmulo de sensaciones que cada uno de esos instantes llevaba aparejado. La sensación, por ejemplo, de que toda mi vida y toda la vida de los míos estaba allí, en esas imágenes, en esos olores, en esos sonidos familiares” (310). Later in the same section, she compares the impending separation from Villa Casilda to the loss of a part of her own body:

Me sentía como deben de sentirse los heridos a los que han de amputarles un brazo o una pierna, que no pueden dejar de pensar en ese miembro del que pronto se verán privados. Yo, del mismo modo, no podía dejar de pensar en Villa Casilda y en todo lo que Villa

Casilda contenía o había contenido. (310-11)

María continues using the metaphor of an amputation, characterizing the loss of Villa Casilda as a mutilation:

Todo el pasado familiar se me representaba en cada uno de aquellos objetos y detalles, y en esas imágenes del pasado estaba también encerrada una parte de mi futuro inmediato, esa sensación de desposesión a la que sin duda tardaría en acostumbrarme. De desposesión o más bien de mutilación, porque sabía que la falta de Villa Casilda me dolería como dicen que a los mutilados les sigue doliendo el brazo que no tienen. (311)

The family home has become like a part of María's own body, and its loss will require its own process of grief as the María and her family adjust to a new "normal." This new "normal" also implicates an alteration in family history. Villa Casilda will persist for the family as a *lieux de mémoire* even if that place is only in a shared mental space. But the building's destruction will, as María suggests, alter the character of future memory and doubtless lead to the permanent loss of some memories.

BODIES AND MIRRORS

It is not accidental for the object to be given to me in a "deformed" way, from the point of view . . . which I occupy. That is the price of its being "real."

—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception"

The topic of mirrors has been heavily covered by critical theory, probably most prominently in Jacques Lacan's critical reinterpretations of Freud. According to Lacan's theory, human development moves through stages that correlate with a child's deepening understanding of his own identity, connection to others, and place in a larger world. Lacan's explanation of the mirror

stage emphasizes that a child's initial understanding of his image in the mirror is also a misunderstanding of his true self and the distance between what is seen in the reflection and what is experienced within. According to Lacan, the ego-in-the-mirror is itself an "other" (or a series of "other" alter-egos) with whom an individual must negotiate through life (Murray 98-100). Relying on a different vocabulary, Merleau-Ponty also considered the distance between who I am and what I see in the mirror, and it is with Merleau-Ponty's work that I will interact most here. Mirrors play significant roles in both *Corazón tan blanco* and *Dientes de leche*, both books about a son's (or sons') relationship with a father. Not only do the characters in this novel come into contact with physical mirrors, but the theme of mirrors operates throughout on a metaphorical level: son becomes mirror for father, and father mirror for son.

Mirrors take on many roles in the texts covered in this chapter. They are household objects that are sometimes passed down from one generation to another. They are, as Pierre Nora may say, *lieux de mémoire*, both because significant shared moments in front of the mirror go on to have value in family memory and history. They are places to note family resemblances or one's own physical resemblance even apart from other family members. Looking into the mirror, one sees not just oneself, but the physical characteristics that belong to an entire family (and represent the merger of two distinct families). Mirrors are also sites of self-realization and self-manipulation. These texts also use mirrors to suggest that family members are mirrors for each other. Looking to their children, parents in these texts return to the narrative of their own mistakes in life and seek in some way to pass warnings or advice (or to project their own psychological problems at the memory of the past) on to their children. Unlike other methods for self-reflection (writing/storytelling), the mirror is significant in its inevitable connection with corporeality. Without my body, I cannot look at the mirror, and without my body I have no

presence in the mirror. Like it or not, what I see when I look into the mirror is my body.

The idea of embodiment in *Corazón tan blanco* can be clearly seen through the presence of mirrors in the story. The narration opens with a suicide in front of a mirror, and the image of the mirror appears again at various points throughout the novel. Rather than being sites of revelation, however, the mirrors of *Corazón tan blanco* only reinforce how much is not known, even at the moment that we share a mirror with another. The mirror introduces the double play of the body that both sees and is seen, a theme that Mariás raises frequently in the novel, significantly in the observation from Juan's father Ranz (who, one could say, has made this idea his mantra): "Ves, la propia vida no depende de los propios hechos, de lo que uno hace, sino de lo que de uno se sabe, de lo que se sabe que ha hecho" (281). The effect of duplication in the mirror produces an "other" that is myself but also outside myself, that looks back at me and reminds me that I am also an object for the vision of others. Mariás uses this image both with the presence of physical mirrors and with the presence of human others who act as mirrors. In each instance, the presence of the mirror emphasizes the primacy of perception: the encounter with the mirror is always defined by subjective positioning and the exercise of sight. Mirror images can therefore be subject to manipulation—either by the subject-being-reflected or because of a defect in the mirror (it may be too small, dirty, or otherwise flawed).

The novel begins with the introductions of a reluctant historian ("No he querido saber, pero he sabido..." (11)) and continues to narrate the story of the suicide of a young girl just returned from her honeymoon: "entró en el cuarto de baño, se puso frente al espejo, se abrió la blusa, se quitó el sostén y se buscó el corazón con la punta de la pistola de su propio padre" (11). The question introduced in these initial lines is what drives the entire novel (and its answer is not revealed until very near the end): why did she do it? The family members and guests who run

into the bathroom after hearing the gunshot have all the physical evidence within their reach, but that only leads to conjectures, not answers. Her father knows that “[I]a hija había estado llorando mientras se ponía ante el espejo...porque, tendida en el suelo frío del cuarto de baño enorme, tenía los ojos llenos de lágrimas” (12), although he does not know why. He also knows that “en contra de su costumbre y de la costumbre general, no había echado el pestillo” (12), and this causes the father to surmise “que quizá su hija, mientras lloraba, había estado esperando o deseando que alguien abriera la puerta y le impidiera hacer lo que había hecho, no por la fuerza, sino con su mera presencia, por la contemplación de su desnudez en vida o con una mano en el hombro” (12). Despite Teresa’s passive invitation via the unlocked door, no one appeared to interrupt her gaze on her own body reflected in the mirror.

The fact that Teresa shot herself in front of the mirror highlights the sense of existential struggle in her story: she committed suicide while engaged literally in an act of self-reflection. Still, at this point in the narration the reader has no idea what the motivation for her actions may have been (i.e., what tensions were at work in her fight for existence?). Unlike the human observer who could have (but did not) enter through the unlocked door, the mirror reflected back to Teresa only what she brought to it. There was no dissenting voice to avert her gaze from herself or encourage her to consider her problems from a different vantage point. Teresa stood alone in front of the mirror in a tableau tinged with both narcissism and despair.

On the other hand, however, each character in the novel acts as a mirror for Teresa, staring back at her defiant act and affirming that she has been seen (even if the “sight” of her at the moment of the suicide is only figurative). Juan muses, looking at Teresa’s photo, that this reflection continues to the present: “Hay algo en ella que *ahora* me recuerda a Luisa, pese a haber visto esa foto durante tantos años antes de que Luisa existiera, todos los de mi vida menos

los dos últimos” (128). But the idea that we are all looking into the same mirror as Teresa is suggested much earlier, in the description of the discovery of the suicide. As her father and sister kneel over her body, one of the family’s guests approaches the bathroom and catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror: “no pudo evitar mirarse en el espejo a distancia y atusarse el pelo un segundo, el tiempo suficiente para notar que la sangre y el agua (pero no el sudor) habían salpicado la superficie y por tanto cualquier reflejo que diera, incluido el suyo mientras se miró” (13). We learn later that this guest was in fact the doctor, a family friend and the father of Professor Villalobos, who years later relates Teresa’s story to Juan. The doctor’s encounter with the mirror is different from Teresa’s, because in this case the mirror is no longer an empty space inhabited only by self-reflection. Teresa’s spattered blood interrupts the doctor’s perception and changes the way that he sees himself. Because of the previous intervention of Teresa’s blood, the mirror reflects back to the doctor’s perception more than what he brought to the encounter. The mirror acts as a witness to Teresa’s suicide, implicating the others and transferring the spattering of blood to their own faces.

The next appearance of a mirror is during Juan and Luisa’s honeymoon, in the hotel room where Juan is eavesdropping on the inhabitants of the room next door while his wife rests on the bed next to him. He says, “[m]e veía en el espejo de la pared divisoria, es decir, me veía si quería mirarme, porque cuando uno escucha muy atentamente no ve nada” (42). During this scene, Juan plays multiple games with his reflection—games that rely on both internal and external manipulation of perception. His first manipulation of perception is interpretative. He sees his image in the mirror, but imagines different explanations for it:

[D]e pronto me miré a propósito en el espejo mal iluminado que tenía delante, la única luz encendida le quedaba lejos, con las mangas de mi camisa arremangadas, mi figura

sentada en penumbra, un hombre aún joven si me miraba con benevolencia o retrospectivamente, con la voluntad de reconocer al que había ido siendo, pero casi de mediana edad si me miraba con anticipación o con pesimismo, adivinándome para dentro de muy poco más tiempo. (46)

Juan's reflection in the mirror is here the site of interpretation. Like Teresa's body, Juan's body both seen and is seen, but here he himself performs both actions. Out of that doubled solitude, Juan mediates between divergent perspectives, each based in different facets of his personality and experience.

Juan continues to experiment with his control over the image in the mirror a few pages later: "Me miré en el espejo y me incorporé un poco, para que mi rostro quedara mejor alumbrado por la distante luz de la mesilla de noche y mis rasgos no se me aparecieran tan sombríos, tan umbrosos, tan sin mi pasado, tan cadavéricos" (46). Now his manipulation has moved from the internal to the external. Even staring back at his own reflection, the subject can adjust his vantage point to enjoy a different (and more pleasing) perspective on his own body.

The mirror also mediates his view of Luisa, but, again, it is a mediation that he controls with his manipulation of perspective: "Si miraba también veía el bulto de Luisa bajo las sábanas, acurrucada a mi espalda, o, mejor dicho, sólo la superficie del bulto, lo único que, al estar ella echada, aparecía en el campo visual del espejo de medio cuerpo. Para verla más, su cabeza, tenía que incorporarme" (42-43). The image reflected by a mirror is not immune from manipulation and does not guarantee an accurate or complete representation of reality. The double act of *seeing* and *being-seen* is vulnerable at every point to the manipulation of the perceptive faculties.

The idea of mirror and manipulation is raised again later in the novel, when Juan is staying with his college friend Berta, who is preparing for a date with "Bill," a man she met

through a video personal ad: “Antes de salir, mientras me afeitaba y me preparaba, Berta se acicalaba...para encontrarse por fin con ‘Bill’...y nos disputábamos calladamente el espejo del cuarto de baño, el cuarto de baño mismo” (206). This meeting at the mirror marks a turning point in Juan and Berta’s interaction over Berta’s exchange with Bill. Although she had intimately involved Juan in every step of the process (including filming a video of her posing nude in compliance with a request from “Bill”), once the evening of the date arrives, Berta becomes reticent to answer Juan’s questions. Even the shape of Berta’s mirror emphasizes the idea of a silencing: “Se miró en el espejo a distancia para verse lo más completa posible (no le había de cuerpo entero en la casa, yo me hice a un lado e interrumpí el nudo de mi corbata)” (207). Significantly here, Juan can see what Berta cannot: he can see her entire outfit, head-to-toe, even without the benefit of the mirror. But Berta is unable to get outside herself, and is at the mercy of the mirror to give her some representation of reality, however incomplete. Berta’s ability to see is hampered by the limitations of the physical mirror, while there is no similar limitation on her capacity for being-seen, in this case by Juan.

Neither Marías nor his narrator denies the reality of the bodies in the text. They are beings-in-the-world that live and interact with others—at least until death. Death can be understood as the moment where the double play of the mirror is made impossible: one *is seen* but can no longer *see*. For this reason, “los muertos,” we are told, in a reference to Shakespeare “son como las pinturas” (76). Even from within one’s own body, the mirror emphasizes the power of perspective to control perception. Merleau-Ponty addressed this problem in “The Primacy of Perception”:

This subject, which takes a point of view, is my body as the field of perception and action... Perception is here understood as a reference to a whole which can be grasped, in

principle, only through certain of its parts or aspects. The perceived thing is not an ideal unity in the possession of the intellect...it is rather a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views which blend with one another according to a given style, which defines the object in question. (16)

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, “Being” cannot be understood and or accessed as an “ideal unity”—which is not to say that it does not exist or cannot be partially understood. But we cannot escape the paradox of perception and ever quite follow Husserl “to the things themselves.” Instead, the perceived thing “exists only in so far as someone can perceive it” (“Primacy” 16). Even my own grasp of my existence is limited by this sense of perception.

Rather than recognizing the limitations of perception as a handicap, Merleau-Ponty signals the possibilities: “Thus there is a paradox of immanence and transcendence in perception. Immanence, because the perceived object cannot be foreign to him who perceives; transcendence, because it always contains something more than what is actually given” (16). At the same time that the mirror reminds me of the things that I cannot see, it reinforces that there is a reality that transcends beyond my perception. Thus, Teresa’s dead body in front of the mirror, or Berta’s silent one, do not indicate that there is nothing to learn from them—but it does point out their own existential power to conceal or reveal their own secrets, secrets that may transcend my knowledge.

The mirror also emphasizes the uniqueness of my interior perception compared to the outside and shows me how much I have to learn from others, even about myself. “Man,” says Merleau-Ponty, “is mirror for man” (E&M 168). He explains this idea further in “The Primacy of Perception”:

It is thus necessary that, in the perception of another, I find myself in relation with

another “myself,” who is, in principle, open to the same truths as I am, in relation to the same being that I am. And this perception is realized. From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field. (17-18)

Marías, too, works with this thematic, representing people (and their stories) as mirrors for each other. In the novel, the invitation to be seen by another is represented in the action of telling another person one’s secrets, making that other person a reflection for oneself. The act of telling deforms reality much like the reflection deforms the real image it reflects:

Contar deforma, contar los hechos deforma los hechos y los tergiversa y casi los niega, todo lo que se cuenta pasa a ser irreal y aproximativo aunque sea verídico...en cuanto se relatan o se manifiestan o muestran...pasan a formar parte de la analogía y el símbolo, y ya no son hechos, sino que se convierten en reconocimiento. (200-201)

While the image in the mirror, however, is transitory, the image of what-has-been-told cannot be erased from the mind of the hearer. Thus, as Teresa stands in the mirror she stands there not just as herself, but as the mirror of her new husband, Ranz, whose murderous secret has made her aware of her own participation in the death of another. In the movement of turning from gazing at his own murderous reflection to casting that reflection onto his wife, Ranz has started the chain of events that will conclude with her death.

For Raffaele Cameroni of *Dientes de leche*, mirrors are an obsession: “la idea que él tenía de la distinción y el lujo incluía una anormal abundancia de espejos” (129). Whether in love, war, or business transactions, Raffaele is always working on curating what he looks like from the outside, so that the reflection that he sees of himself is pleasing, sincere or not. Raffaele is mollified by the neat and tidy image that he is presenting in the mirror. The problem for Raffaele

is that the mirrors on the wall of his house are not the only ones in the story. The most significant mirrors are those blood relatives who know him well enough to start reflecting his true self back to him. This revelation occurs partly with the births of Margherita and Paquito, united by the *mala sangre*, but it also occurs through Raffaele's relationships with his sons and, later, with his only grandson, Juan. And the novel begins with Juan.

Dientes de leche opens with a prologue that is an extended scene in front of a mirror—the large hall mirror in the home of Raffaele's middle son, Alberto, and his wife and young son. The mirror is the site of an annual photo taken every November 2 when Raffaele takes Juan, dressed in his own pint-sized fascist uniform, to the annual service of homage for Italian fascists killed in the Spanish Civil War. Each year, Juan and Raffaele pose in front of the mirror while Elisa takes their photo. Juan's experience is in many ways determined by the situation into which he was born: the identity and personality of his grandfather and the continuing conflict between his parents. Those things all shape his perspective in a certain way. This prologue is a 20-page Bildungsroman for Juan, tracing his development toward self-awareness and acceptance of responsibility for his own actions.

At the beginning of the narrative, Juan is too young to understand or form an opinion about dressing up to accompany his grandfather, and the conflict is located in the relationship between his parents and their annual squabble over who should put a stop to Raffaele's insistence on taking Juan. To make matters worse, Raffaele engages in a farcical ritual of obtaining Juan's consent for the outing:

Agarraba a Juan por los hombros, le miraba con fijeza a los ojos y le decía:
—Eres libre, Giovanni —cuando estaban en familia, no le llamaba Juan sino Giovanni—. Eres libre de venir o no venir. Si quieres, vienes y si no, no. Tú decides. Que

no se diga que te llevo a la fuerza. Te repito que eres libre. Absolutamente libre. ¿Quieres venir o no? ¿Quieres venir?

Y el niño, por no contrariarle, hacía un leve, levísimo gesto que de inmediato era interpretado por el abuelo como un asentimiento.

—¿Lo ves? ¡No soy yo! ¡Es él! (14)

Juan's innocent surrender to what he does not even recognize as his grandfather's emotional duress becomes more complicated as he matures. He slowly becomes aware of what is happening and begins to want to put a stop to it himself. The year of his thirteenth birthday, Juan decides that he will talk with his grandfather and tell him that he refuses to participate. Now, however, the hesitance of the parents becomes the hesitance of the son—he already mirrors their behavior—and he decides to put it off for another year.

The final rejection of Juan's annual fascist façade happens not because of any inner strength on Juan's part, but because of an intervention by the mirror. Until the moment that Juan stands in front of the mirror, dressed once more in the black shirt of the Italian fascists, he sees the situation from the inside. He is motivated, on one hand, by his affection and respect for his grandfather—he doesn't want to disturb him or inspire feelings of betrayal. On the other hand, he is motivated by his own embarrassment and lack of courage when faced with taking a stand. In the mirror, though, he sees something different: how he looks from the outside. He sees his reflection, wearing the perfectly-tailored fascist uniform, in light of the behavior and falangist ardor of Moisés, one of Juan's schoolmates who also attends the annual memorial. Juan's assessment of Moisés is that "era el tipo de chaval al que por nada del mundo querría parecerse . . . : el abusón clásico, el típico matón del recreo que robaba meriendas e insultaba sin motivo y armaba toda clase de broncas" (27). From the inside, Juan sees a vast chasm between him and

Moisés. But, seeing himself from the outside, he sees someone who looks a lot like Moisés: “[a] ojos de cualquiera, era él como . . . ese bravucón al que detestaba” (29). Thanks to the mirror, he finds himself “de nuevo viéndose desde fuera, sólo que esta vez en sentido estricto: observando en el espejo su estampa de joven fascista, observándose junto al fascista de su abuelo, que mantenía el brazo en alto y le miraba con incredulidad” (31). The mirror bridges Juan’s distance from passive—if embarrassed—cooperation and a bold “No voy.”

The novel’s record of the annual photograph in front of the mirror emphasizes the distance between exterior and interior perception. When Juan looks at a photograph later in life, “creía percibir en ella detalles que sólo a él estaban reservados y que ninguna otra persona en el mundo podría interpretar correctamente” (16). Like Roland Barthes before the Winter Garden photo, Juan approaches this piece of the past with a combination of memory and knowledgeable observation that makes its meaning too complex to communicate with the image alone. The photo seems to communicate something—family sympathy, or at least complicity, with the fascist cause—that is, in fact, absent. Photos have an effect of freezing moments that can be taken completely out of context, affirming rather than removing the distance between interior truth and exterior appearance.

There are undisputable truths evident in the photo: that grandfather and grandson were in the same place at the same time, that the family was cooperating to some extent with the grandfather’s plan, that Juan always had a uniform that fit him, despite the frequent growth spurts of childhood. All of those things are confirmed by the photo, and all are true. More abstract realities, however, like loyalty, devotion, and dedication, are impossible to capture, and the actual truth may in fact contradict the apparent truth of the photo. The existential question posed by *Dientes de leche*, however, is whether our intentions can provide any refuge from the

consequences of our actions. Can one really claim a difference between actual truth and apparent truth? Merleau-Ponty gives one answer when he says, “Truth does not ‘inhabit’ only the ‘inner man’, or, more accurately, there is no inner man, man is in the world, and only in the world does he know himself” (*Phenomenology of Perception* xii). Juan’s simple encounter with the mirror and an internal portrait of Moisés gives way to the novel’s depiction of Raffaele, whose success at cultivating a certain image in front of the physical mirrors of his home cannot withstand his encounters with the human mirrors he finds in his family members.

CONCLUSION

The world is not what I think, but what I live through.
—Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

None of the novels considered in this chapter carries the weight of a historical document. *Corazón tan blanco* suggests, but does not aim to historically document the experience of a translator who was present at an interview between Margaret Thatcher and another contemporary world leader. *El tiempo de las mujeres* does not rigorously document the experience of everyday people during the 23F coup. It cannot even be said that these novels delve into the *intrahistoria* of events that have been described and re-described in official histories. These are fictions. But the questions that they pose are relevant to History because they occur in a context of characters who are placed under the mundane but real pressures common to historical beings. By fleshing out the lives of characters participating in the context of a family, these novels reach historical beings at the level of a common denominator: how we respond in history to those Merleau-Ponty might call our “cogenitors.” Where do political loyalty and family loyalty intersect? What inherited fears from the past am I unwittingly carrying into the future? How does the material

context for my life—buildings, photos, places—become determinative in ways I have not even considered? These novels illuminate the complication of lived experience on levels that may never make it even to a social history following the *Annales* legacy, but that still exist under the surface.

Merleau-Ponty invited philosophy to consider more fully the perspective of individual, idiosyncratic, embodied beings. As he did so, he recognized that individual humans-in-bodies are always already operating in a multifaceted context of history, populated always already by many other individual humans-in-bodies. He says,

For the ‘other’ to be more than an empty word, it is necessary that my existence should never be reduced to my bare awareness of existing, but that it should take in also the awareness that *one* may have of it, and thus include my incarnation in some nature and the possibility, at least, of a historical situation. The *Cogito* must reveal me in a situation, and it is on this condition alone that transcendental subjectivity can, as Husserl puts it, *be* an intersubjectivity. (*Phenomenology* xiv)

The characters of these novels are “revealed in a situation”—here, a family situation occurring at a particular point in time. Readers may not learn specific details about historical facts, but their understanding of the experience of living in a particular time will certainly be enriched. If, as Merleau-Ponty insists, “[e]very incarnate subject is like an open notebook in which we do not yet know what will be written” (“Primacy” 6), what is carried away from these novels will become part of many individual readers, each writing—with their arms, legs, minds, senses, and actions—their own individual histories.

CONCLUSION

Is this the highest point of reason, to realize that the soil beneath our feet is shifting, to pompously name “interrogation” what is only a persistent state of stupor, to call “research” or “quest” what is only trudging in a circle, to call “Being” that which never fully is?

— Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind”

This dissertation was completed during a tumultuous moment in history. As I was working on this project, startling political upsets dominated headlines. The Islamic State gained territory and inspired terror around the world with attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, Orlando, London, Manchester, and Barcelona, among others. Countless natural disasters ravaged Mexico, the Caribbean, and the southeastern United States. Far-right nationalist groups gained power all over Europe. North Korea threatened nuclear war. And, in these final days of writing, Catalan nationalists clashed with the Spanish government in what a recent commentator has called “one of the gravest tests of Spain’s democracy since the end of the Franco dictatorship” (Minder A12).

Without a doubt, events that will become the History of tomorrow are happening now. From here in the *intrahistoria*, however, it is hard to separate the enduring from the ephemeral. It can be hard to anticipate what happens next and impossible to respond perceptively to tragedy for much time after it has occurred. Meanwhile, political discussion grows exceedingly polarized. In an environment where there is almost no delay at all between publishing a thought (on social media for example) and its receipt by an audience of thousands, official responses are often expected before there is much time to adequately investigate or even think about what has been said. What is it like to live this moment in history? Unsettled. Confusing. Surprising. Unclear. This is what history feels like, and reading the texts considered in this dissertation inspires a sense of solidarity, showing me that other times of tumult have been, in many ways,

not much different from our own. From the inscrutability of Don Manuel's true convictions—even for those who knew him best—to the well-intentioned but hamstrung investigations of Dos Passos's Jay Pignatelli, to the despicable but relatable posturing of Martínez de Pisón's Mateo Moreno or Raffaele Cameroni, these texts pave the way for memorable insights into human strengths and weaknesses in the face of difficulty.

This project is both an analysis of certain specific pieces of writing and an argument for why the teaching and enjoyment of literature continue to be vital to the human experience. Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana famously declared that, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Santayana 82), and I argue that this act of remembering the past includes not only processing the data about *who*, *what*, *where*, and *how*, but reflecting on the *why* behind the actions of those who have come before. One of the characteristics uniting most of the theorists consulted in this project is an appeal to a transcendent element to human experience: realities beyond the material world, realities that exist across time and over generations. Even Walter Benjamin, discussing historical materialism, finds the promise for future change in the religiously-charged idea of a messianic break-through into time. Literature works together with more scientific historical endeavors to intensify transcendent themes that bring the lessons of history to life again for new audiences.

In an article calling for greater attention to the presence of existential thought in the Latin American literature of the 1930s-60s, Stephanie Merrim posits that literature with an existential focus can be an important part of a “more embodied, rooted” (93) liberal arts education. Merrim invokes Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*, especially Camus's provocative declaration that “The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy” (quoted in Merrim, 93). Giving students the tools to imagine Sisyphus happy—to bear

with and come to understand literary characters caught in the middle of existential struggle—is, for Merrim, “the best reason to include [these texts] in a liberal arts education” (105). The same argument holds for the texts consulted in this project. In conjunction with the formal study of history, the study of fiction that creates existential histories can help readers to create a multi-dimensional and more empathetic picture of what life may be like in another person’s shoes.

* * *

There are a number of ways that this project could serve as the starting point for future study. One is, as already discussed in this conclusion, as an undergirding motivation for literary scholarship and teaching, including course syllabi that specifically place existentialist thinkers in dialogue with contemporary literature. A second possibility is as the background for a more specific investigation into Civil-War-, Franco- and Transition-era novels of memory⁵⁷ in connection with ethical questions regarding the usurpation of the memories of those who have actually lived a traumatic event. Who has the right to tell these stories? And where, as in Spain, there is a reigning “pacto del olvido,” does the fictional colonization of uncharted memories border on exploitation? Daniel Aguirre Oteiza’s recent article, “Usurping the Apocryphal: Testimony and Cosmopolitan Memory in Max Aub and Antonio Muñoz Molina”⁵⁸ begins to ask these questions specifically about novels covering the Civil War era, and—considering the recent boom of literary production in this sub-genre—there is clearly more work to be done in the field. Third, little critical attention has been paid to Martínez de Pisón’s work and his project of

⁵⁷ Gonzalo Sobejano provides a helpful overview of this term in his chapter for the *Cambridge Companion to the Spanish Novel: from 1600 to the Present*, “The testimonial novel and the novel of memory” (Cambridge, 2003).

⁵⁸ *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, Vol. 70, No. 1, June 2017, pp. 1-17.

retelling the 20th century through historical fiction. There is ample room for continued scholarship regarding his literary corpus, including translation of his novels into English. Fourth, as academia surveys the landscape of what has been called a “post-secular world”⁵⁹ there is room for continued revitalization of scholarship that interacts with the transcendent, from the work of mostly-materialist writers like Benjamin, Camus, and Vattimo to non-Sartrean existentialist thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gabriel Marcel. Finally, there will never be enough time to fully explore the multitude dimensions of Miguel de Unamuno (but I would start with his poetry!), who lives, breathes, and speaks to us still from the pages, and whose presence has haunted this project from beginning to end.

⁵⁹ See, e.g., de Vries, Hent et al, eds. *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World*, Fordham U.P., 2006.

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