

WOMEN'S STRUGGLE IN PUBLIC AND PERSONAL TERRAIN:
THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN MARIA AURELIA CAPMANY'S
LA COLOR MAS AZUL AS REPRESENTATIVE OF
SOCIALIST FEMINIST PRINCIPLES

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages
and the Honors College of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

July 1990

APPROVED: _____

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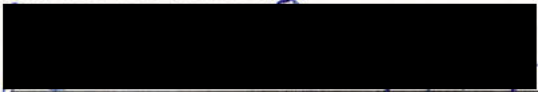
Barbara Da Costa Grey is a Spanish feminist whose life spans the area of Spain's liberal republic. Her Civil War, the Spanish Democracy of Franco, and the transition into democracy. In examination of the history of the Spanish feminist movement shows that the context within which Grey operated is one of circumstances between political and apolitical feminism, at first as between the bourgeois and working classes. In her apolitical work, Grey explores many issues very important to socialist feminists, such as the division of public and private spheres,

internalized oppression, political activity, and the qualitative experiences of bourgeois and working class women. Her novel, La color mas azul, presents female characters whose lives embody these issues, and who either deal with classist oppression by internalizing it as victims, or by fighting it as heroines.

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Kelly M. Bassin for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Romance to be taken August 1990
Languages

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María Aurèlia Capmany is a Spanish feminist whose life spans the eras of Spain's liberal Republic, its Civil War, the fascist dictatorship of Franco, and the transition into democracy. An examination of the history of the Spanish feminist movement shows that the context within which Capmany operates is one of divisiveness between political and apolitical factions, as well as between the bourgeois and working classes. In her non-fictional books, Capmany explores many issues very important to Socialist feminists, such as the division of public and private spheres,

internalized oppression, political activity, and the qualitative experiences of bourgeois and working class women. Her novel, La color más azul, presents female characters whose lives embody these issues, and who either deal with classist oppression by internalizing it as victims, or by fighting it as heroines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Dr. Barbara Dale May for her support and assistance in the preparation of this manuscript.

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INTRODUCTION

Within the context of modern Spanish feminism, Maria Aurèlia Capmany stands as an important figure, both as a source of teaching and entertainment. Her collaborations with other prominent Spanish feminists, as well as references to her work in many feminist writings attest to the respect she has earned within the exciting, frustrating, and inherently controversial field of Spanish feminism.

Capmany was born in 1918 in Barcelona, the city in which she has spent most of her life. Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia, a region distinguished from the rest of Spain not only by its own language, Catalán, but also by its liberal European attitudes and radical political atmosphere. Capmany says about her own upbringing:

Nací en Barcelona, en el seno de una familia de intelectuales, de formación liberal.... Unos estudios felices en un audaz Instituto Escuela, educada en el culto a la libertad y la honestidad intelectual, en contacto con profesores de categoría poco corriente, aprendí muy tarde, cuando ya no podía hacer mella en mí, que las mujeres se aprestaban a seguir cursos de feminidad, para ingresar de nuevo en la vida del hogar que las feministas habían abandonado cien años antes.

I was born in Barcelona, in the heart of a family of intellectuals of liberal formation.... [I enjoyed] happy years of study in a bold institute, and I was educated in the reverence of liberty and intellectual honesty, in contact with professors of an uncommon category. I learned very late, when it couldn't have an effect upon me, that women were being prepared in order to continue with classes in femininity, so that they would re-enter the home life that the feminists had abandoned a hundred years ago.

(De profesión: mujer, p. 30.)

Capmany attributes her ability to resist the forces that socialize people into strict gender roles to her upbringing in a liberal intellectual family and to her early education in the same type of free atmosphere.

After the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Capmany graduated from the University of Barcelona, and then taught for some years at the same university and other schools before deciding to devote her time to writing and other interests. She co-founded the School of Dramatic Art Adrià Gual, has worked for radio and TV, and has served as Cultural Councilwoman for the city of Barcelona. Her literary corpus includes novels, plays, television scripts, essays, and feminist sociological studies, as well as collaborations in newspapers and magazines. This thumbnail sketch of her life achievements does little justice to the quality of her work and her great contributions to the diverse field of feminism, which range from thinly disguised (for the sake of Franco's censors) calls for social revolution, to mainstream works that educate a broad audience about the realities and possibilities of women's lives.

Because the experience of being a feminist in Spain is so different from that of a feminist in America or even Great Britain, an examination of Capmany's developmental context is merited. The feminists in Spain have had a difficult history fraught with setbacks imposed by a rigid society and burdened with the weight of apathy by the

victims of oppression themselves. Many factors have played into the tenuousness of the feminist movement in Spain, including the power of the Catholic church over all aspects of Spanish life, the economic difficulties due to the country's late participation in the Industrial Revolution, along with forty years of repression under the harsh fascist dictatorship of Franco.

In the 1800's, while the feminist movements in America and England were creating a political uproar, there still existed no organized feminist movement in Spain, only an intellectual debate concerning the "feminine question." Because of the Revolution of 1868 sustained by the lower classes, and the subsequent alliance between the upper bourgeoisie and the noble classes to support the Restoration of 1874, class distinctions at the time were severe and antagonistic. Therefore, the debate taken up by the intellectuals was concerned only with upper class women and whether or not they deserved an education equal to that of a man. (Bosch 35.) During this time there were two women, Concepción Arenal and Emilia Pardo Bazán, both from the predominantly rural region of Galicia, who worked for women's education and legal rights by writing and speaking out in public. (Bosch 45.)

In the early 1900's, during the beginnings and development of the First World War, the situation of Spanish women underwent important changes. Although Spain remained neutral in the conflict, the stress placed upon the economy

by the inflation of prices and demand for goods by the belligerent countries increased production and created new jobs. Spain finally experienced the industrial development that other countries had undergone in earlier eras, and many women had to enter the work field. This entrance of women into the work sector created for them a certain independence that made possible the basis for organization. (Calbet 51-52.)

In this first half of the 20th century many women's organizations were formed, mostly in urban areas, distinguished from each other by the social class, cultural level, and religiousness of the women who were members. Gómez (60-64) points out how these groups were separated into three general tendencies that had been described by Adolfo González Posada in 1899: *radical feminists*, whose principal objective was cooperation in the construction of a new Spanish Republic while demanding equal rights, opportunities, and education for women; *opportunistic and conservative feminists*, who were political rightists responding to the need to attract the feminine vote (granted in 1931), with such mottos as "Religion, Patriotism, Family, Propriety, Order, and Work;" and the *religious feminists*, who promoted the ideal of woman as not inferior to but different than men, a woman who needed to be protected and embrace her role as discreet collaborator in the family life, good wife, and prolific mother.

During the Second Republic, a liberal government that

lasted from 1931 to 1939, it was not so much the defenders of feminism as the overall political changes that brought about a greater level of emancipation for women. During this time women received the vote and the right to be elected as a deputy to the Constitutional Courts, which created the Constitution of 1931, (five women were elected to this parliament). This Constitution formally recognized the equality between men and women in the new Democratic state and guaranteed freedom from sex discrimination in the workplace or in public positions. Despite all of these legal efforts at equality there still existed the social rejection of the entrance of women into the public sphere. (Gómez 64-65.) It was during this time that Capmany attended the liberal school to which she attributes much of her progressive intellectual formation.

With the onset of the Civil War in July of 1936, Spain became divided between two ideological factions, the Republicans and the Franquistas or Falangistas, each with its own ideal of the Spanish woman. The differences between the women of the two forces did not lie so much in the tasks they carried out as in the ideology that guided their actions. The women aligned with the Republicans had to contribute just as much to the war effort as the men, and for a short time at the beginning of the war women had access to military action on the front lines. This was a short-lived situation, and women were soon pressured to return to civilian life to guard their comrades' livelihood

by substituting for them in their jobs. (Gómez 73-74.)

Republican women organized themselves according to the two most important political forces within the leftist working class: communism and anarchism. What most distinguished these two bands from each other were their priorities; the communists sacrificed the objective of social revolution to focus all their efforts on winning the war, and upheld women's liberation as a prize to be awarded upon victory. The anarchists considered the war and social revolution to be of parallel importance. The most important women's organization directed by the communists was the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas (Antifascist Women's Group), who called for women of all tendencies and ideologies to work together in support of the government's war effort. The major anarchist women's organization, Mujeres Libres (Free Women), refused to unite with the Mujeres Antifascistas, accusing them of hiding, beneath an apolitical veneer, their communistic character. The activities of the Mujeres Antifascistas included gathering clothing and supplies for refugees, organizing teams of women to replace military men in their jobs (of course with the understanding that the women would relinquish the jobs upon termination of the war), operating child care centers, and providing a health care and conversation service for soldiers. In the writings of the organization were many references to women's traditional functions as mother, wife and daughter, and they never questioned the sexual division

of roles. (Gómez 73-76.)

Mujeres Libres was not formally recognized by the official organisms of the anarchist movement, which considered there to be only one struggle common to both women and men; nevertheless, the feminist organization continued in its efforts toward emancipation by opening libertarian schools, and by taking a special interest in sexual reforms such as contraception and abortion rights. They were also active in the fight to eliminate prostitution, opening shelters for women trying to escape from their lives as prostitutes. (Gómez 76-78.)

On the rebel zone, led by General Francisco Franco, women formed a part of the militarized society within the organization of the Sección Feminina de Falange. The objective of the Falangistas was to impose order over the country by purifying the nation of all heretical and unpatriotic elements, and they received the support of the Catholic church in their efforts. Directed by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the former dictator, the Sección Feminina had as its priorities dedication and submission, in order to complement the virile work of the male Falangistas. The duties of these fascist women included assisting the wounded, caring for children, and operating military uniform workshops such as the "Lavaderos del frente" (Laundryworkers of the front), who followed the soldiers to clean and mend their clothes. Other branches of the Sección Feminina, such as the Social Auxiliary, gave classes in

hygiene, domestic and kitchen decorating, and provided prenatal and child care centers. (Gómez 79-81.)

With the victory of Franco's army in 1939, when Capmany was 21 years old, came the defeat of women's emancipation and the propagation of the feminine ideal as subservient wife and mother, queen of domesticity. It was during this time of harsh political and economic policies that Capmany attended the University of Barcelona and began her career as a teacher. The laws under Franco's regime were clearly misogynist: the married woman was viewed as a perpetual minor, a ward of her husband. Divorce laws were repealed and legislation was enacted that restricted married women from working outside the home, except for those employed in domestic service.

The women who had been active in the Republican movement were forced into exile or jail; one author estimates that 30,000 political women were detained in prison, and those women condemned to death numbered close to a million, (Di Febo). Women who were found to be part of the resistance movement that intensified as of 1945 were also sentenced to 20-30 years in jail. Besides the women who occupied the prison cells, there was another type of woman active in the resistance who served a solidarity/assistance function. These were the wives, lovers, mothers, sisters, and daughters of those anti-Franquistas detained in prison. These were the people who organized "pro-presos" (pro-prisoner) groups that assisted

families of the politically detained, gathered signatures, presented petitions, and sensitized public opinion about the inhumane prison treatment or about the protests of the imprisoned. (Sardá 91-92.)

From this political activity of women came a few clandestine organizations, the most prominent being the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres (Women's Democratic Movement), sympathetic to the communist and socialist parties. During their meetings they discussed issues specifically affecting women, such as birth control, as well as general political issues of the times. Their actions ranged from solidarity with political prisoners and collaborative efforts with other democratic groups, to neighborhood meetings about women's problems. In the 60's the MDM began operating under the legal cover of a housewives' organization, bringing the group to a crisis concerning the conflict of interests between their political alliances. The group suffered a split and disbanded in Barcelona, but maintained its existence in Madrid and other areas, losing its feminist focus to work more closely with the male-dominated communist party. (Sardá 93-94.)

In 1966 Capmany wrote La dona a Catalunya (Woman in Catalonia), in 1970, El feminismo ibérico (Iberian Feminism), and in 1971, De profesión: mujer (By Profession: Woman), all openly feminist works to which one author attributes the quality of being "cornerstones of feminism in Spain," (Pérez 142).

1975 saw both the death of Franco and the pronouncement by the United Nations of The International Year of the Woman. 15 days after Franco died, the first national reunion of Spanish feminists, the Jornadas Nacionales por la Liberación de la Mujer (National Women's Liberation Days), were held semi-clandestinely in Madrid with 500 women in attendance. In May of 1976 the I Jornadas Catalanes de la Dona (First Annual Catalán Women's Days) were held in Barcelona; in spite of the meeting being designated for Catalán women, 4000 women from all over the country attended. During these congresses two conflicting points of view that were to polarize the feminist movement in the following years became apparent: that of maintaining a strictly feminist platform independent of political and union organizations, termed *radical feminism*, and the position that defended feminist issues while at the same time supporting the general struggle toward the establishment of a democracy in Spain, termed *class-struggle feminism* or *socialist feminism*. These two conferences marked a period of expansion in the Spanish feminist movement, which saw a proliferation of many new feminist groups, notably the marxist-feminist political party Partido Feminista, founded in 1979 by Lidia Falcón, and legalized in 1981. (Folguera 118-120.)

The first Spanish elections in 41 years were held on June 15, 1977, with all parties offering concessional policies to women. In 1978 a new Constitution was developed

and approved which outlawed any discrimination, especially in the workplace, on the basis of age, race, sex, religion, or opinion. The document also established the equality between women and men in marriage, followed up by a divorce law which legalized divorce again for the first time since the Spanish Republic. The abortion law of 1985 allows abortions only in the cases of grave danger for the physical health of the woman, violation, or malformation of the fetus. The pro-choice fight is still going on in Spain today. (Folguera 120-121.)

In 1983 the Instituto de la Mujer (Women's Bureau) was created with the objective of defending and developing the anti-discrimination policy of the Constitution. This new form of "institutionalized feminism" has been criticized by more radical feminists for its limitations prescribed by the political party that established it, PSOE (Partido Socialista-Obrero de Espana). Nevertheless, the bureau has been active in many campaigns for the defense of women's rights. (Folguera 127-128.)

The contemporary feminist movement in Spain seems to have "caught up" with those in other countries, a situation illustrated by a pamphlet published by the Instituto de la Mujer, which lists over 600 women's organizations.

(Folguera 126.) The Spanish feminist movement continues to be characterized by a non-antagonistic split, existent in the movements in other countries as well, between Radical and Socialist feminists. According to Rosa Pardo, the

contemporary feminist movement in Spain suffers from a lack of diversity:

Un riesgo que yo creo que tiene en este momento el MF [Movimiento feminista]... es identificarse casi en exclusiva con las mujeres de la clase media urbana, tanto en sus alternativas como en su composición. Es urgente que el MF inicie un periodo de reflexión, debate y acción política que permitan el acercamiento a sectores más amplios de mujeres... todo esto con el objetivo de universalizar situaciones... que objetivamente favorecen al conjunto de las mujeres. ...la articulación de la lucha contra el clasismo y contra el sexismo es un objetivo fundamental del MF hoy pero no es tarea fácil....

I believe that the FM [Feminist Movement] is running the risk right now... of identifying itself almost exclusively with women of the urban middle class, as much in its alternatives as in its composition. It is urgent that the FM initiate a period of reflection, debate, and political action that permits the approach to wider sectors of women. ...all this with the goal of universalizing situations ...that objectively favor the union of women. ...the articulation of the struggle against classism and sexism is a fundamental objective of the FM today, but it's not an easy job....

(p. 139.)

These words echo those of many other feminists, and point towards a hopeful future of multi-issue platforms of the women's liberation organizations.

Women active in the feminist movement often contribute great works to literature, as is the case with Capmany. Spanish feminist literature as a movement has only existed during the last fifty years or so, although there were some isolated authors who wrote specifically feminist works before this time, such as Emilia Pardo Bazán, and scholars have been able to trace a feminist tradition that was carried on by some Spanish authors. Until relatively recent years, however, Spanish literature was dominated by men in all aspects, excluding women writers from professional

recognition. During the post-war era a number of women novelists exploded onto the scene with serious works dealing with issues relevant to the socio-political environment of post-war Spain. This is the literary generation to which Capmany belongs, one which flourished in spite of all the factors against it.

Under Franco's rule, Spain suffered a cultural crisis; all "subversive" writings were confiscated and destroyed, which included anything tainted with liberalism, realism, or experimentalism. The only foreign books to survive were those written by fascists. Everything printed in the country was censored by three censors-- moral, religious, and political-- although there officially existed no censorship. "Its semi-secret nature made it more formidable; simply turning a manuscript over to the euphemistically named Servicio de Libros (Book Service) required courage, for the author of a work deemed subversive might be summarily imprisoned," (Pérez 91.) The dire economic condition of the country made it impossible for any writer to make a living solely by writing; few people had money to buy books or time to read them.

A phenomenon similar to the abundance of quality women writers in the post-war generation is now occurring during the post-Franco democracy. These contemporary women novelists, of which Capmany is included also, are dealing with issues that had previously been censored-- such as female sexuality and lesbianism-- and are united by a common

"tendency toward subversion," (Zatlin 30.) The political structure may legally give women writers freedom to express what they choose, but the social constraints and expectations of a very conservative era still linger on. Although there exist a few small companies dedicated to publishing feminist work, distribution is limited, making it difficult to find Spanish feminist literature in stores.

Published in 1982, first in Catalán, then translated into Castilian in 1984, La color más azul is Capmany's brilliant, rich novel that explores many issues that Socialist feminists are concerned with. The novel begins with the separation of two best friends, Oliva and Delia, both aged fifteen in 1939. Delia flees Spain with her working class, communist parents, leaving Oliva to remain in Barcelona with her upper middle class family. Their lives take vastly different courses; Oliva marries a wealthy young man and settles down into the lifestyle of a bourgeois wife and mother, while Delia's life as an exile takes her to France, Poland, and finally Mexico. Oliva soon becomes dissatisfied with her life, leaves her husband, and begins a successful career as an actress, eventually becoming a symbol of freedom for Catalán people. Delia's life is a constant struggle filled with hard work and insecurity; she marries a self-destructive alcoholic who eventually leaves her, at which point she literally falls into the arms of a rich man who gives her the kind of life she always wanted. The secondary characters are equally captivating: Oliva's

aunt Remedios is a teacher and active in the Republican fight for democracy; an ex-classmate and friend of Oliva's, Bel Puig, is a successful novelist and center of an intellectual clique; and Delia's mother, Pepa Albertí, is a strong, independent woman who protects and cares for her family, yet also defies socially-contrived gender roles.

Written in epistolar form, as letters exchanged between the co-protagonists and the people that touch their lives over the course of thirty years, the narrative is claimed and manipulated by the characters' own voices. This device allows for a view into the characters' thoughts, emotions, and belief systems, exposing the effects of society's oppression upon the individual. Capmany's characters are a complex blend of positive and negative qualities who all undergo an evolution of personality which makes them highly believable. La color más azul is definitely a women-centered novel, with the development of female characters into realistic examples of women dealing with social oppression by fighting it as heroines, or by internalizing it as victims.

CHAPTER ONE

There are several topics which have provoked discussion and debate among Socialist and Radical feminists, and which Capmany deals with in her non-fictional work. Indeed, it is precisely the diversity of topics covered in these books that makes it a challenge to classify her into any pre-existing feminist tradition (i.e. Radical, Marxist, or Socialist). Her books would be ideal texts for an introductory Spanish women's studies course, if one existed, such is the breadth of her vision. Some of the topics she covers include: the search for the origins of the inequality of the sexes, the history of the women's movement as a whole as well as in Spain, and literary representations of women, among others.

In two of her non-fictional books, De profesión: mujer, 1971, and El feminismo ibérico, 1970, Capmany deals directly with the topic of the social class of women by examining how social class has prevented the unification of feminists, and more importantly, how social class determines the form that oppression takes in each individual woman's life. She calls for a transformation of society and a sexual revolution in which all women may overcome the subordination forced upon them by incumbent powers.

Capmany attributes the defeat of women by patriarchy to the biological liberation of men which has permitted them to establish laws throughout the centuries that subordinate women. The biological liberation of men takes the form of

brute strength and freedom from the burden of reproduction. With the establishment of the bourgeoisie and the consumerist society, women's condition took a giant step backward, because these changes brought with them "...el concepto irrevocable de la familia/ the irrevocable concept of the family," (El feminismo ibérico, p. 21.) Capmany adamantly states that it is not a natural condition of women to be subordinate to men, but that sexual inequality derives from the social and political structures in which we live.

According to Marxist principles, which Socialist feminists use as a basis for their theories, the introduction of the private ownership of property into society, otherwise known as the capitalist system, established the split between social classes based on economic factors. By their ownership of the means of production, the bourgeoisie have rights to the profit gained by the sale of the products, and from this profit they pay the workers, or proletariats. The automation of production established by the Industrial Revolution caused great unemployment, creating a surplus labor force which allowed employers to pay low wages to the workers who were afraid to strike or quit.

While the Industrial Revolution caused the grand entrance of women into the work force because of economic necessity due to high unemployment, it also separated life into public and private worlds, with great implications for women's roles in society. The idea of the separation of

public and private spheres is an important one in feminist theory, and one which Capmany addresses in her work. In De profesión: mujer she writes: "La situación de la mujer puede ser resumida del modo siguiente: Su intervención en la vida pública es mínima/ Women's situation in Spain can be summed up in the following manner: her intervention in public life is minimal," (p. 43.) Public life is primarily centered around paid work, but also includes such areas as politics and education, while private life is centered around the home and family.

Prior to capitalism, and in its early stages, the family household as a whole was the basic economic unit for the production of goods and services. All family members, including women and children, contributed to the maintenance of the household. By the nineteenth century, however, the family had been stripped of its many productive functions and the development of the factory system, together with increasing industrialization, had established the economy and the family as separate spheres. (Brittan and Maynard, 1984, p.15)

The private sector is essential to the capitalist system because it is there where the labor power is produced, not only literally, as in the reproduction of more workers, but also in the sense that it is there where the laborer receives the care-- food, shelter, personal expression-- that enables him to go out into the public world and produce capital. While men freely occupy both spheres, women, because of their reproductive functions, are primarily limited to the private sector in order to care for children and household. Thus, women labor in the home for no wages other than their maintenance, and can be thought of

as being exploited by their husbands as a type of slave labor. This is another factor that keeps workers' wages low, because the proletariat does not have to be paid in order to be able to afford the services a wife provides for free. By giving women few alternatives for their survival other than marriage, the capitalist system insures male control over their reproductive capacities.

Capmany points out how Spanish female intellectuals hardly ever speak out in public about social or political issues, but during interviews demonstrate "elegante discreción, suelen hacer referencias a su marido y a sus hijos/ elegant discretion, and tend to make references to their husband and children...." (De profesión: mujer, p. 43.) She discusses how women are shut out from higher-order jobs in more stratified careers such as law or medicine, and are "tracked" into lower-paying secretarial or nursing jobs with less prestige and power.

Tanto es así que no nos sorprendería lo mas mínimo si en un día no muy lejano, en toda oficina pública, la relación exterior estuviera totalmente ejercida por el empleo femenino, y el hombre reserve... la dirección no visible de toda empresa.

Such is the manner of things that it wouldn't surprise us in the least if one day in the not too distant future, in every public office, the exterior relations were handled by female employees, and the invisible direction of all business will be reserved for men.

(De profesión: mujer, p. 44).

Capmany places supreme importance upon work and political activity as ways for women to have influence in the public sector. When work was separated from the home,

domestic duties were reduced to cleaning and cooking, which diminish as the prosperity of the household increases. The women who can afford to hire domestic help are left with nothing to do but have babies, and have no power or influence over public life. By getting involved in political activity, both women who do and don't work may change the social structure that prevents them from attaining a satisfying career. This view is what most distinguishes Capmany as a socialist feminist, and is illustrated by her analysis of a certain public incident which seemed of such importance to her that she discusses it in both De profesión: mujer, and El feminismo ibérico.

In the magazine, La Voz de la Mujer, there appeared a criticism by Celsia Regis of a recently published (1925) book by María Cambrils titled Feminismo socialista. In the criticism, Regis accused Cambrils of utilizing feminism as a vehicle for political propaganda because of Cambrils' assertion that socialism was most concerned with the protection of women's rights. Regis argued that the partisanship of Cambrils alienated many women from the feminist cause, therefore impeding a desirable "united front" of women without class or party distinctions. Cambrils responded with an open letter in which she accused the organization "Unión del Feminismo Español," which published La Voz de la Mujer, to be just as political as she and to defend-- under the guise of apoliticism-- the interests of the most conservative elements of society.

Capmany clearly takes the side of Cambrils in her discussion of the necessarily political nature of the feminist struggle, as well as in her exposure of the politics of the bourgeois feminists in Spain's not too distant history.

In the days of the Cambrils/Regis debate, women's groups in Spain were often organized by churches and thus, according to Capmany, were under the influence of ecclesiastical authorities. The women who took part in such groups were primarily from the bourgeois class, and were only willing to take up the feminist cause to the extent that it did not endanger their class privileges. It was all too common for these women to preface their speeches or writings with a type of assurance to men that it was not women's goal to usurp the inherent and unquestionable masculine power, but that they merely wanted certain rights in order to perform their feminine functions (i.e. housework and child-rearing) more effectively. The rights they requested were access to education and labor, but only such disciplines and employment that would not destroy their fragile femininity. These bourgeois reformists were essentially affirming the very social order that, unrealized by them, was oppressing them and keeping their intervention in public life minimal.

While bourgeois women are assigned their class status on the basis of their familial relations to bourgeois men, proletariat women are defined as such because they hold a job and earn wages. Even though women hold a job outside of

the home, they are not relieved of their traditional responsibilities as wife and mother; thus, they suffer a double exploitation, in both the public and private sectors of society. Because it is always assumed that a woman is married, her wages are considered supplemental to the family income, and she occupies a space in the sub-proletariat or surplus labor strata, the members of which, if they do receive employment, will earn much less than first-order proletariats.

La situación de la mujer obrera, querámoslo o no, no es la misma que la del obrero.El obrero recibió muy mal la continuada afluencia de la mano obra femenina, que rebajaba los sueldos, y que en definitiva destruía las conquistas de los trabajadores, tan duramente logradas. Jamás al obrero empeñado en su lucha sindical se le planteó este hecho tan simple: que la mujer era un obrero más.

The situation of the female worker, like it or not, is not the same as that of the male. ...The male worker took the continued affluence of the feminine work force very poorly, because it lowered wages and destroyed the hard won conquests of the workers. The male worker involved in his union struggle never realized this simple fact: that a woman was just one more worker.

(El feminismo ibérico, pp. 90-91.)

Although the working woman is the only woman who can demonstrate, by her laboral capacities, the equality of the sexes, she finds herself exploited by the bosses, receiving inferior pay, and depreciated by her male co-workers as an intrusion in the workplace. And the worst of this is that she may also consider herself an intrusion, and hope, along with her husband, that someday they may be able to do without her salary so that she can return full time to her

wifely and motherly duties as properly befits a woman, (El feminismo ibérico, p. 91.) What is happening in this situation is an internalization by the proletariat woman of a morality that has nothing to do with her, but belongs to the bourgeoisie.

Cuando los pensadores burgeses han querido definir a la mujer, lo han hecho según el modelo que se les ofrecía de inmediato. La mujer burguesa, con la cual compartían su vida, les ha parecido la esencia de la feminidad, y a partir de su apariencia, de sus ignorancias, de sus represiones han definido el sexo femenino. Lo han hecho sin contar, desde luego, con la ingente masa de mujeres que ellos apenas han entrevisto en uno de sus viajes al pueblo, en una de sus escasas visitas a los arrabales, en una de sus escapadas a los burdeles. (De profesión: mujer, p.263.)

When the bourgeois thinkers wanted to define woman, they did so according to the model that was immediately offered to them. The bourgeois woman, with whom they shared their lives, seemed to them the essence of femininity, and from her appearance, ignorances, and repressions the feminine sex was defined. They did this without counting, of course, the enormous mass of women that they had hardly glimpsed during one of their scarce visits to the slums, or in one of their escapades to the bordellos.

As wives, daughters, and mothers of bourgeois men, bourgeois women have no economic need to go out into the marketplace and work; indeed, it is considered unseemly for a woman of upper class status to labor like a common, dirty proletariat. Thus, bourgeois women have no money of their own, and they are limited to the private sector of society, having no intervention in public life of their own power. That is not to say that the bourgeois woman is not a public figure, for she is commonly represented in the media and literature, but always with the qualities deemed appropriate for her by the great male thinkers: corporal grace, moral

discretion, and common sense. Capmany comments through the voice of a 1911 feminist in "Cartas impertinentes": "Ya me dirá si existe algo importante en este mundo que se haya hecho con gracia corporal, con moral discreción y sentido común/ Now let's see if they can tell me that there exists something important in this world that has been accomplished with corporal grace, moral discretion, and common sense," (p. 40.) Because the economic situation of bourgeois families is such that they can usually afford to hire cheap domestic labor, the bourgeois woman finds herself with no appropriate activities other than acting as a showcase for her family's wealth by shopping and socializing. She does not act, she represents. Possibly her most important function in life is to reproduce more bourgeois men (heirs) and to pass on to her children the very values and morality that have kept her in a marginalized position in society.

Fortunately it was the bourgeois women's realization that even though members of the bourgeoisie, they didn't possess any characteristics of their class (namely, capital and influence), that moved them to take up the banner of feminism. Obviously, their concerns as feminists had little to do with those of the working-class feminists, who focused their demands on equal labor rights. The bourgeois feminists never concerned themselves with labor issues other than to organize philanthropic-type activities (such as theater or operatic performances) in order to provide for their underprivileged sisters an opportunity to rise above

their misery, if only for an evening. This, along with other actions and attitudes, belied the intent to save the female proletariats from the evil of working, rather than to improve women's labor rights; which translates into the imposition of bourgeois morality onto the working class, to whom it serves no purpose other than providing an all-encompassing oppression.

In Capmany's estimation, the fight for sexual equality in the workplace is the optimal place to focus the feminist struggle because it provides concrete results that will affect society on many levels. She also warns that unless feminists fight for their rights on all battlefields, political, social, and moral, the changes in the social structure necessary for equal rights will never come about. This is a call for all feminists to rise above their class differences in order to bring about social revolution.

CHAPTER TWO

In La color más azul, Capmany illustrates the Socialist feminist principles discussed in her non-fictional books through the creation of exemplary characters. While the co-protagonists of La color más azul, Delia and Oliva, are representative of the typical proletariat and bourgeois experiences, the secondary female characters, Remedios, Bel, and Pepa Albertí, absolutely defy class constraints. Some of the major factors in these women's lives are the public/private dichotomy, internalized oppression, class consciousness, and political activity, women's issues that Capmany emphasizes in her non-fictional feminist work.

The author chooses an ultra-liberal school as the setting in which the co-protagonists meet, and which calls to mind her remembrances of the preparatory school she attended. It is at school where Victoria Oliver meets some of the friends she will have for life, and is first called "Oliva" by her best friend, Delia Marcet. One of their classmates reflects upon their school in a letter to Oliva, saying,

Supongo que si tu padre no hubiera sido un hombre liberal, ...tú y tu hermano no hubierais sido nuestros compañeros de instituto. Un instituto que no era vulgar, es cierto, un instituto tan nuevo y tan avanzando que huía de la vulgaridad de los institutos nacionales, donde los chicos de casa bien iban solo a examinarse.

(p. 57.)

I suppose that if your father hadn't been a liberal man, ...you and your brother wouldn't have been our classmates at school. The school was uncommon, for sure, it was a school so new and so progressive that it escaped the vulgarity of the state schools, where the rich boys went only to take the tests.

It took a school with a liberal atmosphere, the kind that was only allowed during the Republican era, to bring two girls from such different walks of life as Oliva and Delia together. Oliva's father is a prominent doctor, and she lives in a big house in the richest sector of town. Delia later writes to Oliva,

Yo, al principio, no te tenia ninguna simpatia, porque se te notaba mucho que eras una chica rica, por la manera como vestias, porque ibas limpisima, se notaba que te bañabas cada dia, porque los profesores tenian hacia ti un asomo de deferencia sólo perceptible para nosotros, los envidiosos. (p.120.)

At first I didn't like you at all, because it obvious you were a rich girl by the way you dressed, it was obvious that you bathed every day because you were always so clean, and because the professors always demonstrated a hint of deference to you that was only perceptible to us, the envious.

Delia's family, on the other hand, is working-class poor, and her parents are politically committed to the Communist party. The two girls begin their friendship at age 15 based on intellectual interests; Delia reminisces in a letter to Oliva: "Descubrimos entonces que nos gustaban los mismos versos, que leíamos las mismas novelas, y también descubrimos que nos gustaba escribir,/ We discovered back then that we liked the same poetry, that we read the same novels, and we also discovered that we both liked to write," (p. 120.) Later their relationship would acquire all the characteristics of a typical teenage friendship: the sharing of secrets, crushes, and the inevitable love triangle.

Oliva and Delia seem to be infatuated with each other precisely because of their differences. Delia admires

Oliva's self-assurance and security that financial stability provides, while Oliva is fascinated by the "mysteries" of Delia's house. Oliva especially respects Pepa Albertí, Delia's mother, and frequently tells Delia, "Tu madre es extraordinaria,/ Your mother is extraordinary," (p. 33.) Oliva admires the political passion of Delia and her family, and a couple of times declares that she will also leave the country if the fascists take over, declarations met only with Delia's derisive laughter or a cold dismissal by Delia's grandmother. Each girl esteems in the other what they feel their life lacks: for Delia it is security, for Oliva, integrity. The closeness of the girls' bond is evident by the intensity of emotion expressed in their very first letters after their separation. Oliva writes to Delia:

Me he pasado la noche
llorando. Lloro de pena,
de rabia, de vergüenza,
de miedo. ¿Por qué más
se puede llorar? Dime.

I've passed the night cry-
ing. I cry from pain, fury,
shame, fear. For what more
can one cry? Tell me.
(p. 11.)

Delia writes to Oliva with such a wistful longing for times gone by that it borders on the romantic. These initial letters have a similarity in tone and are marked by each writer's sense of confusion and loss that is reinforced by the rigid form Capmany uses. First she presents five letters writted by Oliva, then appear exactly five letters by Delia. This grouping of letters by each individual which are not exchanged but filled with despairing comments about not knowing where to send them or having no address at which

to receive them, conveys the strong sense of isolation that the girls are feeling. If each girl represents the women of their social class, then the school can be thought of as the type of society idealized by Socialist feminists, in which class differences will be broken down and women will be brought together on the basis of their true human qualities. The society under the Republican government was aiming for this ideal, but was destroyed by the forces of fascism that were led by Franco.

After the first two sets of five letters, Capmany breaks the unifying tone and sends her two co-protagonists off on their widely diverging personal paths with these words from Oliva's pen:

Querida Delia. Tengo la piel morena, y mi pelo ha adquirido un tono rubio; me miro in el espejo y veo a una mujer; sí, a una mujer.... Cuando me miro en el espejo sonrío, porque me gusto.

(p. 36.)

Dear Delia. My skin is tan and my hair has acquired a lighter tone. I look at myself in the mirror and I see a woman; yes, a woman.... When I look at myself I smile, because I like what I see.

From this point on, Oliva succumbs to her family's pressure to settle down and start acting as a woman of her class ought to. She becomes engaged to Oriol Baixas, a wealthy young businessman, and concerns herself with little else than her social and love lives. She quits studying, and decides not to take her final exams; she informs Delia: "Ahora dice [mamá] que el próximo curso me mandarán a un colegio donde enseñan a llevar una casa y hacer vida de sociedad./ Now [mother] says that next semester they'll send

me to a college when they teach you how to manage a household and maintain a social life," (p. 81.) The pressure to be a carefree, pretty young woman of high society seems to actually cause Oliva to act less responsible and mature than she did when she was best friends with Delia. This frivolity is reflected in a letter to Delia in which her thoughts appear to be scattered:

Las cosas vuelven a ser como antes, pero no exactamente como antes. También parece que seamos más ricos. Vamos a misa. A mí me gusta ir a misa. No sé si te contaba que ya llevo medias. ...¿Qué más quería decirte? ¡Ah, sí! Que aprendo a ser feliz y que estoy segura de que llegará a serlo.

(p. 50.)

Things are like they were before, but not exactly like they were before. It also appears that we are richer. We go to mass. I like to go to mass. I don't know if I told you that I wear nylons now. ...What else did I want to tell you? Oh yes! I'm learning to be happy and I'm sure that I will be.

Oriol becomes a prominent figure in Oliva's life; while she tells herself that she loves him, at the same time she is filled with doubts. She asks him in a letter if the thought of being married to each other for life doesn't make him feel like "¿...te pusieran la mano en la boca, con la intención de ahogarte?/ someone put their hand over your mouth with the intention of suffocating you?" (p. 76.) And it's no wonder she feels that way, when Oriol treats her like an overprotective father would treat his child, in accordance with the way the Spanish law under Franco treated all wives: like a minor. While he's away on business he writes to her:

Pero no te preocupes, ratita querida, porque yo tengo la obligación de pensar por ti y por mí. Ya sé que no te gusta que me haya ido tan lejos y además no comprendes las razones de este largo y molesto viaje, de esta estancia abrumadora, sencillamente porque me aleja de ti. Pero un día lo comprenderás, y sabrás que tu Oriol estaba poniendo los cimientos de tu bienestar y del de toda la familia futura, de nuestros hijos que vendrán, si Dios quiere.

(p. 65.)

But don't you worry, my little rat, because I have the obligation of thinking for you and for me. Now I know that you don't like that I've gone so far away and you don't understand the reasons for this long and bothersome trip, for this overwhelming absence, simply because I've gone away from you. But one day you'll understand, and you'll know that your Oriol was laying the groundwork for your welfare and for the welfare of all the future family, for our children that will come, God willing.

Oliva accepts the bourgeois social pressures as desirable, marries Oriol, has four children, and after ten years is so miserable with her leisurely and worthless life that she leaves him. At this point she resumes her correspondence with Delia after the ten-year silence, writing the first letter to her exactly a month and four days after Delia writes the first letter in ten years to her. It's an amazing coincidence explainable only by an emotional connection between the two women that knows no physical boundaries. However, they are not moved to resume their correspondence by a need to communicate with each other, as before, but more by a need to express their thoughts to a perfect audience, one frozen in a time that was the happiest they ever lived.

The letters that Delia writes during the first two years after her family flees Barcelona are filled with stories about their life on the run. They jump off a train

in the middle of nowhere, leaving all of their belongings behind, find work on a farm, then after five days walk to another small town where they receive false documentation and work at a factory. They stay there for six months, during which time Delia becomes romantically involved with her tutor, Noël, who eventually enlists in the French army. Then Delia and her mother move to Brives, the only place where they have any hopes of finding her father, Agustín Marcet, who has a friend with a car garage there. They both get jobs at a dressmaker's shop, and within two months are reunited with Agustín. The family spends a difficult three and a half months there, because Agustín fights often with his comrades about the impending world war, until they move to Toulouse, where Delia enrolls in the University. Life appears to settle down for the family, but then two months later Hitler's troops invade Paris and Delia sends a hurried note to Oliva in which she writes that they are leaving, but she doesn't know to where. In her letters, Delia departs from the updates about their location and situation with comments concerning her doubts about love, and remembrances of good times in the past.

When she resumes her correspondence with Oliva ten years later, she is living with her family in Varsovia, Poland, where she works at radio station, Pepa Albertí works at a factory, and Agustín is a supervisor of a fleet of trucks. Her first letter in 1951 fills in some of the gap from the past ten years; she writes about how she miscarried

Noël's baby, which didn't affect her nearly as much as his death in a concentration camp. Somehow she blames herself for his death, thinking that if she had married him like he wanted to, he wouldn't have gone off to war. She writes: "Durante todos estos años estaba furiosa y todo el mundo era mi enemigo/ During all these years I was furious and the whole world was my enemy," (p. 104.) All it took to pull Delia out of this frame of mind was Mike Czajki, a man she meets at work and with whom she falls instantly in love. During the next 17 years, the only subject of her letters is Mike, her relationship with him, and the conflict between him and Agustín; because she so tragically lost her first love, she clings tenaciously to this one, and she refuses to accept the realities of the relationship and its ramifications.

Delia apparently falls in love with Mike because he is very good-looking; she never writes about what he is like other than to rave about the sound of his voice or the color of his eyes. She writes to Oliva: "Me gustaría mandarte una foto suya..., porque si le vieras, no tendría que contarte muchas cosas/ I would like to send you a photo of him..., because if you saw him, I wouldn't have to tell you much else," (p. 104.) Agustín sees through Mike's attractive exterior and does not like what he finds in his future son-in-law. Delia writes:

Pero a mi padre no le gusta Mike. No hay nada que hacer. No dijo cuando lo

But my father doesn't like Mike. There's nothing that can be done about it. He

conoció, pero yo adiviné todos sus pensamientos y me era tan insoportable que lo hice estallar. ¿Qué pasa? ¿Qué puedes echarle en cara? Y entonces él bajó los ojos entristecido. "Nada --dijo, simplemente no me gusta." Y de pronto dijo, mirándome fijamente: "No es de los nuestros, Delia!" Y entonces no se me ocurrió más que abrazarme fuerte a él, porque él es la persona a quien más quiero en este mundo, pero los dos sabíamos que esto no arreglaría nada.

(pp. 116-117.)

didn't say anything when they met, but I guessed his thoughts and it was so unbearable to me that I exploded: "What's wrong? What can you accuse [Mike] of?" And then he sadly lowered his eyes. "Nothing," he said, "I just don't like him." And suddenly he said, looking at me fixedly, "He's not one of us, Delia!" And then I couldn't think of anything else to do but hug him him tightly, because he's the person I love most in the world; but we both knew that wouldn't solve anything.

Delia suffers from an emotional tug-of-war between her familial and romantic loves, despairing because she thinks she can't have both. Although she and Mike become engaged in 1957, they don't actually marry until 1965, eight years later. She never explains the cause of the delay, but the only incidents from those years that she describes are Agustín and Mike's arguments about politics, economics, and lifestyle, so one presumes that she was paralyzed by her internal conflict of interests. When they finally do marry, Mike insists they do so in a Catholic church, infuriating Agustín, who refuses to attend.

When Delia finally leaves her parents' home she is forty years old. Why is it that even though she has a fairly successful career in broadcasting and translating she chooses a life of dependency, going straight from her parents to a husband? It is because she has internalized the bourgeois morality as desirable, and wants for herself

the kind of life she believes that normal women (unlike her mother) should have. She doesn't value her accomplishments in the public sphere, although she does very important work in public communication, and she doesn't think of herself as someone who can survive alone. Instead she seeks personal satisfaction in her private life, believing the bourgeois myth that women can only find fulfillment through love and family.

Delia throws all of her energies into her doomed marriage, wanting so badly to finally have a "normal" life with a husband and children, that she fails to recognize all that she gives up for it. What she desires more than anything is the security she has longed for her whole life; she believes that she acquires it by marrying Mike and entering "his world," but actually she leaves behind what little security she had by alienating her parents, who had sacrificed all their lives to keep the family together. On her wedding night she writes to Oliva:

He roto todas las ataduras
con mi pueblo, con mis
padres.No se lo per-
donaré nunca, Oliva. No
quiero perdonar. Mi ren-
cor me da seguridad,
¿comprendes?

(p. 148.)

I've broken all ties with
my homeland, and with my
parents.I will never
forgive them for this, Oli-
va. I don't want to for-
give. My anger gives me
security. Do you under-
stand?

Delia's single act of independence is to break away from her parents by entering a destructive co-dependent relationship which never provides her with the security she craves. Exactly two and a half years after her wedding, Delia writes

to Oliva:

Yo no puedo tener hijos; el porqué no lo sé ni lo quiero saber.... No te rías; deseo como no puedes ni imaginarte tener un hijo, si un hombrecito; estoy segura de que así retendría a Mike a mi lado para siempre. Si tuviera un hijo no viviría tan dolorosamente las ausencias de Mike, la certeza de que un día no volverá, que conseguirá pasar la frontera y no lo veré nunca más.

(p. 169.)

I can't have children; I don't know the reason why and I don't want to know it.... Don't laugh; you can't even imagine how much I want to have a son, yes, a little man; I'm sure that this way I could keep Mike by my side forever. If I had a child I wouldn't suffer so much during Mike's absences, living as I do with the certainty that one day he won't return, that he'll manage to cross the border and I won't ever see him again.

Indeed, Delia is more insecure during her marriage with Mike than during any other time. She is obsessed with him, and constantly fears that he will leave her. She writes, "...si no lo tengo cerca, si no lo siento respirar, temo morir/ ...if I don't have him near me, if I can't feel him breathing, I'm afraid I'll die," (p. 148.)

When Delia receives a job as a translator at a convention in Mexico, she believes the trip will save her marriage, especially when Mike says to her in the plane ride over, "[n]unca volveremos a Polonia/ we'll never return to Poland," (p. 199.) But Mike doesn't like Mexico, and during their stay he stops speaking to Delia, going on an alcoholic binge. Finally, when they are at the airport to take a flight back to Poland he pushes her away, says, "¿Crees que es soportable tener al lado a una personita con cara de terror? ...Adiós, Deliauxka/ Do you believe it's bearable to have at your side a little person with a terrified face?

...Goodbye, Deliauxka," (p. 225), and runs away alone to the airplane. Luckily for Delia she is accompanied by her charming host, Ramón Martinell, a wealthy architect and Catalán exile, who takes her in after this shocking incident.

Not only does Ramón Martinell take Delia in, he takes her over, and she is more than willing to be conquered. Finally she has what she desires: someone to take care of her every need so that she doesn't even have to think. She writes that after Mike boarded the plane with both tickets, "...yo me aferré a los brazos de Ramón y perdí el sentido/ I clung to Ramón's arms and lost all sense," (p. 200.) The letters she writes after she becomes involved with Ramón exemplify what is expected of bourgeois women, and she demonstrates a fragility that belies her character-building past.

Ahora creo que ya soy capaz de contar... [lo de mi separación], y Ramón dice que esto me ayudará. Si no hubiera sido por Ramón, ya hubiera desaparecido en un pozo de silencio. (p. 198.)

Now I think I'm finally capable of telling... [the story of my separation], and Ramón says that this will help me. If it hadn't have been for Ramón, I would've already disappeared into a well of silence.

Delia takes on the role of subservient bourgeois wife, allowing the complete transformation of her external self into her previously internalized ideal. It is apparent by her letters that she ceases to think for herself, and has acquired the characteristics of a parrot. She writes,

La dirección que te mando es la de Ramón Martinell.

The address I'm sending you is Ramón's. Ramón says

Ramón dice que es la mía,
pero todavía no me he
acostumbrado. Ramón dice
que conseguirá poner todos
nuestros papeles en regla,
que nos caseremos, ¡vaya!
A mí me da lo mismo, pero
Ramón dice que le gustan
las cosas bien hechas....

(p. 226, my emphasis.)

that it is mine too, but
I'm still not used to it.
Ramón says that he'll man-
age to put all our papers
in order, that we'll get
married,--goodness! It
doesn't matter to me, but
Ramón says that he likes to
have things done right....

By the end of the novel, Delia has completely rejected all
of her parents' values, and the last letter, written by her
to Ramón, indicates just how powerless she has become.

Me he detenido en la calle,
delante de un escaparate
con mi imagen mal dibujada
en el cristal y le he dicho
a mi propia imagen: Tran-
quila, tú no eres nadie.
Nadie espera nada; ni tus
gestos ni tus palabras
tienen ninguna importancia.

(p. 241.)

I stopped on the street, in
front of a store window
with my image poorly drawn
in the glass and I said to
my own image: Calm down,
you are no one. No one ex-
pects anything; neither
your gestures nor your
words have any importance.

Pepa Albertí and Delia, although they spend forty years
of their lives together, are complete opposites. Throughout
her life, Pepa's actions reflect strength, courage and
pride, while Delia wants to deny her past and seeks a
dependent role. Only two short letters written by Pepa
appear in the novel, but she is a prominent figure in
Delia's letters, giving her character the mystique of a
legend. It is Pepa who decides to jump off a moving train
in the middle of nowhere, sure that they will find work in a
small town, and they do. It is Pepa who manages to get
false documentation for her and Delia, and rides an unknown
distance by herself on a bicycle to find Agustín's friend in
Brives. Instead of admiring Pepa for her self-assurance,

Delia is irritated by it, saying, "No he visto nunca una mujer tan poco femenina como Pepa/ I've never seen a woman as unfeminine as Pepa," (p.223.)

Unlike Delia, Pepa is not ashamed of having to work, nor does she desire any more than she has. Delia writes about a conversation between her and Pepa:

Y le dije: "¿Sabes?, cuando era pequeña había una cosa que me había hecho sentir muy desgraciada, y era que tú hubieras hecho de criada en tu juventud." ...[Y ella dijo], "Te hubiera gustado tener una madre como cualquiera de las madres de tus compañeros, ¿no? Yo también había llorado porque mi madre no era como las otras madres del pueblo. Era tan diferente mi madre que llegó un momento en que no pudo resistir y nos plantó a todos." Y entonces me explicó su infancia en la calle formando pandilla con los muchachos del pueblo. Todo menos estarse en casa. ...una casa que parecía invitarte a huir. ...¿Con qué alegría se puso a hablarme de aquella época en que hacía de criada!, porque fue entonces cuando conocí a Agustín Marcet.... Vivieron juntos bastante tiempo, hasta que llegué yo y se casaron.

(pp. 117-118.)

And I told her: "You know, when I was little there was one thing that made me feel very bad, and it was that you had worked as a maid when you were young." ...[And she said], "You would have liked to have had a mother just like any of your friends' mothers, wouldn't you? Me too, I also used to cry because my mother wasn't like the other mothers in town. My mother was so different that the moment came when she just couldn't resist, and she left us all." And then she told me about her childhood in the streets, forming a gang with the neighborhood kids. Anything except being at home. ...a home that seemed to invite you to run away. ...She talked to me about the time she worked as a maid with such joy! It was during that time when she met Agustín Marcet.... They lived together for a long time, until I came along and they married.

Pepa grew up in very poor and unpleasant conditions, and considers the life she has made for herself, a life undesirable by bourgeois standards, to be rewarding. She

wants Delia to be able to make a happy life for herself as well, and encourages her to learn and love. Delia writes:

Mi madre dice que si me enamorara y me dejara querer, la vida sería más soportable. (p. 35.)

My mother says that if I fell in love and let someone love me back, life would be more bearable.

Ya he entrado a trabajar en la radio. ...Mis padres están un poco desilusionados porque les hubiera gustado más que hubiera ido a la universidad o al menos a una escuela especializada.

I've just started working at the radio station. ...My parents are a little disappointed because they would have liked for me to have gone to the university, or at least a trade school.

(p. 116.)

Ironically, it is precisely these two elements of Delia's life that cause her to reject her parents; at school she acquired an upper class peer group that made her desire to be like them, and she uses love as a vehicle to break away from the family.

Pepa Albertí and Agustín Marcet have an egalitarian marriage in which neither one conforms to gender roles prescribed by the capitalist society. When the family is preparing to move away from Brives in 1940, Pepa goes first to Toulouse by herself to find work and get settled, and she does the same thing in 1967, making the trip from Poland to Barcelona before Agustín comes, so the adjustment will be easier for him. This is a responsibility usually taken on by the man in typical marriages, but within Pepa and Agustín's relationship it is more natural for her to do so. Pepa is a far cry from the stereotypically overprotective, pampering mother; instead it is she who forces Delia to be

stoic in frightening situations. Pepa never babies Delia, but is always trying to help her be strong; when Delia tells Pepa that the reason she looks so horrible is because she just had a miscarriage, Pepa laughs calmly and says: "No es nada, reina. Yo he tenido tres abortos, no pasa nada/ It's nothing, princess. I've had three miscarriages, it's no big deal," (p. 103.) Just because Pepa does not display a sympathetic attitude toward Delia's problems does not mean that she doesn't care; on the contrary, Pepa takes great interest in her daughter's life and tries to help her come to her own solutions. But Delia will have none of it. She writes to Oliva in retrospect about a discussion she and Pepa had about her marital difficulties:

Cuando me dijo: "En realidad tú no has preocupado nunca de saber cómo es Mike Czajka." Salté hecha una furia: "Que yo..." Pepa detuvo sabiamente el chorro de mis confidencias; tampoco le han gustado nunca las confidencias femeninas. ...Pero aquel día consiguió que me calmara, y después de haberme beber un té buenísimo..., dejó caer esta sentencia: "Le adoras y te da miedo, pero no le escuchas." Entonces sí que me reí: "Escucharlo, madrecita; Mike no habla, decide." Pepa no me contestó en seguida. Aquella noche, cuando me ibas hacia casa, me anudó el pañuelo, cosa que se había hecho habitual cuando nos despedíamos, y me dijo en voz baja: "Siempre dices que Mike es tu felicidad. ¿Y la suya?"

When she said to me: "In reality, you have never bothered to find out what Mike Czajka is like inside." I jumped up in a huff: "But I..." Pepa wisely stopped my outburst of confidences; she's never really liked feminine confidences anyway. ...But that day she managed to calm me down, and after having me drink some wonderful tea..., she let this statement drop: "You adore him and you fear him, but you don't listen to him." Then I really did laugh: "You listen to him, mother dear, Mike doesn't talk, he decides." Pepa didn't answer me right away. That night, when I went home, she knotted my scarf, something she always did when we said good night, and quietly said to me: "You

always say that Mike is
your happiness. What's
his?" (pp. 223-224.)

For Pepa, love is based upon mutual respect. She and Agustín have a healthy, independent relationship, they are two people living their own lives together very happily; while the relationship Delia seeks is one of co-dependence, two people sharing one life. Pepa and Agustín always respected Delia's individuality, whether she wanted them to or not, and she interpreted this attitude to be one of coldness and distance. She writes,

Siempre he sido una invitada en la mesa de esta pareja. Cuando tenga hijos..., serán una continuación de mí misma; no crearé nunca esta distancia dolorosa que ellos han establecido conmigo.

(p. 149.)

I've always been a guest at the table of this couple. When I have children..., they'll be a continuation of myself; I won't create this painful distance that they have established with me.

Pepa tried to raise her daughter to be independent, think for herself, and love with respect, not possessiveness, but all Delia ever wanted was someone to take over her life for her, and in the end she gets what she wants.

Pepa Alberti is Capmany's example of a working-class woman with such strong political ideals that she sacrifices comfort and convenience to keep her family together in a place where they can freely express their political convictions. She is a woman who has never conformed to society's expectations of women, because her life never allowed her the luxury of doing so, but rather than feeling ashamed of being different, she is proud of her strength.

As a result, Pepa Albertí is one of the only characters in the novel who is happy and at peace with herself.

In the second part of the novel, Oliva breaks a decade of silence with these words to her husband: "Quiero separarme de ti, Oriol. De esto es lo único de lo que estoy segura/ I want a separation, Oriol. This is the only thing I'm sure of," (p. 92.) With this decision she emerges from a depression that was common among housewives in the 1950's (and today), characterized by boredom and lethargy, and remedied by doctors with tranquilizers. In a letter to Bel Puig, Oliva writes about the years following the closure of the institute:

Después viene un largo
período de oscuridad, como
los caminos de los sueños.
Es un camino a través del
cual me fui desprendiendo
de lo que era, hasta tal
punto que ya no sé cómo era
yo, cómo podía haber vivido
una época tan luminosa.
(p. 111.)

Then came a long period of
darkness, like in a dream.
It was a period during
which I shed all of who I
used to be; now it's gotten
to the point where I
don't know how I used to
be, how I could have experienced
such a brilliant
era.

The ambiguity in this passage is significant; it is not clear whether Oliva is referring to the social atmosphere under the Franco regime or to her marriage as "a long period of darkness." Capmany is making a statement about the values strongly promoted by the government and the Catholic church at the time, which pressured women to stay at home and have children. During that time, marriage was considered an institution, a duty one served for the good of society. But for bourgeois women, it was often more like a

prison. For many of these women, the spiritual fulfillment they were supposed to receive by giving birth to and raising children turned out to be a myth, and they relegated the responsibility of child care to their domestic servants, who also did all of the housework. These women, like Oliva, had absolutely nothing to do and frequently became very unsatisfied with their lives. Oliva describes her life in the following manner:

...he hecho minuciosamente mi papel de madre ociosa, que toma el sol por la mañana, que juega a las cartas por la noche, que coqueta con el primero que llega, que la distrae del tedio y que, en el fondo, buena chica, hace el amor con el marido....

(p. 91.)

...I've meticulously played my part as the mother of leisure, who sunbathes in the morning, plays cards at night, flirts with the one nearest at hand, which distracts her from the tedium, and who really, like a good girl, makes love with her husband....

In complete contrast to Delia, who miscarried the baby she didn't want, then could never have children when she wanted them, Oliva enjoys her first pregnancy and adores the firstborn, but at best feels apathetic towards her other three, and more often feels resentful. She looked to Francisco, the firstborn, for salvation from the unhappiness she felt with Oriol, then when Eugenia was born "y [le] dijeron que era pequeña y enclenque y que era una chica, [se puso] a llorar y a llorar hasta que [le] dieron un calmante para que se acabaran los llantos/ and they told [her] that it was small and terribly thin and that it was a girl, [she] started to cry and cry until they gave [her] a tranquilizer to stop the sobbing," (p. 113.) Oliva gives Francisco the

role of her emotional caretaker, but she only sees her other children, a girl and two little ones (boys), as desperately needing her to take care of them. This situation in which she truly is responsible for the well-being of others, in which her actions are of critical importance, is too much for her to bear because the only function she has ever served was to be a symbol for other people.

During the year immediately following the war, Oliva receives letters from friends in prison or in exile who think of her as a symbol of beautiful times in the past. For these people, specifically Octavio Trullols, a teacher with whom she had a personal relationship and who is imprisoned by the fascists, Pedro Simó, a former classmate who enters a monastery after his entire family was killed in the war (an example of voluntary or internal exile), and Delia, it is the physical image and emotional qualities of Oliva that are more outstanding than anything else about her. Capmany emphasizes Oliva's symbolic function in the minds of these three by having them describe Oliva's appearance with almost the exact same words. Delia writes: "Te veo como serás siempre para mí, con las gruesas trenzas colgando, la raya en medio, [y] los ojos inmensos.... / I see you as you will always be, in my mind, with your thick hair hanging down, the part in the middle, [and] your immense eyes....," (p. 31, my emphasis.) Octavio writes, "Me gusta imaginarte cómo eres ahora..., leyendo esta carta, con la ternura reflejada en tus grandes ojos..., las trenzas

colgando y la raya erizada de pequeños cabellos rebeldes/ I like imagining how you look right now..., reading this letter, with tenderness reflected in your *big eyes*..., your hair hanging down and the part bristling with tiny rebellious hairs," (p. 41, my emphasis.) And Pedro Simó writes, "He pensado, ¿qué debe hacer Oliva..., la chica de las trenzas más bonitas del mundo?/ I thought, what must Oliva be doing..., the girl with the prettiest hair in the world?" (p. 56, my emphasis.) These three also write about Oliva in terms of her emotions; in the same letters as quoted above, Delia and Pedro Simó both comment on her propensity for crying, and Octavio Trullols refers to the night she risked her life with Bel Puig's brother, Juan, to clean his house of all incriminating papers in the following manner: "...y cuando me han contado que te habías preocupado tanto para que no se perdiera ni una sola ficha de nuestro diccionario, me he puesto a pensar en ti rabiosamente, con ternura/ ...and when they told me that you bothered so much so that not a single page of our dictionary was lost, I began to think of you hungrily, with tenderness," (p. 40.) The dictionary the two of them used to work on was the least incriminating evidence Oliva and Juan removed from his house, and the word "preocuparse," which in this context translates best to "bother," also means "to worry" and always carries with it that connotation. So Octavio interprets Oliva's heroic action to save his life as one motivated by sheer feminine sentimentality for the days they

used to spend together working on the dictionary project. For these three individuals, isolated from the people and places they love, Oliva represents a happy era when they had the luxury of spending time with a pretty, caring girl; her physical beauty and emotional vulnerability are two aspects of life that these exiles/prisoners of war have had robbed from them.

When Oliva marries, her function in life becomes solely representational. She doesn't work, neither outside nor inside the home, and as far as her children are concerned, she words it best herself: "...he hecho muy poca cosa por ellos, aparte parirlos/ I've done very little for my children besides give birth to them," (p. 111.) Oliva has no money of her own, and is completely dependent upon her husband for all of her material needs. In "Cartas impertinentes," Capmany writes a letter from the perspective of a prototypical bourgeois woman, directed to a proletariat woman, in which she describes what the bourgeois woman's position in society consists of:

Cuando me veas trajeada, telas caras, modelo Dior, calzado italiano, bolsa de cocodrilo, pieles y piedras preciosas, peinada, maquillada, perfumada, en los grandes ceremoniales donde se dan cita política los industriales, los sabios, los teólogos, tienes que comprender que yo no soy más que una vitrina donde se exponen los signos exteriores de riqueza de los dueños del mundo. Yo no

When you see me all dressed up in expensive fabrics, Dior fashions, italian shoes, crocodile-skin bag, furs and precious jewels, coiffed, powdered, and perfumed, in the grand ceremonies where the industrialists, intellectuals, and theologians make their political appearances, you must understand that I am nothing more than a showcase where all the external signs of wealth of the own-

actuó, represento. Nada de lo que hago tiene influencia.

(p. 34.)

ers of the world are displayed. I don't act, I represent. Nothing I do has any real influence.

As a bourgeois wife with no function other than to bear children, Oliva's purpose in life is even further reduced. At least before she married she served as a source of positive thoughts for her friends, as Oriol Baixas' wife she is little more than a decorative fixture. When the opportunity arises for her to take on some real responsibility by caring for her children, she feels threatened and retreats into her own isolated world of tranquilizers and sleep.

After she separates from Oriol, Oliva decides to work as an actress, ostensibly to become financially independent from Oriol, but her inner motivations are not quite so admirable. She writes to Delia:

...si he de serte sincera lo que más me gusta de hacer comedia es que me siento protegida, me siento con el derecho de ser diferente, me siento atendida y feliz porque todo el mundo me quiere. Me gusta decir palabras que me he aprendido de memoria, no tengo que pensar, ¿me comprendes? Nadie puede hacerme daño. Me siento salvada.

(pp. 144-145.)

If I have to be honest, what I like most about acting is that I feel protected, I feel that I have the right to be different, I feel attended to and happy because the whole world loves me. I like saying words that I've learned by heart, I don't have to think, do you understand? No one can hurt me. I feel saved.

Oliva goes from a life that is merely representational to a job that is literally representational; as an actress all she does is repeat words that someone else has written, bringing them to life for the entertainment of people who

can afford the price of a ticket. Even within her new career, which she chose as an act of independence, she is under the control of a man; her agent, Juan Devesa, not only decides for her what roles she will perform, but also becomes her live-in romantic partner and credits himself with "discovering" her. When Oliva wants to do a poetry recital, he tells her to forget the idea, calling it a "solemne tontería/ solemn joke," (p. 145.)

Eventually she becomes romantically involved with a fellow actor, Salvador Xammar, with whom she begins to attend political demonstrations such as the famous miners' strike in Asturias. Although she begins to acquire a reputation as a political activist, she never comments on political issues in her letters except to say, vaguely, "...he de ser libre y quiero que la gente, toda la gente, lo sea/ I must be free and I want the people, all the people, to be free also," (p. 193.) It's obvious that even though she makes public appearances at political events, at first she does so only to be with her boyfriend. As her fame as a revolutionary grows, her political consciousness remains relatively shallow; in 1968 she is invited to appear at a very important festival of Catalán letters, which was also a form of political protest at the time because the public use of Catalán was still outlawed. On her way home from the event, she writes a letter to Salvador in which she reflects upon how she didn't want to be bothered with going, and writes, "Tú insiste mucho y, para convencerme, me dijiste:

'Todo sea por los símbolos, los símbolos también actúan'/
 you insisted very much that I go and, to convince me, said,
 'It is all symbolic, symbols also act,' (p 235.) Before her
 performance she encounters Delia, who she hasn't seen in
 almost thirty years, which greatly affects her state of
 mind; during her recital of Catalán poetry, which, for the
 audience, inspired pride for a nation suppressed by Franco,
 she only thinks about Delia sitting in the audience. For
 her finale she recites from memory the first stanza of "La
 oda a la patria/ Ode to the Country," the banned Catalán
 national anthem, not to make a political statement, but
 because Delia used to quote it in her letters. What seems
 like a grand protest is actually a sentimental dedication to
 her friend.

After consciously rejecting her life as a bourgeois
 wife, in which her functions consisted in giving birth and
 displaying the wealth of her husband, Oliva's position in
 society is still merely representational. As an actress she
 earns success because of her physical beauty and ability to
 give voice to the words someone else has written; and later
 when she becomes a revolutionary symbol of freedom, it is
 only because she has been noticeable in the right places at
 the right times, and is not due to any political convictions
 on her part. Even while her lifestyle does not conform to
 bourgeois moral standards, she continues to be used in the
 same way that bourgeois women are; her lack of effectual
 action allows attributions to be superimposed upon her

person by a public desperate for a symbol to look up to.

In El feminismo ibérico, Capmany writes about the position of women writers in society:

...a lo largo del siglo XIX vemos aparecer lentamente personalidades femeninas que se sitúan a primera línea, casi en plano de igualdad con los hombres. Son las escritoras. ...No cabe duda de que la mujer encontró a través de la literatura la puerta de emergencia de su prisión hogareña.... Pero no lograron influir en el mundo que las rodeaba. (pp. 35-36.)

...throughout the XIXth century we see feminine personalities slowly appearing on the front lines, almost on an equal level with men. They are the writers. ...No doubt women discovered through literature the emergency door from their domestic prison.... But they were not successful in influencing the world around them.

Although Capmany recognizes the failure of women's writing to change the feminine condition, (El feminismo ibérico, p. 54), Capmany has chosen for herself the profession of writing; moreover, the aim of most of her work is to expose and analyze the reality of women's lives in today's society. Her reliance on the words of other Spanish feminist authors such as Campo Alange and Pardo Bazán, as well as international feminist authors such as Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, to support and illustrate her arguments shows how important women's writing has been in her intellectual development. Possibly Capmany was discouraged at the time she wrote El feminismo ibérico by the lack of support and enthusiasm for feminist writing in Spain, but by the time she wrote La color más azul, fourteen years later, her outlook had changed to the extent that she created an influential character in the form of a woman writer: Bel

puig. Bel dedicates her life to writing, becoming a very renowned novelist and role model for young women students and aspiring writers. First and foremost, Bel is a WRITER, and as such she serves a vital function in this novel. Not only does she show the most common way for women to break into and claim a space in the public arena, but she also contains many autobiographical elements from Capmany's life.

Bel Puig is a classmate of Delia and Oliva whose family owns an herb store with shelves that remain empty after the war, but which serves as an underground meeting-place for Catalán intellectuals in the repressive environment of the fresh Franco regime. During the course of her life, she remains the center of this intellectual clique which is a nurturing environment for some, but just a bunch of snobs in the eyes of others. Of course these reunions are clandestine because of Franco's law against more than three people meeting without official permission, and because the intellectuals who are a part of this group write and discuss in Catalán, which is also forbidden by the new regime. These meetings are representative of the political resistance within the intellectual community which would gain momentum until in 1968 it exploded with demonstrations and the convention of Catalán letters in Paris.

After the demise of the Republican-minded institute, Bel continues studying with Oliva under a private tutor (paid for by Oliva's father). In a letter to Delia dated

1939, Oliva writes:

Bel aprovecha el tiempo mejor que yo y dice, riendo, que como es mi padre quien paga la clase, ella, como buena becaria, tiene que hacerlo quedar bien. Lo cierto es que Bel quiere estudiar, aunque se hunda el mundo. (p. 21.)

Bel makes better use of time than I do and says, laughing, that because my father pays for the class, she, like a good scholar, has to make it worthwhile. What's certain is that Bel wants to study, even though the world is being destroyed.

This situation is as short-lived as Oliva's interest in studying, and soon Bel has to make a declaration of allegiance to the new regime in order to be admitted to the university. Oliva quotes her in a letter to Delia as saying, "Jur[é] en falso porque... yo era roja,/ [I] swore falsely because... I was red [Republican]," (p.70.) Bel demonstrates the extreme dedication to her education that allows her to be successful despite the economic obstacles in her path. She knows that her mind is the only factor she has that will enable her to take care of herself financially, and she obviously gains much personal satisfaction from intellectual pursuits. Bel's education frees her from the limits society imposes upon women from her economic background, and allows her to focus upon the most important part of her life: her career.

As store owners, Bel's family falls between the cracks of class distinctions; they are neither bourgeois nor proletariat, but members of the small true middle class of that era in Spanish history. She is poor but not a laborer, an intellectual but not bourgeois. Her lack of

class consciousness allows her to base her self-identity on her experiences and work, and not on society's expectations of women "like her." Although her peer group is made up of bourgeois intellectuals, she identifies herself with the lower classes. She writes,

El otro día Pedro Pujadas me decía sentencioso: "Vosotros, los hijos de la alta burguesía." Imagínase, a mí, a la Bel del herbolario, que se sentía tan pueblo llano frente al hijo del notario, a la hija del médico y no digamos frente a la orgullosa prole del arquitecto.

(p. 151.)

The other day Pedro Pujadas sententiously said to me: "You, the children of the upper bourgeoisie." Imagine, to me, to Bel of the herb store, who felt so small-town plain before the notary's son, the doctor's daughter, and let's not even mention the offspring of the architect.

Bel is proud of her class-less origins, perhaps because of her socialist bent. In a response to a writer who submitted a criticism of her work for her approval, Bel writes:

Una cosa que sí le pido que corrija, es este concepto que flota en su relato de "familia burguesa" referido a los míos, con todos los matices que parece atribuirle. Me gustaría que viera por un agujero la tienda de herboristería y el entresuelo con su balconcito que daba a la tienda. Y mi madre que gritaba: "¡Bel, baja, que hay un señor que no sé qué quiere!" ...Pero quizá tiene razón, no pertenecemos al proletariado: era un pequeño núcleo extraño lleno de olores y remedios, un pequeño núcleo tan frágil que se deshizo en un santiamén.

(p. 213.)

One thing I do ask you to correct is this concept that floats through your piece of the "bourgeois family" in reference to mine, with all the nuances that you seem to attribute to it. I would like for you to peek through a hole at the herb store and the mezzanine with its little balcony that adjoined the store. And my mother who would call out: "Bel, go downstairs, there's a man here and I don't know what he wants!" ...But maybe you are right, we weren't proletariats: it was a strange little nucleus full of smells and remedies, a little nucleus so fragile that it disintegrated in the blink of an eye.

Not only is Bel's background free from class influences, but the life she chooses for herself is one of independence from the typical bourgeois or proletariat experience. Her career as a writer and professor does not require that she be at the mercy of the capitalist market or perform hard labor, and she refuses to marry. The distaste for romance that she displays through her personal decisions also comes through in her writing, which is noted for its unsentimentality and the complete absence of love stories. This rejection of love in both artistic expression and life style is also a rejection of society's pressure upon women to only be concerned with love and marriage; Bel is simply not interested in a family life which would ultimately cause her to be subjugated to a man and cripple her creative power.

Bel is like Capmany in that both women are teachers and writers; also, Bel grew up and attended school in the same type of liberal atmosphere that Capmany did, and Bel is similar to Capmany in her political and intellectual inclinations. With an understanding that Bel is very much an autobiographical character, one incident in the novel takes on greater significance. A young female student writes to Bel to express her disappointment in a women-writers panel in which Bel took part. She uses words that echo sentiments expressed in El feminismo ibérico:

Y fijate que digo todavía,
y lo digo furiosa, porque
llegué al convencimiento

Notice that I still say,
and I say it furiously, why
I arrived at the conviction

de que vosotras, las intelectuales, las escritoras, las novelistas, las poetisas, las, ponle la dedicación que quieras, no haréis absolutamente nada para que cambie una situación injusta, tétrica en muchos casos y absolutamente risible en la totalidad. ¿Y sabéis por qué tuve este sentimiento, mejor dicho, convencimiento, porque comprobé con vuestra abigarrada presencia que era tal como ya me temía? Porque dabais la impresión de ser muy felices manipulando todos aquellos elementos de vuestro discurso: libertad, sexualidad, conocimiento, e incluso moralidad. Y también amor, claro.... Sorpresa por mi parte, debo confesaros: quizá la única sorpresa de la velada fue que fueras precisamente tú la que más habló de amor.

that you, the intellectuals, the writers, the novelists, the poets, the, add on whatever dedication you want, will not do absolutely anything that can change a situation that is unjust, sad in some cases, and absolutely ridiculous in its entirety. And do you know why I had this feeling, or rather, conviction, why I verified with your motley presence that things were the way I had always feared? Because you gave off the impression of being very happy manipulating all those elements of your discourse: liberty, sexuality, knowledge, and even morality. And also love, of course.... I felt surprise on my part, I must confess: possibly the only surprise of the evening was that it was precisely you who spoke the most about love.

(p. 207, my emphasis.)

This interaction appears to be a younger version of Capmany confronting her modern self with ideals she has either not lived up to or forgotten. This self-criticism could be in response to the feeling that her work has not had the impact she hoped it would, or because she has not remained true to her ideal of changing the condition of women through her work. It appears to be an unresolved dilemma for Capmany, and there is no response to the young feminist's letter from Bel.

Both Bel and Oliva are women who have entered the public sector by achieving professional fame and notoriety, Bel as a writer, and Oliva as an actress. Bel's accomplish-

ments reflect the use of her intellectual capacities; her books are well-written and have earned her literary renown and even a nickname, Bel Puig, "la mujer monosilábica/ the monosyllabic woman," (p. 168.) Oliva has become famous by exhibiting her body on stage, by gracing audiences with her beautiful feminine presence, and by merely appearing at controversial political events. Ironically, Bel's contributions to the public arena, which come from admirable intellectual qualities, have much less social impact than do those of Oliva. Capmany may be trying to show that, although some women may be grudgingly allowed into the public sector, they will not be able to improve the situation of inequality between the sexes until there is a great change in the consciousness of society. Until women are esteemed for their mental capabilities rather than for their physical attractiveness, they will not achieve social status equal to men's.

Remedios Codina, Oliva's aunt, is an unmarried teacher who lives with her sister Carmen's family, and is involved in clandestine political activities. Oliva describes how Remedios returns home at daybreak after having spent the evening "quemando ficheros"-- burning files, presumably to eliminate evidence that might later be incriminating. Her life in her sister's home is not easy because she is constantly quarreling with her brother-in-law over political matters. The fact that Oliva's father is considered a liberal by others attests to the radical nature of Remedios'

views, and how passionate she is about them. For example, she refuses to stay in the house while a family member who is a general in Franco's army attends dinner.

The new regime is wary of liberal Catalán instructors, and disperses them throughout Spain; Remedios is sent to a small conservative town to teach and stay out of trouble. She soon arouses the town's suspicions because of her single status, and begins to feel the pressure to marry. When a well-off widower with two children proposes to her, she confides in Oliva about her confused feelings, writing, "[d]espués de estos momentos de euforia, caigo en las más terribles depresiones/ after these moments of euphoria, I fall into the most terrible depressions," (p.83.) She views marriage as inevitable, writing, "[l]as mujeres deben casarse, estoy segura, pero tienen que hacerlo pronto, para no tener que pensar más en ello/ women should marry, I'm sure, but they must do it early so they don't have to think about it anymore," (p. 83.) Knowing that Oliva will probably spill the beans to Carmen, she warns her, "[n]o echés las campanas al vuelo que todavía no hay nada decidido/ don't start ringing the bells, nothing has been decided yet," (p. 82.) Nevertheless, Oliva is so excited about the news that she reads the letter to her mother, who sends a reply to Remedios not included in the novel, but obviously it is so asinine as to incite a furious response from Remedios in which she declares her intentions to never marry. This incident is indeed a turning-point in Remedios'

life, a time at which she decides to break away from her past and make a commitment to herself and her own interests. She writes to her sister,

Todo lo que dices me sirve mucho. Descubro de una vez y para siempre que no tengo nada que ver con vosotros y que debo evitar, sea como sea, parecerme al modelo que me proponéis. ...de pronto, vi muy claro que la única cosa que deseaba con toda mi alma era perderos de vista, lo que me impidió cometer el disparate más grande de mi vida. (pp. 84-85.)

Everything you tell me has helped me very much. I've discovered all at once and forever that I don't have anything in common with you, and that I must avoid at all costs being like the model you propose to me. ...all of a sudden, I saw very clearly that the only thing I desired with all my soul was to lose you from sight, which prevented me from committing the gravest error of my life.

These words are carefully chosen by Capmany to show not only Remedios' rejection of her family, but indeed of the entire bourgeois way of life. Remedios addresses her words to Carmen, but in spite of previously mentioning only Carmen and Oliva, she uses the sex-inclusive collective pronoun *vosotros*, indirectly referring to the family and their counterparts in society. Her decision not to be subjugated by a husband but to devote her energies to her own pursuits is one she follows the rest of her life. Although the long-lasting results of this dramatic event are positive, the immediate effects are painful. The hurt she feels by Oliva's betrayal, the only person in the family she felt close to and trusted, is evident by her stinging words to Carmen, (p. 85.)

Eras tan bonita, pero ahora te has vuelto de una vul-

You used to be so nice, but now you have turned

garidad que aterra. Un día
tu hija será como tú. ¿Qué
será como tú. ¿Qué se
puede hacer para evitarlo?

into a terrorizing vulgar-
ity. One day your daugh-
ter will be like you. What
can be done to avoid it?

When Oliva leaves her husband and also escapes from the family's control, Carmen writes to her, "[h]ija mía, no sé a quién te pareces como no sea a mi hermana Remedios, que no ha hecho nada bien en su vida/ my dear, I don't know who you resemble if not my sister Remedios, who hasn't done anything good in her life," (p.105.) Remedios and Oliva become close again after Oliva's divorce, both becoming a part of the intellectual social set centered around Bel Puig, and one can't help but wonder how much influence Remedios' example had over Oliva's decision.

During an reunion at Bel's family's store Remedios meets a young man named Pedro Giner, and they become passionately involved, scandalizing their friends and even Oliva. From Remedios' descriptions, Pedro's character is sketched out as a dramatic, volatile, and destructive young man, with the emphasis on young. She constantly refers to their age difference in her farewell letter to him. She writes that he entered her life at a time when she was very distracted by the opening and success of her own antique store, and by leaving him she is saving herself. She is repelled by his dependency upon her, a dependency of such high intensity that he threatens to kill himself if she abandons him. She writes to him, "[n]o te he arrancado de tu pozo, más bien tú me sumergirías en él si continuó contigo/ I haven't pulled you out of your hole, rather you

would drown me in it if I stay with you," (p. 126.) Once again her assertiveness for independence is painful. Almost two years after their break-up Pedro commits suicide, and we learn through Bel's correspondence with her that Remedios takes it very hard, giving her store over to Bel to run for her and sinking into a depression that lasts another two years. Capmany chooses to utilize Bel as the narrative vehicle for describing the suicide and everything concerned with it. Her presentation is decidedly unsentimental and straightforward, allowing the reader to objectively judge the situation in a way that Remedios, being swamped by her guilt, could not. Bel writes to Remedios,

Nadie es responsable de nadie; hace mucho tiempo que lo sé. Y, además, un suicida es alguien que te cierra la puerta en las narices: ¿A qué tanto llanto? (p. 159.)

Nobody is responsible for anyone else; this I've known for a long time. Moreover, a suicide is someone who slams the door in your face. What's there to cry about?

Bel assures Remedios that Pedro's suicide wasn't her fault, but that Pedro's problems were his own. The relationship between Remedios and Bel shows the impact that female friendship, often devalued as secondary to marriage, can have on women's lives; as single intellectual women, Bel and Remedios share common interests and form a part of each other's social support systems. Later, when Remedios lives alone in the huge house Oliva acquired from her marriage, she invites an old acquaintance who is living in exile in South America, Consuelo Comerma, to stay in the house during her visit to Barcelona. During her stay they spend many

evenings staying up talking until the break of day, and after Consuelo leaves, Remedios writes in a letter to her, "Aquel corto espacio de tiempo que pasaste conmigo..., dejó más rastro del que te podrías imaginar/ That short period of time you spent with me..., had more of an effect than you could imagine," (p. 219.) Remedios' strength is fortified by her female friendships, to which she turns for human contact and emotional support.

Remedios is Capmany's example of a politically active woman who consciously rejects the bourgeois values of her family, is self-sufficient without relying on the financial support of a marriage, and who balances her life with the emotional contact of her women friends. She overcomes many difficult times in her life, without ever sacrificing her principles, to emerge as a triumphant, independent woman.

CONCLUSION

Through the characters in La color más azul, Capmany explores how the principles central to Socialist feminist theory are personally experienced by women in their life situations. The propagation by bourgeois intellectuals of the ideal woman as the bourgeois wife and mother who needs only to have and raise children for personal fulfillment is directly linked to the capitalist economic system and the privatization of property. Most women believe this ideal to be the way women should be, and have this as their goal; this internalization of a mythical norm is harmful to all women, but especially to proletariats, whose economic situation will not allow them to have that kind of lifestyle. Delia is an example of a woman who embraces a dependent role, in spite of being raised to be independent, because she believes that this is the normal and right way for women to be. Pepa Albertí is someone who never internalized the bourgeois role as desirable, and lives her life free from the constrictions of gender roles. Remedios is an example of someone who, unlike Oliva, consciously rejects the role before it is too late, and devotes her life to her own interests, rather than being subordinated to those of a husband and family.

The Industrial Revolution removed production away from the home and family into centralized locations causing a

separation between public and private spheres. Because women are allowed little to no place in the public sphere, they have no way of changing the political and social structures that keep them marginalized and exploited. For this reason Capmany places such importance upon political activity. She is ambivalent about the public role of women writers, such as the character Bel Puig, who is representational of Capmany herself, because their words can have little impact upon a society who values women only for their asthetic qualities or reproductive functions.

When Delia and Oliva recite "La oda a la patria," the Catalonian national anthem, their memory falters after the first stanza. This is symbolic of the way the liberal Republican government, whose aim was to establish an egalitarian society in which women and men had equal rights, was ended by the wave of fascism that eventually swept the world into the longest nightmare of all time. Oliva and Bel can only remember the very beginning of their country's national anthem, just as Capmany can only remember the very beginning of what was supposed to be an ideal society, because the conservative powers never allowed it to develop into anything more than a beginning. This is why Capmany idealizes revolutionaries, because only through social revolution will the political, social and economic structures that keep women in oppression ever disappear.

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