SOLITARY WOMEN WANDERERS: URBAN STORIES OF RESISTANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH WOMEN'S NARRATIVE

by

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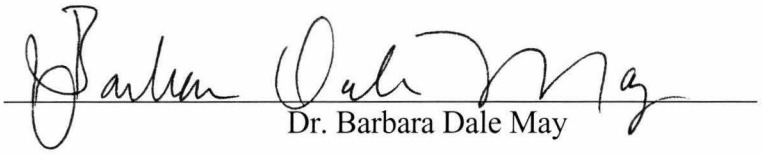
Approved: 
Dr. Barbara Dale May

This project investigates the urban space as a place of ideological resistance in the literary production of Spanish women writers from the 1940s through 2001. I find that as a place in which women protagonists defy cultural boundaries and challenge societal assumptions concerning femininity, the urban space provides women subjects the opportunity to construct their own stories. I argue that by wandering the city space, women call into question their cultural positioning; thereby, reconfiguring their subjectivity in the process. Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical foundations of the project. Through ideas expounded by work in the field of feminist geography as well as the work by cultural theorists such as Michel de Certeau, I define how the city can be read as a place of discursive resistance. Chapter 2 discusses the work of Catalan women authors writing after the Spanish Civil War who center their narratives in the urban center of Barcelona. I orient the chapter around women's literary production during the Franco regime and take into consideration the theoretical implications of the dictatorship on the woman subject.

Chapter 3 examines the work of Carmen Martín Gaite and how her particular employment of the urban space leads the woman subject to explore alternate states of subjectivity, as exemplified in *Lo raro es vivir*. I find that Martín Gaite's use of the urban sphere invites a repositioning of feminine identity. Chapter 4 approaches the later works of novelist Rosa Montero. I this chapter I investigate the positioning of Montero's work within the feminist movement. In addition, through a discussion of *Bella y oscura* and *El corazón del Tártaro*, I analyze how the city space works to reflect contemporary urban life while, at the same time, providing a space in which the woman subject envisions alternative realities. The dissertation concludes with a consideration of the present trends surrounding Spanish contemporary culture and the rise of the urban novel. The conclusion discusses Clara Sánchez's *Últimas noticias del paraíso* as exemplary of the concerns of Spanish women writers at the beginning of the XXI century.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

This project arose out of curiosity about the dynamics of space in the Spanish contemporary novel authored by women. Through my exposure to Spanish contemporary women's writing, I began to contemplate how these authors went about weaving space, especially the city space, into their writing. While the Spanish texts I was reading at the time of this project's inception varied in scope and purpose, each held a common thread: they were written from an urban viewpoint with each protagonist making use of the city in her personal journey.

It is tempting to dismiss this phenomenon as part of the Spanish culture, or just as facile to say that since Spain is, for the most part, an urban culture, it logically follows that most of its contemporary literary production would arise out of an urban center. However, given the city's prominent role in many of these works, questions about the use of the urban space continue to need resolution. From my point of view, Spanish women writers do not merely enlist the city space as a passive backcloth to their work. Rather, the city commands the reader's attention through its active participation in the narrative development. Why do contemporary Spanish women authors find the urban critical to their narrative expression? Or, stated another way: How do Spanish women writers incorporate the city into the development of their protagonists and what are the purposes and results of this incorporation? Essentially, this project began with an interest in the response of Spanish women's imaginative expression of the urban space. What I discover

over the course of this study is that Spanish women writers embrace the city as part of a strategic resistance to ideological forces interested in constraining feminine movement, thought, and experience.

In order to address the previous questions and demonstrate how the city functions as a space of feminine resistance, this study takes a panoramic view of the urban space in works by five Spanish women authors who have achieved wide public and literary recognition. By panoramic I am referring both to time and space. As the scope of this project is large and certain elements of each writer's work will go unmentioned, it will be advantageous to establish at the outset the common ground I find in these texts, and which of their salient characteristics will be considered in this analysis. The ultimate purpose is to center the investigation on how these women writers working from within the cultural milieu of the Spanish peninsula incorporate the city space into their literary creations. To gain this insight, the works considered in this study span a sixty-year period and encompass a wide array of political situations as well as social conditions. Therefore, while the social/political arena shifts, the use of the space of the city remains a constant and cohesive element. The city space flows through each narrative with unique formations and contributions. Despite the differences in the city's presentation and function in each text, certain parallels can be ascertained and analyzed for how they interplay with each author's narrative.

This study's focus is on how the city provides a way for Spanish women writers to challenge and confront certain ideological practices that attempt to confine them to a certain existence. That said, there exists no one way that the city "acts". Rather, the cityscape provides a place for a multitude of resistant practices. On one level, the city

provides voice to the unspoken by giving place to resistance when vocal protest is hindered or impossible. By the same token, the city spurs memory and provides access to the subconscious elements of femininity by allowing for alternate representations of experience to emerge. In each of these manifestations, the city stands ready to assist Spanish women writers to search out and define new identities.

The reason I consider space essential to the understanding of the workings of the texts considered here is because space is a political construct of the everyday reality, influencing actions in identifiable material ways. By examining how a particular space, in this instance the city, we obtain a deeper understanding of how space facilitates dimensions of difference and inequality among human relations. This project concerns itself with how Spanish women writers grapple with the metropolis (derived from Greek 'mother city') as a nexus of power and control. In many ways, the city has represented foreign terrain for women. As Jane Darke explains, "Women know that the city space does not really belong to them. They know that most cities are dangerous, that they may only use particular parts of the city and at certain times, and that even in those spaces where they are permitted to be (as guests) they must comport themselves in particular ways" (89). The women writers considered here not only exemplify the process of women not belonging to the city space, but also demonstrate significant moments of resistance to this embedded exclusion.

The use of the city as a major literary trope is not a new one and there are boundless examples of the city in literature dating back to antiquity. In his Preface to *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (1981), Burton Pike describes how the city is a daunting motif for literary analysis: "As an image, the city is too large and complex to be

thought of as only a literary trope. It has a double reference, to the artifact in the outside world and to the spectrum of refractions it calls into the minds of the author and reader" (i). Pike explains how for the reader the city combines its mythological presence with its material existence, thereby melding the two forces into a system of signs that exist both within and without the actual city. In fact, the use of the 'real' city in connection with the imaginary urban space is found in all the works considered in this project. I borrow my understanding of *city* from Elizabeth Grosz who writes that the city is "a complex and interactive network which links together, in an unintegrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, processes, and relations, with a number of imaginary and real, projected or actual architectural, geographical, civic, and public relations. The city brings together economic and informational flows, power networks, forms of displacement, management, and political organization, interpersonal, familial, and extra-familial social relations, and an aesthetic/economic organization of space and place to create a semipermanent but ever-changing built environment or milieu" (244). The contemporary Spanish women writers of this study blend both the inner (real) and outer (imaginary) world of the city to find an authentic feminine voice and challenge particular social realities. This study focuses on several urban stories in which these authors engage this vast sign—the city—to encounter alternatives to their prescribed conditions. My reading of the city is a gendered one, and I argue that the city must be looked at in terms of its influence on gender construction in order to fully grasp how the women writers of this study use the urban space as a place of protest.

With this in mind, I consider how the city space relates to the specific historical, social, and cultural conditions that these women writers experience and convey through

their individual narratives. At this point I would like to reiterate that this study lays no claim to addressing how all women writers respond to the urban space, but rather relies on its geographic and historic specificities as essential markers. While I draw from critical work concerning women's writing with various national origins, there exists no universal code that pigeonholes women's experience with the urban space into one easily discernable explanation. I believe the strength of the premise of this project lies not only in its specific aims but also in what it is not. The goal of this project in not to analyze and weed out specific inconsistencies and weaknesses of a particular theoretical position. I suggest that through a combination of feminism, modernism/postmodernism, and deconstruction one can begin to understand how the city provides Spanish women authors a place from which to stage their stories of resistance. To achieve such an analysis, I welcome the opportunity to draw from the work of a multitude of contemporary thinkers whose work draws us closer to understanding the various factors that influence every narrative structure. My hope is to avoid the implementation of any given theory of urban space or feminine identity. The intention is to navigate through various theoretical contributions without following any one way avenue of thought. The outcome will, I hope, be a multifaceted approach that will lead to an original analysis of the city and how contemporary Spanish women employ this space in their writing.

Although the framework for my reading of the city space in the novels of the aforementioned Spanish women writers is eclectic in the sense that it draws from the ideas of a number of literary and cultural theorists, it finds solid ground through the deployment of feminist geography. Inspired by the work being done by feminist geographers, I orient much of my interpretation of space in the work done by Doreen

Massey in *Space, Place, and Gender*. Massey centers her argument on the conceptualization of the spatial in terms of social relations. Massey contends that a close examination of social relations points to a larger systematic/ideological problem concerning power: "And since social relations are bearers of power what is at issue is a geography of power relations in which spatial form is an important element in the constitution of power itself" (22). Her argument pulls the concept of space out of a state of quiescence and implicates its role in the dynamics of human relationships, suggesting that it is the connection of space to power and social relations that justifies a new way of 'thinking spatially':

> 'The spatial' then [...] can be seen as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town, the settlement, the household and the workplace. It is a way of thinking in terms of the ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations, and it forces into view the real multiplicities of space-time. It is a view of space opposed to that which sees it as a flat, immobilized surface, as stasis, even as no more than threatening chaos—the opposite of stasis—which is to see space as the opposite of History, and the (consequently) depoliticized. The spatial is both open to, and a necessary element in, politics in the broadest sense of the word. (4)

Massey's position asserts that the dominant order retains a desire to fix and stabilize place (mostly through masculine codes), but that the inherent characteristics of

spatial dimensions counteract this process.[1] This theory supports the way Spanish women writers seek to reveal the instability of space through their narratives. Massey observes that the desire to fix place and space is connected to the desire to fix women in a stable identity. In a number of ways the women of this study confront a system whose historical tendency has been to speak through the establishment of boundaries, containment, and political conquest. The protagonists of this study defy stasis, opting rather for permeable trajectory through urban areas that are embedded with different meanings for the female subject. It is the journey through the urban space, along with the way that journey is conducted and the images that it stirs, that constitutes a subversion of many of the basic principals of control. Resistance, as I intend it for this study, must be understood in its specific context. I refer not to organized rebellion and mass social upheaval. Rather, I point to smaller literary moments of protest, which manifest themselves in many ways from subtle reminders of dissent to loud bursts of opposition to a particular social position. Resistance is often spontaneous and springs from unexpected locations which allows it to exist outside a labeled struggle. This study focuses on how, through literary exploration, the dominant system is deconstructed to reveal its tendency toward control and, indeed, domination over the woman subject. Connected to that, this study also explores alternative places (other than those bound by four walls or ones found on a map) of feminine expression.

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[1] Mona Domosh and Joni Seager in *Putting Women in Place: Feminist Geographers Make Sense of the World* define 'space' as the "three-demensionality of life—to its material form" and 'place' as "spaces that have been invested with meaning", such as *home* or *house* (xxii). I defer to these definitions of space and place throughout this project.

Therefore, it is necessary to understand how space links to the development of feminine identity. Susan Stanford Friedman writes in *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* that "Geographic allegorization [...] is not merely a figure of speech, but a central constituent of identity. Each situation presumes a certain setting as site for the interplay of different axes of power and powerlessness" (23). Grosz also maintains that the organization, orientation, form and structure all point to city as "the most immediately concrete locus for the production and circulation of power" (250).[2] Similarly, Massey addresses the way place and identity interact in her essay 'A Place Called Home?'. The question mark alludes to the essay's objective to reexamine the way one thinks about place and home. In this work, Massey takes particular issue with the way some geographers as well as the culture at large understand the concept of 'being home'. She points out that place is often associated with a sense of belonging and identity and that the desire to feel that one is home is rooted in a need to experience "stability, oneness and security" (167). While she recognizes that the current global economy has left many feeling "placeless and disorientated," at the same time she questions what some have labeled the "postmodern" feelings of dislocation and fragmentation, suggesting that these feelings are more readily related to feelings of loss of control and power over others. In her argument she confronts the idea that dislocation is somehow the new and daunting reality of the post-modern world, causing any number of identity crises. Rather, she contends that place has always been "stretched" beyond its geographic location by dynamic and ever-changing social relations.

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[2] For a more detailed account of Grosz's analysis of the cityscape and power relations see "Bodies-Cities" in *Sexuality and Space*: 241-54.

Massey recognizes that the desire to preserve a place as the locus of nostalgia is a gendered issue. She writes that women in the Western tradition have historically been the ones who "stay behind" and are assigned the role of the preservers of culture, while men are the ones who challenge borders and expand frontiers. While on the one hand this may seem like an obvious observation, there is a need for more thought about the implications of women being charged with the post of embodying a masculine perception of 'home'. So it follows that if women challenge this prescribed role, they are, essentially, challenging the system that binds them.

Massey makes the keen observation that it is the mother who is associated with the preservation of 'home' and 'place' and who was "assigned the role of personifying a place which did not change" (167). Hence, the power relations embedded in a place are the crucial components because a static place means control remains intact. Explaining that women have long been associated with the preservation of place, Massey concludes that "Woman stands as metaphor for Nature (in another characteristic dualism), for what has been lost (left behind), and that place called home is frequently personified by, and partakes of the same characteristics as those assigned to, Woman/Mother/lover" (Massey 10). In addition, there are larger ideological concerns linking gender to ideas of what constitutes 'nation', with women often being connected with the "heart" of a nation. This idea often results in protecting a place from outsiders who pose to threaten internal stability (Domosh and Seager 160).[3]

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[3] Ibid. "Women and the feminine represent the part of nation that is unchanging and 'natural.' In contrast, men and the masculine represent the political and volatile official apparatus of the nation. The nation is imagined as masculine when it conducts its political affairs, fights its wars, and builds its highways; it is imagined as feminine when it protects its children, tends its land, and maintains its values" 161.

This is why the city, in its complexity and expansiveness, can be considered an escape for women. As urbanist Elizabeth Wilson attests in *The Sphinx in the City*, women in the city have represented a certain lack of control due to a relaxing of social control: "Almost from the beginning, the presence of women in cities, and particularly in the city streets, has been questioned, and the controlling and surveillance aspects of city life have always been directed particularly at women. Urban life potentially challenged patriarchal systems" (Wilson 14). Wilson historically traces the 'gendering' of the city as masculine as developing during the Renaissance (approximately 1400-1650) while the countryside was identified as feminine. The emerging result was that once women became a visual presence in the city streets, they were viewed with suspicion because of the challenge they represented to the rationally ordered urban space. Liz Heron has also suggested that the city is a locus from which to challenge gender divisions, writing that "the classic narrative of the city as a new beginning, a stage embarked upon in early adult life, has specific features for women in that very notion of female self-invention defies the nature-culture divide; women being traditionally the stable, fixed point in a universe whose spaces wait to be explored by men, so that woman endures while man transcends" (3). The work by the Spanish women writers studied here invert the idea of woman/mother equating home and demonstrate that the urban space calls into question this assumptive practice.

Massey associates place with identity formation in what she defines as an effort to maintain "a seamless coherence of character, of an apparently comforting bounded enclosure" (168). This connection between identity and place, she argues, has been an attempt to adhere meaning to a place and that more often than not meaning comes not

from an internal history (defined, enclosed space) but rather from what is perceived to exist outside of that space—the Other. Hence, she calls for a reexamination of space taking into consideration the social relations that "stretch across" any given space. This, she explains, expands the meaning of place from one of nostalgia and stasis to one that encompasses a multiplicity of social relations that intersect a given location. In short, social relations, both the ones occurring inside and outside a determined place, lead to identity formation. The fact that "places cannot 'really' be characterized by the recourse to some essential internalized moment," means that the constant flux of social relations makes it impossible, or at least a rare exception, to fix identity to a place (Massey 168). Systems that attempt to stifle this inevitable process are concerned primarily with control and the maintaining of their own access to power. Massey contends that people or systems attempting to define identity of place based on imaginings of the past are really grasping for control she writes that they,

> seek the identity of a place by laying claim to some particular moment/location in time-space when the definition of the area and the social relations dominant within it were to the advantage of that particular claimant group. When black robed patriarchs organize ceremonies to celebrate a true national identity they are laying claim to the freezing of that identity at a particular moment and in a particular form—a moment and form where they had a power which they can justify themselves in retaking. All of which means, of course, that the identity of any place, including that place called home, is in one sense ever open to contestation (169).

In this sense, gender relates to space because men and women internalize different spatial boundaries. Since men traditionally grow up with a need to separate or differentiate themselves from the mother, Massey suggests that this encourages the development of identity based on counterpositioning and boundary drawing. She links gender and space to the foundations of identity formation.[4] This counterpositioning based on the concept of 'other' creates a false sense of enclosure and authenticity, which in turn incorrectly translates into stability. In actuality, Massey contends that it is the fear of change that drives the forces nostalgia for the past. That a constructed identity is tacked onto any given geographical location is a representative symptom of fear of the loss of power. Massey's position that "there is no internally produced, essential past" is actually welcome news for women writers questioning the boundaries of identity and space, because it widens the path of exploration to alternative definitions of self (171). In short, Massey's work calls for a reexamination of how we perceive space and identity. The consequences of Massey's argument are wide-reaching: The refusal to bind identity to any given space via a more global understanding of identity formation, quells the effects of rampant nationalism.

The city is a space that counteracts the stasis of identity in part because of the feelings of fear, disorientation, and uncontrollability that are often present in the urban sphere. However, these emotions have not always been produced in the same way for women as for men. Wilson writes that while

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[4] See also Certeau's discussion of this occurrence in *The Practice of Everyday Life* p. 109-110.

> most of the male modernist literary figures of the early twentieth century drew … a threatening picture of the modern metropolis (an exception being James Joyce) … modernist women writers such as Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson responded with joy and affirmation. In Mrs. Dalloway, Virginia Woolf exulted in the vitality of a summer's morning in London, in the 'swing, tramp and tread; in the bellow and uproar … in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead'. Acknowledging the unstable and uncertain nature of personal identity, she does not find this alarming, as did Kaffa and Musil. (157)

The idea of place as a porous interconnection of social relations rather than a static view oriented backwards into the past connects to the idea of women in the city. Grosz underlines the city's matrix-like qualities, echoing Massey's position that identity has global geographic origins: "The city provides the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies. For example, it links the affluent lifestyle of the banker or professional to the squalor of the vagrant, the homeless, or the impoverished without necessarily positing a conscious or intentional will-to-exploit" (243). While the "will-to-exploit" may not be a conscious occurrence of space relations, Massey's principal argument is based on the idea that the drive to establish identity of place based on nostalgia and preservation is connected to the desire to maintain control. In essence, it is the system of control that the women protagonists of this study challenge with their use of space and with the activities in which they engage. The resistance that the protagonists demonstrate parallels the idea proposed by culture critic Michel de Certeau in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life* which defines resistance as the ability

to "elude discipline" (96). Eluding discipline can be read on a number of levels, and I incorporate the concept here to mean being able to dodge, either physically or emotionally, coercion of participation in a given system of controls. Certeau's work echoes the work done by Massey in the sense that he also contends that what the "ministers of knowledge" fear is the possibility of uncontrollable changes (95-6). Certeau's focuses the means of resistance not in loud theatrics or vociferous protest, but rather examines, and places value in, the subtle ways of eluding discipline. He claims that everyday behaviors, practiced by the anonymous hero, have the ability to defy stagnation or prescribed constraints on existence. Drawing from the ideas developed by Michel Foucault, Certeau states that those lacking a solidified identity actually possess the ability to elude the "reach of panoptic power":

> Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to read. (95)

The idea of the impossibility of being read is an interesting proposal because herein lies the resistance of the various protagonists who inhabit this study. These are women characters who are not easily read within the boundaries of the dominant system. Often they are paradoxical and defy classification and characterization based on what is known about twentieth century Spanish womanhood. So while these women do not fall into an obvious role of social protest, their presence, actions, and thoughts nevertheless point to a fracturing of the supposition that stagnant space defines one's identity. In fact, the presence of these female protagonists in the city poses an interesting conundrum:

Given the dominant system's desire to discipline, how does an urban environment, as the chosen space for these works, reflect, and indeed aid, the project of resistance to control?

The answer may lie in the strategies of resistance put forth by Certeau. By naming a number of different "practices" that can be read as eluding discipline, Certeau delineates the process of everyday protest. One of the primary practices is the act of walking. Walking is for Certeau a "spatial practice" in which one can engage that has the potential to disrupt control of the subject. According to Certeau, the walker "transforms each spatial signifier into something else" (98). In other words, the walker interprets the city, thereby reinventing its meaning with each passage:

> Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects, etc., the trajectories it "speaks." All the modalities sing a part in this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping in through proportions, sequences, and intensities which vary according to the time, the path taken and the walker. (99)

Hence, the practice of walking can be read as a subversive act against systems seeking to control. Just as Massey insinuated, walking can stand as a resistance to the preservation of place through nostalgia. The women considered in this study engage in this practice and as a result resist "discipline" either by using the city as an escape, by navigating the city in order to survive, by experiencing the city as a link to feminine genealogy, by engaging the city in a search for the subconscious, or by inventing stories inspired by the city's presence. Their navigation through the city repositions the system that seeks to bind and constrict access. Each of these acts requires the protagonist to be present within the city space. This presence, the act of "walking around" and determining

one's own course of passage, puts into question the ability of the system to exert total control. Wandering the city space allows for other expressions and experiences, those not sanctioned by dominant culture, to emerge. "The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them. It inserts its multitudinous references and citations into them (social modes, cultural mores, personal factors)" (Certeau 101). Linda McDowell summarizes the concept of urban space in her study *Gender, Identity, and Place*: "Urban space itself is not just the straightforward, legible or scientific space of the urban planners and cartographers. It is also constructed through sets of myths and representations which are given meaning by everyday spatial practices [...]" (168). It is this way of altering the symbolic meaning of spatial organizations in which the women protagonists in this study participate.

Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote in "The Grey Champion" about the city as 'paved solitude' and, in a sense, this study relies both on this Modernist concept of reclusivity in combination with Massey's assertion of place as being defined by social interactions and the power embedded in human relationships.[5] This tension between the need to find one's way through the city by way of solitary roaming and the need to connect with the social influences of the urban space runs consistently through each of the narratives. There is a feeling the narratives that form the base of this study of both resistance to systems while, at the same time, feeling that the belong to the space they are challenging. This phenomenon is explained by Marshall Berman, who studies the effect of Modernity

on the modern subject. I believe that his observation of late nineteenth century reality speaks to the experience of the woman subject in post civil war Spain:

> This is a landscape of steam engines, automatic factories, railroads, vast new industrial zones; of teeming cities that have grown overnight, often with dreadful human consequences; of daily newspapers, telegraphs, telephones and other mass media; [...] of an ever-expanding world market embracing all, capable of the most spectacular growth, capable of appalling waste and devastation, capable of everything except solidity and stability. The great modernists of the nineteenth century all attack this environment passionately, and strive to tear it down or explode it from within; yet all find themselves remarkable at home in it, alive to its possibilities, affirmative even in their radical negations, playful and ironic even in their moments of gravest seriousness and depth. (19)

The 'great' (male) modernists to which Bergman refers felt the need to counteract the disturbing trends of urban industrialization and the threat it posed to the human subject. Twentieth century Spanish women writers are interested in reconfiguring the ideological base on which modern society is constructed to include feminine experiences. While women often 'feel at home' in the cityscape they also recognize that they are being used to support a system which they had little voice in creating. I believe it is precisely the tension induced by this situation that these women writers explore in their stories.

Connected to the idea of walking as resistance, I adopt the Spanish word *callejear* to reflect the idea of wandering through the urban space. There is no adequate equivalent

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[5] I owe my awareness of Hawthorne's idea to Burton Pike in *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*.

to this word in the English language, but its rough translation alludes to the act of wandering the city streets. Linguistically speaking, as a verb, it takes the ordinary idea of walking about and mixes it with a noun—the street—to mean to be in the streets yet to resist a static presence. Each of the works examined in this project revolves around main protagonists who *callejear*; who question the supposed order of things while roaming through urban centers.

Similar to Massey, Certeau also understands the city as a multifaceted and porous location and does not see the city as a place that can be inscribed with an absolute identity. Walking, Certeau argues, "is to lack a place." He envisions the city, as well as the act of walking through the city, as lacking the sense of belonging that often accompanies the word 'place'. He goes on to explain that the city itself is lacking place because of its nature to compress and expand meaning:

> The moving about that multiplies and concentrates makes the city itself an immense social experience of lacking a place—an experience that is, to be sure, broken up into countless tiny deportations (displacements and walks), compensated for by the relationships and intersections of these exoduses that intertwine and create an urban fabric, and placed under the sign of what ought to be, ultimately, the place but only a name, the City. (103)

The women of this study participate in this subtle resistance to control. As Wilson attests, women have not been granted a favorable place in western representations of the metropolis because their presence hints at disorder: "There is fear of the city as a realm of uncontrolled and chaotic sexual license, and the rigid control of women in cities

had been felt necessary to avert this danger. Urban civilisation has come, in fact, to mean an authoritarian control of the wayward spontaneity of all human desires and aspirations. Women without men in the city symbolise the menace of disorder in all spheres once rigid patriarchal control is weakened" (157). According to this idea, the mere presence of women in the city, acting as they will, is reason enough for ideological tension. The female protagonists that appear in this study directly engage in a persistent protest against powers meant to undermine and circumvent their experiences. In many respects, these females deviate from their predefined path of existence by involving themselves in the cityscape.

Since I will focus on walking as one of the ways in which these female protagonists elude discipline, I fine extremely useful one of Walter Benjamin's most studied literary motifs—the *flâneur*. Anke Gleber writes in *The Art of Taking a Walk* how authors who engage the *flâneur* in their writing are opening themselves and their readers to new experiences:

> In "infinite investigations" through the inexhaustible realms and nuances of this new reality, these authors left their bourgeois interiors in order to encounter their materials of observation in a new sphere of public exteriors—jogging their creativity by traversing the "streets and promenades" of the city, and coming across imaginary spaces at every turn. "Drifting along" with the modern crowds, these authors and their texts attentively described the ways in which the flaneur's literary dreams gradually take material shape. At the same time, they slowly pursue their own trajectories, considering reality with their own careful gaze. (3)

Gleber acknowledges that the practice of flanerie is a gendered one that is usually a privilege granted only to men: "Such unabashed and unadulterated pleasure in the sights, views, and images of the street seems reserved for the experience of male spectators" (171). However, as literary critics such as Susan Squire, Elizabeth Wilson, and Deborah Parsons demonstrate, the practice has been appropriated by women writers in their attempts to forge a new understanding of women in the city.

The chapters that follow consider the work of five Spanish women authors acknowledged by the Spanish literary canon. It must be considered a triumph in and of itself to now be speaking of canonical women authors as bona fide members of the peninsular canon. This is due in part to the rise in scholarship centered on Spanish women writers, as well as to the high quality of their literary production. Yet, despite the recognition granted these women and their work in recent years, many aspects of their craft remain unexplored. I will show how a close examination of the city space in these women's writing reveals their commitment to finding alternate experiences for the feminine subject than those allowed them in traditional circumstances.

The first chapter discusses three authors writing in the midst of the Francoist years from inside the urban landscape of Barcelona. Why Barcelona? While there exists no easy answer to this question, perhaps the most candid explanation is that Barcelona, despite is geographic and political position on the periphery of the Spanish nation-state, simply refuses to be ignored. The capital city of Catalonia figures too prominently in Catalan women writers' literary work not to be given its due consideration. By examining the work of Carmen Laforet, Mercé Rodoreda and Monserrat Roig, one can analyze two simultaneous concepts: how Catalan women writers employ the use of a

particular urban center in their writing as well as how they executed their craft under the repressive Francoist regime. This chapter further elaborates how certain Foucaultian and Althusserian ideas permeate my understanding and application of the workings of ideology and how these concepts apply the Spanish women writers' use of the urban space. In addition, I expand my use of Walter Benjamin's work on the *flâneur* as well as explore some of the new feminist thinking concerning women and the urban space.

The subsequent chapter focuses on the later work of Carmen Martín Gaite, arguably one of Spain's most significant women writers of the twentieth century. During Martín Gaite's prolific career she broke narrative barriers by freely incorporating the use of the fantastic into her depictions of the mundane and ordinary. This chapter discusses the role of the city in Martín Gaite's expression and concern with the feminine subject. I argue that the city comes into play by participating in the skewing of reality and in what others have called Martín Gaite's sense of play and escapism.[6] In addition, I focus on how the city gets woven into Martín Gaite's emblematic use of the subconscious and issues surrounding feminine psychological development. In the works I consider for this project, Martín Gaite relies on her characteristic use of the surreal and uncanny to reveal a unique approach to the incorporation of the city space. By providing specific examples from two of Martín Gaite's novels from the 1990s, *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990) and *Lo raro es vivir* (1996), I examine how Martín Gaite engages the cityscape in her

[6] Adrián M. García speaks about Martín Gaite's use of 'play' with the reader in *Silence in the Novels of Carmen Martín Gaite*. He cites her declaration that narration is a "juego por excelencia" (*El cuento* 111) and her position that readers need to be "seduced" into the story line ("The Virtues" 352) (3-4).

fantastical approach to the comings and goings of everyday life. Specifically, I explore the manner in which Martín Gaite employs the city space in her depiction of motherhood, myth, and identity.

The following chapter takes a close look at the work of Rosa Montero, a popular and widely read Spanish novelist and journalist. Montero uses the city as the backdrop to several of her latest works involving female protagonists and relies on the city to engage the protagonist in her personal identity quest. This chapter provides the space to explore how the city arises in Montero's most recent work to expound the struggles of the everyday heroine of Spanish contemporary society. Montero involves the city in issues concerning present-day women such as maternity, personal relationships, aging, crime, poverty, illness, drug addiction, etc. She uses the realist setting of the city to explore some of the more devious and insidious aspects of daily life, resulting in a surrealistic narrative mode of representation. Via the creation and insertion of certain myths and the questioning of others, Montero illustrates how the streets become a new place from which women can explore a new terrain of expression. Particularly highlighted is an exploration of motherhood and how the city space demystifies many of woman subject's pre-assigned roles. Through an examination of *Bella y Oscura* and *El corazón del Tártaro*, along with references to several of her other works, I show how the city influences the protagonists' sense of self, ultimately creating new identities which defy traditional categories.

My conclusion stresses how the urban space runs through Spanish women's narrative and how this powerful literary motif is crucial to the aforementioned writers' literary expression. I emphasize how the dynamics of urban spaces have, in certain

instances, counteracted limits placed on the Spanish feminine subject. In addition, I discuss some of the recent trends appearing in the urban-oriented narratives of new Spanish women writers of the XXI century. These emerging writers continue to push the boundaries of literary expression via the urban corridor, just as their foremothers before them.

CHAPTER TWO:

Resistant Wanderings: Catalan Women Writers and the Urban Space

In his study *Narrating the Past*, David K. Herzberger theorizes that the Spanish novel has much to reveal about the country's volatile twentieth-century history. Drawing from cultural theorists such as Hayden White and Paul Ricoeur, Herzberger suggests that the novel as a genre carries as much legitimate information as documents classified as "historical," or as documents that carry an objective evaluation of facts.[7] Pointing out that historical documents and novels are subject to human perception, both from the author's and reader's point of view, and because each form mediates human perceptions of history, Herzberger reminds us that both are temporal references of events, subject to human emotion, cultural/political background, embellishment, and error. In the spirit of Herzberger's analysis of the Spanish social realist novel, this chapter focuses on a specific historical period in which women wrote novels with social-realistic characteristics while using the urban space of Barcelona as a cultural centerpiece for their work. I employ Herzberger's argument that the novel should be considered in conjunction with the historical facts in order in ensure a multifaceted view of the past. The question I pose for this section is twofold: How does the city, as a cultural and historical center, influence the writings of Catalan women writing during the Franco era?

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[7] See especially Hayden White's chapter titled "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact" in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*. London: John Holkins UP, 1978: (81-100).

And, connected to that, how do women both engage the city as an eye witness to what is happening to them during this period and, by the same token, use the urban space to their advantage, subverting the overlying dominant ideology?

As the introduction explained, Spanish women writers and their experiences with the city are the focus of this project because feminine access to the urban sphere has been traditionally mediated and controlled through the systematic application of a male-oriented paradigm. As a result of this exclusion, women's experiences, as they relate to the urban, have not been fully considered for their cultural and historical impact. Culture, as semiologist Roland Barthes explained in *Mythologies* (1957), not only encompasses the art and aesthetic expression of a certain population but also denotes ideologically loaded popular images and items. The idea of culture has also been recently expanded to include dispossessed populations previously ignored or silenced, as in Edward Said's *Orientalism*. The city acts as a conglomeration of culture with competing interests and ideals clustered together in the same geographic location. It is a place where peoples struggle to establish their presence and demand recognition, a place that molds national identities, and shapes social dynamics and ways of life. For these reasons, the city is a space that demands consideration for its deep impact on the formation of identity. Since, traditionally speaking, women have been omitted from the official construction of the cityscape, yet have continually inhabited and influenced its space, their participation as it pertains to the urban needs to be reexamined.

From their unique perspective, Spanish women writers of the twentieth-century have used their art to record the dramatic changes endured and experienced by women in the city. Urbanization goes further than referring to one's geographic location; it is the

mark of one's social status and upbringing. For Spanish society, as Christina Dupláa indicates in *La voz testimonial en Montserrat Roig*, to be urban is to be both educated and refined in the sense of "ser civilizado" and "ser educado" (144). Dupláa relates the importance of being urban to Spanish society, mentioning that much of Spanish civilization lives within an urban culture where a city's public spaces (the café, the plaza, major streets, etc.) are where the population engages in the majority of its economic transactions and socialization. As a result, women's relationship to the city corresponds directly to how that city disseminates its specific culture. If a city provides women with potential and opportunity, then the city is seen as a place of fulfillment. For a woman who has fallen on hard times, however, the city is a place of physical danger and emotional threat. For women authors recounting the story of women's experiences, rarely is the city polarized into one extreme or the other. Rather, the city is a microcosm of the culture at large in which women are subject to both pleasure and pain and experience a vast array of cultural discontinuities.

Spain, as a nation, is presently experiencing the post-Franco backlash of unstable identities. The new cultural tensions arise from a host of sources: immigration, regional cultural interests, economic difficulties, shifting political alliances, etc. As Spanish literary and culture critic Barry Jordan writes in *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies*, "It is becoming increasingly difficult to talk confidently any more of a singular Spanish identity as such, as Spain becomes both globalized and internally fragmented through processes of political devolution" (5). This splitting of Spanish national consciousness needs to be understood in its historical origins and a study of the city provides clues to the formation of both a Spanish identity and to women's contribution to its makeup. The

premise of this study is to look at the Spanish city in conjunction with the novel, a dynamic cultural relic, to gain insight into how the urban imprints itself onto female representations and, by the same token, how women transform the urban space to be more inclusive of their perspectives. Susan Squire explains in *Women Writers and the City* (1984) that women's experience of the city has been mediated by men due to women being relegated to the domestic sphere and by the supposition that women are more connected to the natural world. Squire also argues that women who write about the urban engage the city as a cultural artifact and, consequently, confront the problematic relationship that women have had with culture throughout history. A woman writer who uses the city as their cultural backdrop raise questions as to "her literal and literary confinement in patriarchal modes of experience, and of her struggle to win freedom from such constraints in life and art" (Squire 6). Squire adheres to a formula of city = liberation; however, the situation is more problematic than this equation implies. Indeed, as this study will demonstrate, the city is often a place of liberation from antiquated modes of being for women. However, it is naïve to assume that the city consistently provides safe harbor for women attempting new cultural forms or that the dangers present within the urban boundaries are overshadowed by a feminine presence. Violence still exists as a threat to women when they are engaged in the urban sphere, regardless of the level of liberation obtained. While the three authors discussed in this chapter seek freedom from cultural bondage and do succeed in revealing that ideological control of space can be permeated and rendered less oppressive, there are also times of defeat. My position is that these defeats are as relevant as the victories and shall be examined for their underlying messages for the feminine subject.

Recent poststructuralist thinking about space, especially the work of Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, has disrupted absolutist theories concerning spatial metaphors. Through poststructuralist theory, dominant metanarratives have proven to be more slippery and less conducive to signification as once thought. In other words, historical grand narratives have been melted down into smaller stories of interrelatedness. Women and minorities are currently granted space in the interdisciplinary work being done in geography, literature, history and art studies with their stories integrated alongside the canonical works. Many stories still need to be understood in the context of the metanarrative influence under which they were originally conceived. This is especially true of Spanish and Catalan women writers who developed their stories in the midst of a dictatorship known for its censorship and oppressive stance towards dissention. While their stories ultimately eschew monolithic explanatory narratives, it cannot be ignored that the effects of ideological coercion mark these women's texts and are a primary focus of their work. The city offers the women writers of this study a socially produced space where grand narratives can be brought into question while at the same time paying heed to the demands of ideological forces.

When one considers the socio-political climate of Spain in the years directly following the Spanish Civil War in conjunction with the catastrophic toll that the war had on the country, to define the period as difficult for women is euphemistic. Women clearly had a problematic relationship to the political atmosphere cultivated in Spain following the war and were often marginalized and subjugated to policies they had little or no voice in creating. The unsettling situation between Spanish women and the political climate warrants new consideration of the city and its connection to the feminine

because the policies of this period regarding femininity will shape Spanish womanhood for the rest of the century. Probing into the city's connection to the feminine reveals ideological controls at work while acknowledging the obstacles women circumvented through artistic creation.

It was impossbile for women to traverse the urban environment free of restraint and with the same autonomous freedom as men in Spain's politically repressive environment in the years following the Civil War. After the war, Spain experienced the painstaking process of redefining its national identity, which encompassed not only major governmental institutions but also reached into the private space of the home. Mirroring the rise of the importance of the domestic sphere during the development of nineteenth-century industrialization, the home again rose to a position of national importance. In contrast to the nineteenth century's preoccupation with the home as a healthy harbor from the less charming aspects of the public environment, the post-war home had a decidedly nationalist duty to maintain a decorum of behavior reflective of Franco's national agenda. As Aurora Morcillo Gómez explains in "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood: Francoist Educational Discourse on Women", the construction of national identity in Europe before the twentieth century was primarily in the hands of men. After the Spanish Civil War the home was converted from being a moral safe haven from the public sphere for men to actively promoting specific ideals that were in line with the new national identity. Women were not only expected to be "ángeles del hogar" as in the previous century but they now had the added burden of acting as political angels in the sense that they were

responsible for extolling Catholic values (i.e. political values) to their children.[8] As is typical of totalitarian regimes, Franco's Spain depended on the construction of a national identity along with at least the partial cooperation its participants, resulting in the incorporation of the home as a propagandistic tool of the new nation-state. Whereas nineteenth-century women were to keep the home a retreat of domestic bliss for men who needed a reprieve from the public business of nation building, middle-class women in Spain after 1939 were expected to be important tools providing a political undercurrent to homemaking.[9] The general passivity of the home of the previous century suddenly became an active forum for ideological support of the regime. Thus, Spanish women, as keepers of the domestic realm, were essential to the nation's new identity. As heads of one of the new most important institutions to the nation—the family—women were actively recruited to propagate the new national consciousness to their children.

Spain's recruitment of women during this period was based on a combination of state and religious controls that were designed to pigeonhole womanhood into a prescribed concept. The use of the Catholic church in combination with state sponsored organizations for women promoted mass consensus with the national agenda. Franco's ability to rally the Spanish national consciousness around its former Imperial glory, fostering images of power and religious righteousness, proved effective in the campaign to suppress progressive political changes made during the Second Republic and to

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[8] For a discussion on the role of the "ángel del hogar" in 19th century Spain see Susan Kirkpatrick's discussion in *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain 1835-1850*: 56-61.

[9] For an in-depth look at the rise of the domestic sphere in nineteenth-century Spain see Bridget Aldaraca's "El Angel del hogar: The Cult of Domesticity in Nineteenth-century Spain" in *Theory and Practice of Feminist Literary Criticism*. Eds. Gabriela Mora and Karen S. Van Hoft. Ypsilanti: Bilingual Press: 62-87.

solidify Spain's legitimacy.[10] More specifically, Franco's new Spain relied on an already established history of "national" identity that focused around the expulsion of the Moors and the Jews in the fifteenth century. Michael Richards writes in *Collective Memory, the Nation-state and post-Franco Society* that historically *hispanidad* centered around gendered religious and militaristic models, models that Franco sought to revive during his renewed effort to centralize Spain under one cultural umbrella (39). The technique of harking back to a time before governmental institutions threatened monarchical structures stirred up lost memories of a Spain once united under the banner of Christendom, whose main objective was the eradication of Islam from the European continent. Of course, the idea of a unified Spain under the guise of Christian valor and supremacy is difficult to summarize, considering the complexity of Spain's historical development. Nevertheless, this idea proved useful for a nation struggling to rediscover its cultural roots and, ultimately, caused a resurgence of misplaced identification with "historical" events that solidified, if only symbolically, Spain's new identity.

Herzberger points to the regime's technique of legitimizing itself by the creation of a past: "For the Franco regime, this means that the State used the past both to underpin its existence as the fulfillment of Spain's historical destiny and to give moral legitimacy to its claim of authority in the present" (16). Carmen Martín Gaite gives specific examples of this process in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987) that Franco's ability to "enterrar el pasado reciente y exaltar el pasado remoto fue una de las más inqebrantes consignas de la España de Franco" (23). Martín Gaite goes on to say

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[10] See Aurora Morcillo Gómez's discussion on the Second Republic and education in "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood: Francoist Educational Discourse on Women" in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood*. This idea is also the central argument expounded by Herzberger.

that in the years following the war every student had studied the epic deeds of don Pelayo, Isabel la Católica, or Felipe II while other more controversial figures were ignored. This is concurrent with what Herzberger describes as the use of myth to obtain an entirely new Spain; one in which Franco is simply a natural extension of Spain's epic saga and national destiny.

Drawing from what semiologist Roland Barthes describes in his work *Mythologies* as using myth to support an ideological stance, Herzberger delineates how myth negates the possibility of alternation of ideas, hence solidifying certain practices: "Myth forecloses upon the possibility of change by asserting the constancy of its truth on what it contends is the solid terrain of the real" (34). For Barthes, myth creates around itself an entire discourse that, in turn, becomes a basis for a semiotic system. The myth, in other words, becomes a sign that eventually is integrated into a whole system of values that, once applied, allows for a falsification of a whole set of cultural values. In Spain's case, Franco's affinity for myth becomes a way of controlling what would be rebellious pockets of dissent by eliminating other versions of history, leaving only one version of "truth." Of course, the methods Franco employed to maintain control ranged from the subtle to the extreme.

Marxist structuralist theorist Louis Althusser introduced the notion of Repressive State Apparatuses, or RSAs (institutions such as the police force and the criminal and justice systems) as part of the explanation of how populations followed the rules established by states. RSAs enforce conduct directly by actively, often violently, forcing citizens to behave, such as how the Guardia Civil kept Spanish citizens acting in accordance to the rules established by Franco's regime—through fear and intimidation.

Althusser's other mechanism of control, Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) is a more subtle use of control and is more useful to this study. ISAs are primarily institutions (schools, religions, communications, the family, legal systems, politics, arts, sports, etc.) which generate ideologies which individuals (and groups) internalize and then adjust their behavior accordingly. Franco's regime used ISAs as a way of ensuring the centralization of the Spanish nation-state, creating a political atmosphere that pricked at the tender feelings of national insecurities to roust support for an illusive idea of a former Spain that never existed. This illusionary state was reconstructed according to the goals and desire of the Francoist system and was meant to control the Spanish masses.

For Althusser, ideology represents people's relationship to real conditions of existence and not to the real itself.[11] This means that the Spanish citizen in the post Civil War years was indoctrinated via ISAs to the idea that the new state was in fact the rebirth of a Spain lost before nineteenth-century ideas of governmental secularization resulted in the 'unfortunate' creation of the Second Republic. Althusser's premise contends that because ideology is a practice with lived and material dimensions with costumes, rituals, behavior patterns, and ways of thinking, people tend subscribe to the underlying message being conveyed, with the result that populations end up participating in the system that seeks to control them. This process is exemplified by the lives of Spanish women during

[11] Althusser writes in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* that "Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." He goes on to say that while 'world outlooks' do not correspond to reality, they do "constitute an illusion" and do "make allusion to reality." That is, reality can be interpreted via a deconstruction of the imaginary representations of the world. Spanish women writes attempt this deconstruction of ISAs through their stories of women and the urban.

the post Civil War years who were pressed to believe that their role as mothers and wives was connected to the health of the state by essentially equating motherhood and domesticity with civilian duty.

María A. Escudero outlines in "Cortes and Marina: Gender and the Reconquest of America Under the Franco Regime" how the Francoist policy manipulated "official" history in order to achieve a sense of "authentic" Spanish values that included the glorification of the Catholic kings and the colonization of America that then were used as a basis for nationhood (73). Spain's ability to engage in 'nostalgic tourism' of its past is central to its postwar agenda of establishing power.[12] Along that same vein, a fervent effort was made after the war to promote conservative Catholic values to the Spanish masses via the educational system and, of course, through the home. Franco, a tepid Catholic prior to power, fervently established a 'holy' relationship with Rome and connected this religious authority to his new vision of the nation. In *Usos*, Martín Gaite poignantly discusses the unavoidable collision between the images of the Pope Eugenio Pacelli de Pío II and Franco during the post war years, noting that their images often appeared together in schools, offices, and homes: "Crecimos bajo la vigilancia de aquellos dos rostros, el del casquete blanco y el del bigotito, donde no puede decirse que andaran precisamente la ternura, la compasión ni la fantasía" (21). As Catholicism was reinforced as the absolute marker for social behavior, Spanish women were expected to conform to its version of femininity under which traditional Catholic values such as

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[12] I borrow the term "nostalgic tourism" from Middleton and Wood. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time and Space in Postwar Writing*: 25.

virginity, chastity, virtuous motherhood, and marriage became fundamental to the reformation of the fatherland.

Spanish women were subjected to what Althusser defines as "interpellation," meaning they were recruited as necessary and essential through state sponsored womens' organizations such as the Sección Feminina. Meant as an educational organizaton for women, the Sección Feminina relayed information about motherhood, being a happy wife, being a good catholic, and other duties deemed necessary for the smooth functioning of the Regime. Antifeminist in nature, the Sección Feminina allowed for only a very narrow type of feminine existence. These everyday ideological pressures were inevitably economic in nature as is easily imagined with a state such as Spain needing to rebuild itself after years of violence and destruction.

Still, while Althusser's contributions to the workings of ideology are influential in understanding how post war Spain dictated the behavior of its participants, it does not allow for the explanation of resistance and here is where his method falters. While his theory remains attractive for describing the inner mechanisms of ideology, it lapses when faced with the question of how the oppressed and exploited ever reach beyond their subjection. As evidenced by certain writing taking place during the Franco years, Spanish women writers were able to counteract the ISAs and their subsequent controls through literary creation. What is more, they confronted the constraints of their existence in the epicenter of ideological control—the city.

Another poststructuralist theorist, Michel Foucault, sheds light on how power works to control people through organization, surveillance, and division. The redefinition of Spain under Franco's policies falls under Foucault's account in *Discipline*

and Punish of the plague mentality that resulted in the circumvention and segregation of populations to maintain civil order. This subjection consists of "a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal" meant to purge the landscape of those who would threaten its stability (Foucault 83). Foucault writes that this hyper level of control "bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies—this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city" (84). That is, the regulation of individuals through observation, supervision, and correction, produces a city that becomes 'perfect' through a governed (i.e. controlled) population.

Foucault adopts an idea involving the power of surveillance and observation developed by British utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)—the Panopticon. An architectural device of observation and control, the Panopticon explains how the mechanisms of power work, or what Foucault calls the 'automatic functioning of power'. Foucault proposes that through the use of visible control, signs that are not hidden but out in the open, people come to recognize the omnipotent functioning of a given ideology and regulate their behavior accordingly without needing the direct exercise of discipline.

Corresponding to this idea of control, Martín Gaite mentions in *Usos* that during the war children were less regulated and less supervised and that Franco's victory resulted in a tightening of family bonds in the form of discipline. She goes on to say that once Franco came to power girls and boys were subject to educational divisions based on gender and that same-sex education became the norm. The effect of universal same-sex education, writes Martín Gaite, "marcó sensiblemente la conducta de las nuevas generaciones de españoles en su paso de la infancia a la pubertad" (92). This divisive

system of sorting children according to gender is an example of Foucault's notion of control through separation and organization through outward signs.

Women during the time of the Francoist regime found womanhood another area to be regulated and divided. For example, representations of women followed Foucault's idea that each individual is given a sense of place and function.[13] For middle-class women in Spain in the years following the Civil War, that function was primarily of a mother and wife. There were other classifications of Spanish women that followed Foucault's notion of discretionary division as well. For instance, if a woman did not become a mother she could become a nun, hearkening back to fifteenth-century ideas of femininity. In other words, Franco's Spain wanted to "discipline" the Spanish woman into a "docile" body that would accept her role as mother and wife under the Catholic values touted by the Franco regime as right and virtuous. Spanish women indoctrinated into this role quelled the possibility of social disturbance by acting as political puppets of Franco's invented nation. Certainly female cooperation within the larger political agenda meant that women would be converted into bodies of "docility-utility" and would be dissuaded from engaging in any effort to liquidate the dominant system. In addition, there existed a need to repopulate the country after the work-force had been significantly depleted by war. Hence, women's utility to the state as mothers (both biologically and ideologically) and wives became another pillar of support for the imposed system.

Foucault's explanation of control is convincing when paralleled with Francoist policy of the late 1930s and 40s which served to solidify a manufactured image of Spain. When one considers the historical removal of Barcelona from the centralist vision of

Spain, along with Franco's paranoid desire to reign in any possible subversion, theories of political control and domination seem especially appropriate. However, just like Althusser, the sophism of Foucault's argument leaves no allowance for fissure and disruption.[14] The massive extension of control of space through the ever-present panoptic gaze that Foucault describes would render useless any form of meaningful resistance. If the city were a monolithic event, then perhaps we could speak of total subjugation. However, the shiftiness of the urban space makes comprehensive adherence to ideological control improbable. While the city does become a vessel for ideological manipulation, its unique metamorphic and evasive qualities inhibit total domination. For example, the urban underworld elements of prostitution, homelessness, poverty, illness, and criminal activity are generally bound to predestined parts of the urban sphere, yet their very existence must be recognized as uncontrollable and, therefore, possibly destabilizing. One must also take into account that these underworld elements provide certain distractions for those wanting to assign blame for any disruption. In other words, the presence of society's murky and lascivious components provide a convenient scapegoat for questionable behavior, ultimately rendering them useful for the state. By not eliminating a predefined space of undesirable activity, governmental institutions can point their finger to the darker elements of society contained in specific geographical areas within the urban space and thus create the illusion of control. The underlying message is that the underworld is *allowed* to exist because it provides location to the more volatile of society's elements.

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[13] Foucault's idea follows the same thread as Althusser's idea of "interpellation."

[14] Jürgen Habermas makes this same argument in his "Discourse of Modernity."

Notwithstanding the stable appearance that geographical sectioning creates, the actual physical distancing between unwanted behaviors and sanctioned ones is a false concept. In fact, these boundaries are precarious at best and do not constitute a non-permeable wall conducive to supervised control. As the women protagonists of the novels considered here demonstrate, the boundaries between city cultures are not fixed entities. Rather, they lend themselves to penetration and, consequently, the so called "contagions" of society become mingled with the more mainstream societal elements.[15] The portrayed women protagonists are the vehicles by which these subversive components are discovered, either through their own bodies (i.e. prostitution, motherhood, marriage) and/or through their observations. In this sense, Barcelona and the women protagonists who reside there, lend themselves well to an examination of the city's pregnable and variable boundaries. Women wander these urban boundaries by way of seeing, feeling, and experiencing the city, with the result that the city becomes a place less likely to harbor totalitarian policies of domination.[16] This urban wandering creates the sense of existing "in-between" and therefore calls into question absolutist concepts of womanhood.

As an epicenter for anarchist and leftist movement, Barcelona was especially vulnerable to Franco's iron-fisted policies of control. During the 1920s and 30s, Barcelona was rising as an industrial powerhouse and labor movements were on the forefront of the political arena. From October 30 to November 1, 1911 the Anarcho-

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[15] Foucault describes "contagions" as "rebellions, crimes, vagabondage, desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder" in *Discipline and Punish* (83).

[16] By "boundaries" I am referring to perceived borders in an urban setting. The city is constructed of places that are 'sanctioned' for one use or another via sociological assumptions and ideological control.

syndicalists gathered in Barcelona to form the CNT (National Confederation of Labor).[17] According to Barcelona historian Temma Kaplan, the group proposed such progressive ideas for the time as equal pay for equal work, and condemned the double burden that women carried by being the exclusive home caretakers in addition to working, albeit in a limited capacity, in the public sphere. Another type of cultural restriction occurred linguistically after 1939 when Catalan culture and language were repressed and a general atmosphere of fear and suspicion concerning all things derived from Catalan culture dominated the landscape. Richards writes that "the socially more advanced localities of the coast, often more industrial and more liberal—Barcelona, the Basque Country, Valencia, Málaga, etc.—were seen as heterodox and dangerous" (39). Kaplan echoes this sentiment, writing "Although Catalan nationalism always remained somewhat fractionalized and never represented a single political ideology, it was to become a potent force against twentieth-century dictators in Spain" (164).

Due to the environment of paranoia that stemmed from Barcelona's past political influence the city was hit especially hard during and after the war in the form of repressive systemic controls. In the postwar years Barcelona's high idealism was transformed into the fatalistic reality of surviving from one day to the next. Martín Gaite summarizes the period after the war with two words: restriction and rationing (13). She also observes these two realities as applying to more than just food but also to all human behavior (14). In addition to the psychologically demoralizing effects of war, Barcelona was experiencing an influx of immigration that would further tax its limited resources,

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[17] See Temma Kaplan in *Red City, Blue Period: Social movements in Picasso's Barcelona*, 110.

drawing it into a period known as "los años grises." As a result of the hardships of the war, Barcelona would not regain its 1936 standard of living until the mid 50s.[18]

Starting with four novels written after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), I consider the relationship between the city of Barcelona and the feminine subject as it appears in the urban space. While other sections of this study focus on less concrete images of the city, the weight of Barcelona as a nexus of Catalan culture demands special attention. Catalan women writers weave the imagery of Barcelona through their texts, and the city's salient characteristics arise in their narratives with such frequency that examining the bond between this urban center and the feminine subject becomes a pressing necessity.

It is precisely Barcelona's "otherness" in relation to the rest of the peninsula that makes it particularly interesting for this study. Barcelona's separateness keeps the city on a cultural plain that exists both in and outside Spain's hegemony. The novels of this study never name the fatherland (Spain) but defer to the city of Barcelona as the more important nation-state. The city, therefore, acts as a surrogate nation, becoming as important or even more so than the larger political entity of Spain. Nations generally require from their participants identification with the cultural signifiers of their dominion and Barcelona, as a center of Catalan culture, is no exception. In the minds of the protagonists (and the authors) Barcelona acts as a central place of identity formation. This identification permits the city to play a significant role in determining a sense of "being home" and pertaining to a specific community.

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[18] Ibid.

For Catalan women writers experiencing Barcelona during the volatile time surrounding the Spanish Civil War, the city and realities of war, mixed with elements of place and personal history, become central to their narratives. Much of their writing attempts to dispel the myths built up by the Francoist regime, especially those pertaining to female development. Where these Catalan authors choose to locate their resistance is critical to the subversive quality of their work. The four novels I consider range in publication from 1945 to 1980 and encompass the forty years of Franco's dictatorship: Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Mercè Rodoreda's *La Plaça del Diamant* (1962) and *El carrer de les Camèlies* (1966) and *Ramona, adéu* (1980) by Montserrat Roig. Each tells the story of a woman's experience with the city as she struggles with issues of identity, place, survival, and expression. While the eventualities of the novels differ from one another, the issues that the women face in connection with the city hold a common thread. The young characters depicted face challenges to their livelihood and participate in a precarious journey through the city's landscape that engages the space in their own quests for identity. Barcelona sets the stage for all four stories but the city's presence is more than a mere backdrop, and the characters interact with the city in a way that becomes a determining factor in their search for selfhood.

Carmen Laforet's *Nada*: The City as Refuge

Carmen Laforet's novel *Nada* (1945) provides a sound base from which to initiate the study of the city and its effects on a particular character's psychological journey precisely because it is a work widely read and studied. Having been the focus of many critical articles and the central topic of larger works, *Nada's* story continues to be an

illusive and yet engaging story for present-day readers. The narrative's shiftiness is perhaps the reason why the novel continues to capture the imagination of critics and students alike. Elizabeth J. Ordóñez in *Voices of Their Own* notes the novel's importance to the field of Spanish literature, touting it as "the first significant postwar Spanish novel of female adolescence--indeed as the first significant postwar novel by a woman" (34). Winning the distinguished Premio Nadal in 1944, *Nada* was recognized as a work of notable status by its contemporaries. Its canonical status can be a deterrent to new studies attempting to tease out more metaphorical analysis on the somewhat tired themes such as the house and the protagonist's psychological reactions to the various secrets and obvious turmoil of her family. However, the question concerning the urban space and how it relates to the protagonist's sense of self remains unexplored. How the protagonist navigates through the city's unstable and precarious geography is a testament to her power of self-definition.

Spanish literary tradition links *Nada* with the *tremendismo* movement that sought to reflect the hardships of the post war years. Margaret E. Jones states in *The Contemporary Spanish Novel, 1939-1975*, that works associated with *tremendismo* generally have an "individual protagonist with a unique, atypical point of view", and that the works generally emphasize social afflictions such as death, poverty, illness, hunger, forced emigration from the country to the city, unhappiness, etc. (15-16). The objective of these works is to inflict a sense of the human burden of this unsettling period without being overtly political in order to avoid censorship.

Much has been written about the narrative's autobiographical links to the life of its author Carmen Laforet, and *Nada* is not the only novel in this study in which an

autobiographical tone surfaces. In fact, it is a topic that will reemerge with the other Catalan women authors of this study and is one that deserves comment. Laforet, paralleling her protagonist, also moved to Barcelona as a young woman after having spent the war years on the Canary Islands. Once there, she studied in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letra at the university, as did her protagonist. The autobiographical motifs of *Nada* and the other four Catalan novels chosen for this study only strengthen the argument that the presence of the city haunts these women writers and that their urban experiences form an intimate part of their literary expression.

Nada retells the story of Andrea, a young woman who comes to live with relatives in Barcelona directly following the Spanish Civil War. Recounted in the first person, Andrea's story chronicles her experiences living with a deteriorating bourgeois family during the economically depressed years after the war. What the protagonist brings to the pages is the struggle of a young woman trying not only to survive but also attempting to establish her identity. The repressive experiences during her stay at her relatives' house on Aribau Street are transformative and critics are unresolved as to the success of the outcome after she is finally able to leave. For instance, Marsha Collins finds her departure from Barcelona a turning point in her quest for identity and a fulfillment of a female *Bildungsroman* towards selfhood.[19] Emilie Bergmann concurs with Collins and sees Andrea's leaving as a sign of "risk-taking" and concludes that she "achieves an immunity from abusive power relationships" (145-6). Others, most notably Barry Jordan, question Andrea's flight from Barcelona as proof of her emotional

[19] Collins, Marsha S. "Carmen Laforet's *Nada*: Fictional Form and the Search for Identity.", 1984. 298-310.

maturity, preferring to emphasize her dependence on bourgeois charity for survival rather than developing an active self-awareness.[20] Bergmann and Jordan raise important questions as to Andrea's state of mind after events at the house have ended in real time. However, as Jordan points out, evidence that Andrea continues to be haunted by her experiences arises from the fact that she narrates the story to us sometime in the future, supposedly a considerable time after her arrival in Madrid. Jordan argues that the reflective tone of the narrative indicates that the trauma inflicted on Andrea continues to plague her despite the physical and chronological distancing from Madrid.

Examining the novel's ending about whether or not Andrea liberates herself from repression (either physical or psychological), leads to a muddled determination that over emphasizes the conclusion as the only deciding factor of autonomy. It is my position that too much dependence is allocated to Andrea's final departure in assessing the complexity of her situation. Rather, I propose an alternative way of evaluating Andrea's success in her search for identity. There exist other more telling instances within the narrative that allow for a more thorough consideration of Andrea's development as a person, revealing significant instances of self-discovery that reside outside the current 'happy ending' debate. The oscillation between the positive and negative aspects of the ending fails completely and adequately to resolve the question surrounding Andrea's full development: Does she obtain self-recognition by fleeing Barcelona or not? That said, I do find compelling Jordan's suggestion that we, as readers, *desire* to see Andrea rebel, which may influence our interpretation of the final scene. Andea's situation evokes a sense of injustice on her behalf and we long for a climactic ending that convinces us of

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[20] Jordan, Berry. "Laforet's *Nada* As Female *Bildung*?" *Symposium* 46.2 (1992): 105-18.

her development. However, *Nada* is too entrenched in the social realism of its day to grant us such a scene of rupture from daily existence. Instead, I suggest an examination into how Andrea is situated in the narrative in relationship to the city and how she situates herself in the urban environment to better illustrate the rebellion we think we observe. Andrea's connection with Barcelona tells an important story about women's ability not only to establish a subjectivity but also to challenge the ideological underpinnings of Spanish women's identity as it was being formed in the postwar political climate.

The narrative opens with Andrea's arrival in the city of Barcelona at the age of eighteen after having lived out the Spanish Civil War in a convent. Andrea's initial positive outlook about her future in the city is characteristic, if not overly typical, of a young girl about to embark on a new adventure. Barcelona offers her a place of open possibility as well as a location of intellectual and personal growth. The first pages of the narrative are dedicated to the wonders that Barcelona lay before her. Raymond Williams informs us how Modernism often emphasized "the vitality, the variety, the liberating diversity and mobility of the city" (43).

It is clear from the narrative that Andrea is coming primarily to receive an education. Ironically, had Andrea been born into the previous generation, she may have experienced a radical new vision regarding the education of women. During the Second Republic Barcelona was home to the anarchist Modern School of Francisco Ferrer Guardia, the center of anticlericalism and revolutionary sentiment. Ferrer Gaurdia founded the Escuela de Barcelona in 1901 and promoted such educational reforms as

coeducation and equality of the sexes.[21] Andrea's experience before coming to Barcelona, however, parallels more closely the Catholic Church's policy of sex-segregated education, as delineated by Martín Gaite in *Usos amorosos*. Andrea was likely to be experiencing the university reforms that the Francoist regime put forth in the first two weeks following the end of the war which promoted Catholic morality in conjunction with national allegiance (Morcillo Gómez 59).

In fact, the narrative includes symbolic clues to her future troubles. For instance, she arrives at night with no one to meet her. Also, despite the events of the narrative taking place after the Spanish Civil War, Andrea is ushered to her new house in an antiquated carriage more reminiscent of the previous century, alluding to the backwardness of her family's social ideas. María Pilar Rodíguez in *Vidas im/propias* accurately describes the arrival scene by adopting Sigmund Freud's term "uncanny" (26). Rodíguez points out that this is not Andrea's first, but rather her second visit to Barcelona. For Andrea, a place that holds familiar childhood memories becomes increasingly wrought with strangeness.

Andrea's problematic relationship with her new surroundings intensifies as the mysteries of her family's situation multiply. Her feelings about the city are in direct contrast to her nightmarish experiences upon crossing the threshold of her new house: "Luego me pareció todo una pesadilla" (Laforet 11). The house is a domestic inferno and represents a microcosm of the politically oppressive environment of the postwar years. The image of the house, a dark *leitmotif* of inner turmoil that reflects the restricted

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[21] See Aurora Morcillo Gómez's "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood: Francoist Educational Discourse on Women." *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999: (53-4).

environment of Spanish society under Francoist policy, repeats itself with unsettling frequency in Spanish women's writings for the remainder of the twentieth century.

In order to escape the physically stifling and psychologically stringent environment of the Aribau house, Andrea takes to wandering the streets by herself. This behavior is vehemently discouraged by her aunt Angustias who attributes wandering the streets to women with sexually deviant behavior. While Andrea's constant wanderings should be understood contextually with her attempts to be anywhere besides the Aribau house, they still can be read as assertions of active rebellion. Phyllis Zatlin notes in "Passivity and Immobility: Patterns of Inner Exile in Postwar Spanish Novels Written by Women" the rebellious nature of many protagonists of post-war novels:

> The self-conscious exile, the adolescent heroine has a clear sense of being excluded from the relative freedom of masculine culture but also of being alienated, socially and politically, from acceptable feminine culture. Typically she is orphaned and is treated as an outcast by her relatives; she resents the privileges of her male cousins, she is a solitary individual, ill at ease with almost everyone. (3)

This description accurately encompasses Andrea's persona and pinpoints her major personality quirks: a certain lack of social acceptability both in and outside the home, a tendency towards isolation, and feelings of awkwardness. Her sense of alienation eventually pushes her outside the confines of the home and into the city.

Having been commanded not to wander the streets, Andrea continues to do so, thus directly defying her aunt's orders. Notable, however, is that Andrea does not always experience freedom from the oppression emitted by the Aribau house when she is in the

streets. In fact, when she is accompanied by her aunt Angustias she experiences the city as bland and less than exciting: "Yo no concebía entonces más resistencia que la pasiva. Cogida de su brazo corría las calles, que me parecían menos brillantes y menos fascinadoras de lo que yo había imaginado" (28). Here we witness Andrea's diminishing excitement about the opportunities that she had hoped awaited her.

In fact, Andrea never experiences the city in the same way when she is with someone as she does when she is wandering alone. Often Andrea converts to a passive position when in the presence of others. Conversely, when allowed to walk through the city alone, her perspective changes and she experiences the city on her own terms, reflecting on its presence and incorporating its significance into her own development. She acts as a *flâneur*, or someone who sees, experiences, and transforms the city into a place of investigation and interpretation.

In order to better understand this concept as it relates to Andrea, as well as the other subjects of this study, we must take a look at the historical development of the *flâneur*. Baudelaire's *flâneur* of the nineteenth century stood in contrast to the developing capitalistic society that surrounded him. As Anke Gleber writes, "Flanerie functions as a 'walking cure' against the prevailing melancholy in capitalist modernity" (60). While the word *flâneur* has traditionally been reserved for the representation of the dawdling male in an urban setting, feminist critics recently have found the motif useful for describing women's presence on the streets. I want to distinguish the type of flanerie adopted for this study from the original concept developed and studied by Walter Benjamin. In *Myth and Metropolis* Graeme Gilloch informs us that for Benjamin the *flâneur* was an arrogant and haughty "self-styled walking peacock" who transgressed the boundaries (imaginary

and real) of bourgeois culture (153). The feminist version of this metaphorical image shuns the peacock-like strut and rather relies on the transgressive aspects of the *flâneur* as a way of counteracting cultural restrictions.

Deborah Parsons writes that "women's highly self-conscious awareness of themselves as walkers and observers of the modernist city [and I would argue the post-modern city] does need to be recognized" (6). Parsons acknowledges the need to move away from the nineteenth-century, dandy-like image of the *flâneur* in order to appreciate the weight of this metaphor for the female wanderer. Just as the nineteenth-century *flâneur* reflected on the negative impacts of industrialization, Andrea, through her urban travels, resists the restrictions that the post-war climate imposed on women's movement. She walks for her own escape and her wanderings represent the few occasions when she expresses her own desires.

In addition, the urban walker inhabits a powerful position that allows her not just to gaze on the structures around her, but also to engage her environment in a discourse. For instance, Certeau makes a distinction between a person walking in the city and one that is engaging in voyeuristic activities, concluding that the walker is in the process of constructing the city as she/he moves through the urban space.[22] Adopting the guise of the *flâneur* grants women the use of a literary motif of resistance to their surroundings. Wilson reminds us that the nineteenth-century writer George Sands described how dressing like a man allowed her the anonymity and privilege of a *flâneur* who could get

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[22] See 'Walking in the City,' in Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1974; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 91-110, 105.

lost in the crowd.[23] Andrea does not disguise her gender, yet feels the same as Sands when she describes the city in reference to her existence, telling the reader, "Yo misma: un elemento más, pequeño y perdido en ella" (Laforet 203). While Sands found wandering incognito helpful, the vastness of the city threatens to swallow Andrea. Yet, she remains the primary describer of the city and, hence, maintains her position as a *flâneur*.

Acting as a filter for the city, Andrea is the narrator of her own story, and she relates the city as she sees it with the narrative reflecting her vision of the cityscape. This puts the eye of the geographer, the one holding the power of description and thus creation, into the hands of a young woman. The following is an example of Andrea providing a view of the city, demonstrating the process of creation and influence:

> La ciudad, cuando empieza a envolverse en el calor del verano, tiene una belleza sofocante, un poco triste. A mí me parece triste Barcelona, mirándola desde la ventana del estudio de mis amigos, en el atardecer. Desde allí un panorama de azoteas y tejados se veía envuelto en vapores rojizos y las torres de las iglesias antiguas parecían navegar entre olas. (180)

The creative process of seeing the city and capturing its images situates the woman subject in a place of power. Her view becomes what constitutes and what is known about the city, rendering its formal structures inconsequential. Her gaze from the periphery destabilizes any attempt to solidify the city as a place reflective of the dominant paradigm. Andrea's presence in the city challenges the influx of "official" information

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[23] See Elizabeth Wilson in *The Sphinx in the City*: 52.

that sets forth the idea that a woman's place is not on the streets but rather in the home. Having a woman read the city resists compliance with hegemonic control and establishes a multifaceted view the city. Women who engage in nonconformist behavior help reveal the morphing qualities of the urban, allowing for fissures in a system meant to constrict. In a pivotal scene during the second part of the novel, Andrea is alone wandering towards the city's center. During this particular outing she is suddenly moved to visit the city's Catedral, one of Barcelona's most impressive and culturally significant icons. That she ends up at the Catedral further places her in opposition to Franco's ideological influence. In other words, the cathedral, the ultimate symbol of Catholic control and power, is transformed under Andrea's gaze. The cathedral does not exude the model of womanhood as defined by Franco, which is aligned with the same feminine model professed by Angustias and by others in Andrea's circle. On the contrary, seeing the Catedral allows Andrea to reflect on her own position without being laden with a pre-constructed femininity. Later in the narrative she refers to the visit to the Catedral as "aquella primera noche de la liberación de mi vida" (127). Her fascination with this imposing structure captures Andrea's ability to experience her surroundings and incorporate the city's presence into her identity:

> Nada podía calmar y maravillar mi imaginación como aquella ciudad gótica naufragando entre húmedas casa constuidas sin estilo en medio de sus venerables sillares, pero a las que los años habían patinado también con un encanto especial, como si se hubieran contagiado de belleza. (102-3)

It is when she is alone contemplating the cityscape and its structures, that Andrea has her most genuine and self-possessed moments. However, her experience with the

city is interrupted when she is confronted by an unexpected meeting with Gerardo, a male acquaintance. Seeing Andrea, Gerardo inquires why she is out on the streets alone and what would happen "si viene el lobito y te come." The sexual implication of sharing the fate of Little Red Riding Hood is clear--if a woman is alone on the street then she invites the threat of sexual overtures. When Andrea explains that she prefers to be alone his response is to place her in a position of inferiority: "En serio, Andrea, si yo fuera tu padre no te dejaría tan suelta." Again, the narrative points to sexual misconduct on the part of the woman when she is on the street. Gerardo anoints himself the patriarchal guardian of a woman's virtue and insists on taking Andrea home. When she refuses, he allows her to leave only if she will promise to call him. The meeting with Gerardo temporarily fractures Andrea's experience with the city, removing her from an individualized expression of self, and she returns to the house on Aribau street. This exchange imposes society's contrived models of womanhood onto Andrea. Ironically, where as people at the time may have equated a woman wandering the streets with sex, Andrea rarely puts forth a sexualized persona. Rather, her sexuality is transparently constructed via her human relationships. That she is always portrayed by others as overtly sexual rather than how she actually is—sexually immature and naïve—is symptomatic of the need to control women's behavior and keep them aligned with the political dogma of the period.

Andrea's visits to the city are escapes from the violence within the walls of the house. For Andrea the shelter the city provides from the strangeness of the family home trumps the threat of violence on the street. In fact, internal domestic strife precedes the majority of Andrea's city sojourns: "A veces se me ocurría pensar, con delicia, en lo que sucedería en casa. Los oídos se me llenaban con los chillidos del loro y las palabrotas de

Juan. Prefería mi vagabundo libre" (112). The constant battles between her uncle Juan and his wife Gloria are cause for Andrea to continue to leave the danger of the house in preference for her solitary wanderings of the city. After Juan threatens to strangle Gloria, Andrea finds solace in the street's presence: "me marché a la calle a respirar su aire frío, cargado de olores de las tiendas. Las aceras, teñidas de la humedad crepuscular, reflejaban las luces de los faroles recién encendidos" (114). The city acts as a deterrent to the continuing chaos of the familial crisis, acting, in a sense, as a place of contemplation and safety that removes her from the violence of the home.

The narrative is peppered throughout with examples in which the city protects Andrea from the sinister house of Aribau Street: "Para ahuyentar a los fantasmas, salía mucho a la calle" (260). Paralleling Baudelaire's *flâneur*, Andrea wanders to reach no particular goal, using the city as a place that invites those who cannot be integrated socially or politically. Andrea finds herself wandering the streets when she comes again to the Catedral where she experiences a beauty "casi mística" and feels "medio estática." This is perhaps Andrea's most positive feeling of self-expression in the novel. The fact that she can delve into the streets of Barcelona and relate to the city in positive terms diminishes the threat of the city as a place of sexual violence and as a place that allows only a particular form of femininity. The *flâneur* is in possession of his/her individuality and Andrea, ambling through the streets of Barcelona, demonstrates a possession of self. Massey suggests that inhibiting women's movement is connected to a masculine desire to keep women contained in a static identity. Massey contends that "the challenge is to achieve this [movement] whilst at the same time recognizing one's necessary locatedness and embeddedness/embodiedness, and taking responsibility for it" (11). Laforet explores

the boundaries of women's locatedness, her place of identification, in connection with the developmental journey of self-discovery. By using the city as a place of self-recognition, Andrea passes over classifications meant to hold femininity in check.

Plazas and Calles: Urban Living in Rodoreda's Narrative

La plaça del Diamant (1962), *El carrer de les Camèlies* (1966), and *Aloma* (1937, 1969) by another Catalan women writer, Mercè Rodoreda, also engage the space of Barcelona in the protagonists' personal history.[24] Written in the social-realist style of the period, the novels draw a schematic picture of a young girl in the years surrounding the Civil War. *La plaça del Diamant* has been the subject of much literary analysis, and some themes need not be repeated here. The marginalization of the feminine is one example of a thoroughly explored topic of investigation. However, how the urban space interacts with Rodoreda's works is an area that deserves more attention.[25] Literary critic Enric Bou writes about the space of the city in *La plaça del Diamant* as a place of internal exile and alienation for Rodoreda in his article "Exile in the City" and notes that Barcelona "goes well beyond its function as a mere locale" (32). However, the issue surrounding the integration of the urban with the protagonist's search for self-awareness is not addressed specifically in Bou's work. Rather his argument parallels how the city mirrors the protagonist's marginalization in conjunction with the author's feelings of exile. The focus of this work, in contrast, is to investigate how the city contributes to the

[24] While I refer to the titles of the works in their original Catalan titles, I will draw any quotations from the Spanish translations as I first read them.

[25] María Isidra Mencos mentions the absence of a study of the urban in Mercè Rodoreda's works in *Visions and Voices: The Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*: 240-265.

protagonist's sense of self and place, ultimately reflecting the use of the city as a place of resistance. Understanding how the protagonist negotiates the cityscape becomes an important clue into her perception of identity and history. In addition, the protagonist's relationship to the city reveals how Rodoreda challenges the historical positioning of Spanish middleclass women as homemakers and wives.

While the historical setting is never explicitly mentioned in the narrative, the action can be situated in the years before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War. Bou mentions that the feeling of 'war' permeates the character's lives and hangs "silently and ominously [...] over the main character's personal history" (33). *La plaça del Diamant*, written in exile by the author, nevertheless engages the realist setting of war torn Barcelona as an extension of the protagonist's persona, hinting at the continued feeling of displacement felt by the author.[26] Bou suggests that Rodoreda's use of the city is an allegorical expression of the "impact of exile and alienation" and positions Barcelona in the category of things that are "unspeakable" for the protagonist, pointing to the nonliteral nature of the narrative as evidence (Bou 31). I, however, believe that the opposite is true: The city encourages self-reflection and self-recognition through direct (literal) contact with its presence. The urban space, although not cleansed of its danger, stands not as a "physical extension of what the main character cannot utter" but rather moves the character toward a deeper understanding of socio-economic circumstances and self-awareness (Bou 31). It is through the use of space that Rodoreda explores the limits

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[26] According to Catherine Davies, Mercè Rodoreda lived in voluntary exile from 1939 to 1978 living mostly in France, "Exile, the Hideous Reality: Mercè Rodoreda (1908-1983)" *Spanish Women's Writing 1849-1996* (London and Atlantic Highlands: The Athlone Press): 212-227.

of her protagonists' existence. The fact that Rodoreda lived in exile through the majority of her literary production yet still chose Barcelona as the spatial backdrop for her major works says much about the cultural and psychological impact that the city had on her, hinting that the city space is an extension of her creative self. Physically distanced from her native land, Rodoreda engages the city in a seeming attempt to resist her displacement. She further opposes this distancing by writing in Catalán, a forbidden language under Franco's government. Through this linguistic defiance, Rodoreda challenges restrictions placed on artistic creation and, by the same token, uses her protagonists as *portavoces* of resistance.

The theme of exile is significant to Rodoreda's work and to her portrayal of (and relationship with) the city. The fact that she did not live in Barcelona at the time *La plaça* and *El carrer* were written makes the connection to the space that much more poignant. Natalia (*La plaça*) and Cecilia (*El carrer*) are young women who are forced to face the daily realities of surviving in a city that is under siege or hostile to their existence. Yet, they both relate their stories with a detached emotional air. Both protagonists weave their way through their lives using skills they pick up along the way. Through their individual experiences they come to navigate the city, using its streets and hidden secrets for their survival.

The protagonist of *La plaça*, Natalia, similar to Andrea, relates her story in the first person and describes the city from her unique perspective. For instance, some of Barcelona's most celebrated features, namely the monuments of the Modernist architect Gaudí, Parq Guell and La Sagrada Familia, fail to impress Natalia. She sees these monuments of achievement as unimportant, telling Quimet, her soon-to-be husband, that

they have "demasiadas ondas y demasiados picos" (Rodoreda 15). This statement elicits not only a hit on the knee from Quimet, but also a "sermón" on the roles of men and women (15-16). Quimet invokes the Catholic sentiment of womanhood when he states that the mothers of the Catholic kings were the ones "que habían marcado el buen camino" (16). This sentiment mirrors Francoist Spain's political policies based on an imagined past morality and monarchial power.

In addition, Natalia's comments question officially sanctioned art and architecture that stand as testaments to the city's bourgeois culture and intellectual power, both influenced heavily by masculine ideals. What Natalia rejects with her refusal to recognize the importance of Gaudí's architecture is what Jean François Lyotard refers to as the 'grand narratives' of history. Natalia rejects the grand narrative of Modernism, stepping out from under its control, if only for an instant. Quimet not only immediately dismisses her opinion but promptly informs her that she is not allowed thoughts of her own. Still, by expressing her opinion, Natalia demonstrates an alternate view of the city, where large constructions as seen in the Modern city (i.e. Modernism) reflecting male-centered ideology seem insignificant. Rodríguez explains the importance of Natalia's narration: "Natalia, se produce un acercamiento indisoluble entre lo personal y lo político. La historia de una ciudad y de ciertos sectores de una población se despliega ante los ojos del/de la lector/a por medio de una voz feminina que tradicionalmente no había encontrado un espacio en la literature peninsular" (85). Hence, Natalia's personal account, Rodríguez goes on to say, subverts the regime's intent on creating one form of history, allowing the presentation of differences concerning perspective and reality.

While Andrea's experiences with the city on her own are mostly positive, Natalia's experience is less consistent and more problematic. She often feels threatened on the streets and at one time in the narrative, after a particularly desperate time, she remains indoors for an extended period. Still, Natalia represents a paradox of female behavior. On the one hand, she is dominated by her husband, allowing her identity to be formed and influenced by his whims and needs. On the other hand, she demonstrates characteristics of a woman who survives because of a keen instinct and mental awareness of her surroundings. As in *Nada*, the action in *La plaça del Diamant* oscillates between the domestic and the urban space. Much attention has been paid by critics to the analysis of the domestic sphere in *La plaça*, mentioning the disorienting effects of the house, its claustrophobic feeling, its dirtiness and state of deterioration. The home in all its enclosing aspects contrasts with the outside spaces of the city—the streets, markets, and parks. The city is where Natalia engages in social interaction, where she experiences the full range of human emotion, including joy and fear, and where she is most able to conduct herself freely without the watchful eye of Quimet.

While the city space for Natalia is not always one that provides a place of comfort (she often feels as if she might be trampled or run over by street cars) she does move through the streets as a technique to achieve mental clarity and to find short escapes from the house. One place she often passes is a shop that has a display of dolls. This recurring image is a way of marking the passage of time throughout the narrative. In this sense she also takes on the quality of the *flâneur* who observes the shops of the city streets: "Si unas cuantas vueltas por la calle Mayor mirando escaparates. Y el escaparates de las muñecas en la casa de los hules" (Rodoreda 36). Later she hides the fact that she has

been to look at the dolls from Quimet, demonstrating a secret resistance to his control: "Y no le dije que cuando había bajado del tranvía había ido a mirar las muñecas en el escaparate de la casa de los hules y que por eso la comida estaba retrasada" (58). I read the dolls as symbolically representing the objectification Natalia has experienced through her role as a daughter, wife, and mother. They, like Natalia, have remained fixed, unable to move from behind their glass wall.

The dolls also represent a fixed symbol of time: "Siempre allí, tan bonitas dentro del escaparate, esperando que las comprasen y se las llevasen" (69). When Natalia is contemplating killing her children to save them from starvation, she again visits the window: "Me paré en la tienda de los hules haciendo que me miraba, porque si tengo que decir la verdad he de decir que no veía nada: sólo manchas de colores, sombras de muñeca..." (177). In fact, during this most difficult time, Natalia begins wandering the streets more. She follows people around the city and observes them, she wanders into a church for the first time since her wedding, and she reminisces about her past. Through her presence on the streets Natalia gains a sense of autonomy: "Y andaba por la calle como una persona entre otras personas" (190).

Natalia does reach times of extreme desperation and the doll display continues to provide a reflective mirror of her surroundings. For instance, when retreating from the store after purchasing the poison meant to kill herself and her children Natalia again contempates the shop window and comments on its ability to distract her from the war represented by the blue lights that were put in place during the bombardment: "Y otra vez la casa de los hules y de las muñecas con los zapatos de charol...sobre todo no ver las luces azules y cruzar sin prisa...no ver las luces azules..." (192). As the war closes in

around her, Natalia's use of the *flâneur's* gaze resists the psychological pull of the violence. The street not only reflects her state of mind but allows for memories to resurface about her life before the war, before children and before Quimet: "Había aprendido a leer y a escribir y vendía pasteles y caramelos y chocolatines macizas y chocolatines huecas con licor dentro" (190). The street triggers a flood of memories about a better time when the influence of husband and family did not dominate her being.

One of the areas that locates Natalia outside of her husband's control is the fact that she worked in the public sphere. Moreover, the novel begins with Natalia leaving her job to attend the dance in the Plaça del Diamant. According to Temma Kaplan, females in Barcelona constituted a large percentage of the work force in the early part of the twentieth-century. The rise of capitalism and increased industrialization meant that many women needed to work to supplement incomes. While Natalia's job at a candy store, which she enjoys, would not seem to present a threat to male supremacy, it does become the focus of a sexual threat for Quimet and he complains about Natalia's job while they are still novios. He demands that she quit working because he is convinced that the boss is acting in a sexually illicit manner: "¡No quiero que trabajes más para ese pastelero! ¡Me he enterado de que va detrás de las dependientes!" (Rodoreda 19). Quimet's paranoia reflects the male-oriented paradigm feeling threatened by women increasingly being allowed into the traditionally male work place. In the 30s and 40s woman's waged labor in Spain was not uncommon but it was a new social construct. In *La plaça* the fear of the feminine is expressed as paranoia that women in working positions are sexually exposed and vulnerable to sexual exploitation. However, Quimet's stance is portrayed in the novel via Natalia's interior monologue as unwarranted and

irrational. Despite the fact that Natalia is already losing herself to Quimet's control, she manages to stand her ground for her right to work, albeit somewhat briefly, and she and Quimet do not speak again for three weeks.

Natalia's experience with the world of commerce, in addition to her job, occurs with señora Enriqueta, an independent older woman who works selling small food items on a street corner. A marginalized character, señora Enriqueta is a self-employed member of the working lower class and maintains her existence without the help of a male presence. She offers Natalia advice and friendship and acts as a role model as someone who can survive on her own through her own means. Señora Enriqueta provides Natalia with a stable female relationship that contributes to the raising of children, and offers social interaction and stimulation, all of which takes place out in the open on the streets. This city street female friendship remains with Natalia throughout the narrative and is one of the few constants of the novel, demonstrating that the city can provide women with stable, healthy, and nurturing relationships.

After the birth of her two children, Natalia again searches for employment to make uo for Quimet's lack of work. Now work becomes essential for survival and Quimet's paranoia about Natalia's being in the work place subsides, revealing the embedded hypocrisy concerning the limits on female employment. On a tip from señora Enriqueta, Natalia accepts part-time appointment as a domestic servant. Here Natalia receives her first direct experience with Barcelona's class system. When she arrives at the front gate to inquire about the position, no one will answer the door and she is told to go around to the side entrance. Despite the fact that the bourgeois house is deteriorating, including diseased trees and termites (a symbol of the decline of bourgeois power), the

social distances between Natalia and her employers remain intact. Natalia is kept very busy at work and when she arrives back to her own home she must fulfill the traditional duties of wife and mother. Her health begins to wane from the strain of working and keeping up the house and children: "Estaba cansada; me mataba trabajando y todo iba para atrás. El Quimet no veía que lo que yo necesitaba era un poco de ayuda en vez de pasarme la vida ayudando, y nadie se daba cuenta de mí y todo el mundo me pedía más, como si yo no fuera una persona" (Rodoreda 127). Natalia's complaint echoes the situation of middle and lower class Spanish women of the time; the female body being overworked while female existence is disregarded and ignored.

Literary critics often comment on Natalia's non-political narrative, as she only makes passing, nonspecific references to dramatic political changes such as the Second Republic or the Spanish Civil War. When the Civil War actually does begin, her response is a casual "vino lo que vino" (137). Kimberly Nance reminds us that issues dealing with a woman's personal well being are, indeed, political: "*La plaça del Diamant* is not a political novel in the traditional sense; it does not deal with the abstracts of politics. Rather, it focuses on what war does to people and how people understand war, bringing to mind a slogan from the Women's Movement: the personal is political" (67). While the CNT heralded progressive reforms in female education and work outside the home, closer inspection reveals that when compared to the percentage of men who were actively involved in party politics, women were often kept on the sidelines. Given the ceaseless workload that the average lower or middle class woman must have encountered, Natalia's lack of reference to the political landscape quite possibly is due to

her extreme exhaustion. Natalia's immediate concerns with the war were focused on her work, the safety of her family, and the daily need for survival.

Another aspect of *La Plaça* is the concern with the role of the mother and maternal memory. In *Nada*, Andrea, long orphaned, encounters maternal substitutes in her friend Ena's mother and to some extent her aunt Angustias, but she does not directly address the absence of motherhood in her own life, nor does she exhibit any interest in becoming a mother. She does long for maternal affection, however, and her desperate searches for lasting friendship quite possibly arise from a residual childhood need for mothering. Natalia, on the other hand, acutely feels the need for a maternal bond and for passing on her personal history to her children. The maternal comes to the surface in Rodoreda's writing as a central link between women and the cityscape by mixing the material space with the emotional. Both *La Plaça del Diamant* and *El carrer de les Camèlies* strongly emphasize the absence of motherhood and its effects on the protagonists' lives. In fact, despite the Francoist regime's emphasis on the importance of motherhood to nation building, the lack of the maternal, echoed in Spanish women's stories, arises as a prominent theme in the form of maternal abandonment, orphanhood, distant relationships, abortion and miscarriage, and unreliable maternal substitutes.

Natalia's relationship to motherhood is problematic and relates to the city and its space in following ways: First, the city, as a locus of collective memory possesses between its layers the accumulated experiences of those living within its boundaries. Their experiences as people, their desires, and fears are ingrained into the city's form. Motherhood is an experience that literally shapes the landscape by adding population, providing sustenance, engaging in a variety of nurturing activities that enhance survival,

and by being part of the general work force. Secondly, mothers also ensure the continued culture of a city by passing down knowledge of the city to their children, both in linguistic and historic modes. As the city is the crux of cultural experience, motherhood gets played out in its structures and streets, influencing the development of the urban matrix.

For example, it is when Natalia is first in the Plaça del Diamant that she tells the reader of her mother's death. The bustle of the crowd instigates a memory of the maternal, or rather the absence of the maternal, for Natalia. In order to appreciate how this memory is triggered it is necessary to examine closely the passages before and immediately after the point when Natalia remembers her mother:

Y los músicos, sudados y en mangas de camisa. Mi madre muerta hacía años y sin poder aconsejarme y mi padre casado con otra. Mi padre casado con otra y yo sin madre, que sólo había vivido para cuidarme. Y mi padre casado y yo jovencita y sola en la Plaza del Diamante, esperando a que rifasen cafeteras, y la Julieta gritando para que la voz pasase por encima de la música, ¡no te sientes, que te arrugarás! [...]. (8)

This passage has been analyzed for its Freudian overtones, providing insightful interpretations about Natalia's subconscious feelings of separation from her parents. That said, the presence of the city, especially taking into account that the passage occurs while Natalia is in an open public square, deserves further discussion. The themes previously mentioned as recurrent in Spanish women's writings occur in these few lines. With the death of her mother Natalia experiences maternal abandonment and her father's choice of a new wife provides no consolation. In fact, the substitute mother offers no emotional bond and is referred to only as "otra". Natalia, unlike Andrea, has enough maternal

memory that she can recall her mother's influence as evidenced in later passages of the novel. However, the fact that she states that her mother "sólo había vivido para ciudarme" has an artificial feel to it, almost as if she had been told that her mother's only role in life was to take care of her. David Rosenthal's English translation (1981) of this same passage takes this idea further saying "My father remarried and me without my mother whose only joy in life had been to fuss over me" (16). The translation is curious because it assumes that "sólo había vivido para ciudarme" is the same as "only joy in life" and denies a more literal reading of the passage that suggests that Natalia's mother identified only as a mother and had no other existence outside of motherhood. In fact, Natalia tells the reader of an unstable home in which her mother and father rarely spoke to each other. Triggering the memories is the open space of the city, the influx of people, and the stimulus of music. The scene creates in Natalia a type of vertigo that stirs up an emotional need for a maternal connection. It is, of course, in this moment of vulnerability that Natalia meets Quimet for the first time—locking in her subsequent victimization.

Natalia's own problems with motherhood are evident throughout the novel. She is a mother who fiercely loves her children, yet feels occupied and controlled by them. She experiences extreme maternal guilt when she locks her children, still very young, in the house while she works. She is also infiltrated by guilt when she decides to send Antoni to an orphanage because she is unable to feed both children at once. And the final and most intense feelings of guilt arise when she is making the decision to kill them with

poison before they starve. The realities of the war slowly peck away at the maternal bond that Natalia shares with her children, resulting in an arduous relationship with motherhood.

While the city streets offer Natalia and Andrea a place where they can explore areas of their identities, their movement is also circumscribed and limited by the threat of violence. This violence occurs on several levels: One is on a physical level where intimidation translates into a direct threat on the body in the form of pain or injury. Another threat, related to the first, is sexual in nature. Women who wander into areas that have been "quarantined" for the use of prostitution, for example, risk sexual assault or harassment. As previously mentioned, sexual promiscuity is commonly associated with women on the street in general and the characters of these two novels are sexualized at various times while in certain areas of the city, many of which have been designated according to feminine access. For example, the Ramblas street in Barcelona, a mesh of extreme cultural differences and purposes, is identified as a place of danger—yet one of infinite excitement—in both novels. The *barrio chino*, the prostitution corridor, is also a place of threat and is considered 'off-limits' to women not engaged in actual prostitution. Natalia stays clear of the barrio chino, but Andrea has several run-ins with this underworld despite the effort made by her aunt to dissuade Andrea from having full access to the city.

As Rodríguez explains, Angustias imposes a mode of behavior that contradicts the goals Andrea originally set out to accomplish: "Si algo experimenta la joven al llegar a Barcelona son las ganas de aventura y de exploración de la ciudad mediante paseos sin rumbo fijo, y esto es precisamente lo primero que se le niega" (Rodríguez 25). Andrea's

access to the outside is persistently jeopardized by her aunt Angustias and reflects many of the inherent fears entrenched in the city's space. Angustias, a bastion of antiquated social values, likens the city to sexual exploitation and, consequently, a deterioration of social standing. This loss of status is why Angustias scolds Andrea for her constant wanderings throughout the city: "[...] pero de eso a andar por ahí suelta como un perro vagabundo... Cuando estés sola en el mundo haz lo que quieras. Pero ahora tienes una familia, un hogar y un nombre" (Laforet 52). Here the family's honor is at stake and reveals how the female's body connects to the social order. In order to maintain the façade of family honor, Angustias fragments the city, dissecting it into places that Andrea can and cannot access and warns of the possible consequences of ignoring certain systems of protocol: "Hija mía, hay unas calles en las que si una señorita se metiera alguna vez, perdería para siempre su reputación. Me refiero al barrio chino...Tú no sabes dónde comienza" (52). This passage is indicative of the need to "know" the streets and introduces a paradoxical situation: On the one hand, according to social custom, Andrea must limit her movement to sanctioned places that pose less of a sexual threat. On the other hand, she is granted permission to navigate this landscape on her own, insuring a continued dependency on established norms of feminine access to the urban sphere. Thus, Andrea's unfamiliarity with the city is used against her and her frequent wanderings quickly develop into a metaphor for sexual deviancy. Through the threat of ruining her reputation by accessing certain streets, the city becomes partially off-limits to Andrea, diminishing the possibility of engaging the urban space into her process of self-definition.

Natalia, while not facing directly the threat of the *barrio chino*, is aware of her perceived heightened sexuality whilst in the city. At one point while looking at the shop windows she encounters the type of harassment typical of women alone in the streets: "Unos cuantos tonots me empezaron a decir cosas para molestarme y uno muy gitano se acercó más que otros y dijo, está buena. Como si yo fuera un plato de sopa. Todo aquello no me hacía ninguna gracia" (Rodoreda 36). In an earlier passage, Natalia again is in the city waiting for the arrival of Quimet when she is bothered by a boy pointing a play gun at her and then by a man who beckons her in a solicitation for sex: "Cuando estuve al pie del balcón el joven me dijo, entra, que echaremos una siestecita" (13). Hence, there exists an abundant perception of possible sexual mischief on the part of the woman in the urban space. Writing that the mere presence of women in the city creates a problem for a masculine-oriented paradigm, Elizabeth Wilson explains that women in the city often are labeled as sexual creatures and, conversely, are held up to lofty standards: "Woman is present in cities as temptress, as whore, as fallen woman, as lesbian, but also as virtuous womanhood in danger, as heroic womanhood who triumphs over temptation and tribulation" (6). Yet, as Natalia and Andrea demonstrate by their solitary wanderings, this threat does not hinder them from utilizing the urban space to their advantage.

Another of Rodoreda's novels that deserves closer analysis of the urban space in connection with its female protagonist is *El carrer de les Camèlies* (1966). Many recurring themes seen in the work of Catalan women writers such as motherhood, dispossession, poverty, sexual exploitation, male domination, also reveal themselves in this text. Published a few years after *La Plaça del Diamant*, *El carrer* grapples with

many of the same issues surrounding the feminine subject and the urban as seen in the two previously mentioned novels. The telling epigraph of the novel is from the quintessential modernist writer T.S. Eliot: "I have walked many years in this city,' linguistically alluding to the connection between space, time, and identity. Correlation with city space is made from the beginning of the text, and is vital to the protagonist's story. Authored outside of Spain during the years of Franco's regime while the author was in exile, the story explores the depths of feminine existence as codified within the urban landscape, while also testing the boundaries of ideological control. The fact that the protagonist involves the space of the city with her own self-discovery classifies *El carrer* as an urban novel that poses a challenge to the type of femininity being manufactured by the Franco regime.

Just as Natalia and Andrea do, the protagonist of *El carrer*, Cecilia Ce, narrates her own life experiences from the periphery. In *Under Construction*: *The Body in Spanish Novels,* peninsular literary critic Elizabeth Scarlett accurately describes Cecilia as being more marginalized than Natalia, namely because she arrives on the scene as an orphan without name or family. Like Natalia, Cecilia is portrayed as an overly naïve girl who tells her story in an emotionally detached, distant way.[27] In essence, Cecilia incarnates several of the urban dweller's manifestations: the *flâneur*, the rag-picker, and the prostitute. She is only an infant when she is left on the door step of a Catalan couple who take on the responsibility of raising her but without integrating her as a permanent part of the family. The theme of abandonment runs throughout the text as indicated by

[27] The narrative technique of having the narrator/protagonist exude emotional detachment has been analyzed as contributing rather than detracting from Cecilia's and Natalia's ability to comprehend their reality.

the first words of the novel: "Me abandonaron en la calle de las Camelias" (9).[28] Here there is direct association with the city space, a location of identity, and with Cecilia, someone with neither place nor identity. From the start, the novel portrays a ensuing struggle with the loss of control to determine one's life.

With the novel being staged once again in postwar Barcelona, Cecilia navigates her way through life by employing various techniques accumulated by years of living with the hazards of the streets. To start with, Cecilia is a strange child, characterized by Carmen Martín Gaite's description of "la chica rara," a leitmotif that dominates the Spanish postwar novel.[29] She exhibits an extreme fascination with fire and her pyromaniac tendencies end up establishing her as "extraña". Cecilia experiences the war as a child and her memories of that time are related with the emotional detachment typical of many of Rodoreda's characters, seemingly devoid of the psychological scarring that the war left on many minds. Still, the war corresponds to her coming of age and the violent events of the war merge with her biological maturation:

> Del tiempo de la guerra apenas me acuerdo. Sólo sé que daba alegría ver a la gente mayor tan asustada, que me gustaba pasear por en medio de la calle cuando tocaban las sirenas y que lo más me agradaba era aquella especie de lanto que hacían al final. Y esta extraña alegría se mezclaba

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[28] Abandonment is a theme that frequents many novels of Spanish women writers, as shall be discussed further with Carmen Martín Gaite and Rosa Montero.

[29] Carmen Martín Gaite's "chica rara" is one that does not exhibit a preoccupation with social engagements or personal appearances and suggests a lack of sexual interest. In general however, a "chica rara" included those girls who did not follow the social norms of femininity.

> con la vergüenza de mi sangre, de haber manchado las sábanas la primera noche. (51)

These words hold an odd mixture of pleasure, shame, and audacity. And, again as we saw with Natalia and Andrea, Cecilia enters the streets as a resistance to the circumstances happening around her. Her pleasure defies the war's purpose to terrorize and create chaos. However, within this resistance to violence enters a shameful feeling concerning her first menstruation that negatively marks her transition from child to young woman. Her shame reveals a problematic transition to womanhood, a change that Cecilia struggles with throughout the narrative as she lives out her existence caught between being an independent woman and personifying the perpetual abandoned child.

Leaving her adoptive home at fifteen, Cecilia wanders from location to location usually with the motive of finding food and shelter. When she first leaves her childhood home with Eusebio, her first lover, her emotional distance concerning the people that had cared for her is evident: "Una noche fuimos a su barraca. Su hermano había muerto en la guerra. Ya no volví nunca más a casa" (67). Once living in a shantytown, Cecilia occupies another manifestation of a nineteenth-century Parisian urban dweller—the ragpicker. Wilson describes the ragpicker as "one of the most abject and notorious groups in Parisian society" who "in their hovels represented the "Other" of Paris, the underside of the city of gaiety and pleasure" (54). In urban motifs the ragpicker, the *flâneur*, and the prostitute share a common identity of being present in the city.[30]

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[30] Wilson writes: "Just as the *flâneur* was a prostitute, perhaps also the prostitute could be said to be the female *flâneur*. They understood, better than anyone, the pitiless way in which the city offered an intensity of joy that was never, somehow, fulfilled. The spectacle melted away just as you felt you had reached its centre; the bubble burst when you touched it" (55).

Throughout the narrative Cecilia embodies all three of these motifs, some simultaneously, becoming representative of all the urban manifestations as delineated by Benjamin.

Cecilia also finds comfort in wandering the city streets as exhibited in the two novels previously mentioned. When Eusebio is arrested for beating another man, she occasionally ventures out to try and get him released but finds herself distracted by observing the city surroundings instead:

> Muchas veces me había vestido decidida, decía que me iba a ver al gobernador y me iba a pasear por las calles. Me gustaba mirar los anuncios de licores en las vidrieras de los bares; había algunos muy bonitos, con las letras muy bien hechas, en dos o tres colores, y con cosas dibujadas. [...] Un día fui a parar delante de la verja del parque, y me detuve de cara al verdor, sin poder entrar, aunque aquello me calmaba. Otro día me metí en una calle muy estrecha, llena de ropa tendida que chorreaba agua. [...] Todas las calles me gustaban: la calle de los Pescadores, la calle de la Sal, la calle del Mar. Me paseaba peripuesta entre los piropos que me echaban los marineros y los estibadores. (90-1)

In these passages, Cecilia abandons the idea of helping her violent lover and instead wanders the streets musing about store fronts and small observations of daily life. There exists among her words a heightened concern for the aesthetic, occupying the privileged position of the *flâneur* who ponders the city scene and gives voice to its description. Through these walks she resists going to Eusebio and instead feeds her imagination by walking. Still, while the streets provide a calmness to the turbulence of

her life, the sailors' calls and whistles stand as not so subtle reminders of the potential violence instilled within the urban space for the feminine subject. When seen through the eyes of the masculine, Cecilia, just as Andrea and Natalia, is over-sexualized when alone in the city.

Janet Pérez tells us in *Contemporary Women Writers of Spain* that Cecilia is pathologically narcissistic and self-oriented (81). However, one must keep in mind that Cecilia's position is one of inferiority. This translates into her being keenly aware of her need for survival. Pérez mentions that the struggle Cecilia has for autonomy is inseparable from the nation's effort to reestablish itself after the war. While I would agree that her self-absorption reflects the harsh post-war climate, it is important to also bear in mind that what we also encounter in Cecilia is a dispossessed protagonist who resists boundaries of identification.

Eventually, Cecilia turns to prostitution and spends most of the novel in some form of imposed prostitution and subjection. Of course, a distinction must be made between Baudelaire's conception of the prostitute and the ragpicker and the reality that Cecilia endures while engaged in actual prostitution. Wilson describes that for Baudelaire the writer resembled the prostitute by selling his poetry, an extension of the self, and by adopting the guise of the *flâneur*. This metaphorical prostitution is a wide departure from the physicality of actual prostitution experienced by Cecilia and reminds us that women often face violent and regressive consequences for wandering the periphery. Cecilia turns to prostitution when her situation becomes dire and she is on the point of starvation, emphasizing the physically debilitating effects of the Civil War on the vulnerable populations. At first, Cecilia attempts to support herself through sewing, but

her inability to learn this traditional woman's craft only increases her subjugation: "Logré hacer cuatro blusas al día, pero me moría de hambre y no podía ni andar de lo que me dolían las corvas y todo el vientre" (Rodoreda 95). Her decision, if one can call it that, to abandon the sewing machine and turn to prostitution is void of any eroticization: "Y una noche, sin pensarlo dos veces, la arrastré fuera de la chabola, cogí el bolso y, delgada como un espárrago, me fui a las Ramblas a buscarme la vida" (96). Paco Villar writes in *Historia y leyenda del Barrio Chino* that despite increases in laws meant to curb immorality after the end of the war, prostitution was still abundant in the Barrio Chino: "El ambiente de pobreza extrema de la posguerra hizo que el número de prostitutas creciera espectacularmente. Las calles aparecían infestadas de mujeres, muchas de ellas menores de edad, ofreciendo su cuerpo a cambio de dinero o comida" (176). Cecilia becomes dependent on this form of earning a living, and is caught in a quagmire of seemingly endless relationships of varying sordidness and misfortune. Hence, the city becomes a place that both sustains and exploits her body, reconfirming the paradoxical relationship that often confronts women who inhabit the urban spaces.

Cecilia, much like Natalia, struggles with issues surrounding motherhood. She has multiple pregnancies, abortions, and one stillborn birth. Scarlett, concerned mainly with images of the body, attributes Cecilia's troubles with motherhood, along with her inability to carry a child to term, to the many years of abuse and bodily mistreatment (113). Pérez draws a more political parallel with Cecilia's preoccupation with motherhood, naming her obsession a "reflection of social values" from a culture concerned with procreation (81). However, motherhood and the ensuing pain caused by its impossibility for Cecilia has several layers of meaning that can be explored. First,

given Cecilia's low social status she defies the clean image of motherhood that the state would be interested in promoting. Secondly, the fact that motherhood eludes Cecilia destabilizes glossy images of the blissful mother, calling into question state controlled propaganda that equates motherhood with femininity. Had Cecilia actually carried to term, the likelihood of her ability to be a good mother is precarious at best. Nevertheless, the loss of maternal possibility affects Cecilia and each subsequent loss is more poignant than the next. She experiences recurring dreams about children and infants that highlight her inability to bear children. For Natalia her children represented a continuation of history, a cyclical testament of life. Cecilia has no such reassurance of continuation as echoed in her manifesto that she only needs to live until her death: "Tenía que vivir hasta la muerte" (Rodoreda 230). In *El carrer*, motherhood is not the idealized version touted by official policy, but a constant affront to a woman's physical and mental well being.

By the end of the narrative, Cecilia diverts from all the codes regarding Francoist policy towards women. She refuses any characterization and stands outside attempts to define her along the lines of femininity of the time. We experience her life in the rawness in which it was lived. Through Cecilia comes a viewpoint of the city that is unaffected by Franco's imposition on the feminine subject. In fact, many have commented on Cecilia's alienation as her most defining quality. Kathleen M. Glenn writes that "Cecilia, in particular, remains an alienated and lonely outsider, and her status as 'the other woman' reinforces the sensation of alterity" (117). While it is difficult to read victory into alienation, it does reveal the façade of femininity created under post-war ideals and reinforce a more complete, less two dimensional, view of femininity.

The Inherited City: Roig's Women of Barcelona

Like Laforet and Rodoreda, Catalan author Montserrat Roig uses Barcelona as the spatial focal point of her narrative. In contrast to the previous two authors, Roig writes from a distinct historical perspective that deals with the long term sociological effects of the Civil War more than with the immediate impact of a war-torn state. In addition, Roig's work focuses on the changes emerging out of the political transition from a dictatorship to a democratic nation. One of the major characteristics in Roig's writing is how femininity responds to societal changes influenced by the rise of feminism during the 60s and 70s. With new issues ranging from education to feminine responses to more sexual freedom, Roig's work offers a commentary on how women can provide an alternate vision that differs from the masculine paradigms previously offered. Through her writing, Roig acknowledges the implicit connection between what was then a major shift in social attitudes concerning women and history. In fact, recuperating history is central to Riog's writing and the city becomes central to the interconnectedness of various generations, even while mainstream ideas are being challenged and called into question. Many literary critics such as Àlex Broch and Christina Dupláa have recounted the importance of the city in the work of Catalan women writers to the development of the feminine subject.[31] As Dupláa indicates, Barcelona is the cultural marker through which all of Roig's narrative work is filtered: "Each generation of Roig's genealogy has conquered for women a new space, moving from the interior toward the exterior, which marks an expansion of the space occupied by the previous generation, eventually claiming

[31] See, for instance, Dupláa's essay "Montserrat Roig: Women, Genealogy, and Mother Tongue" in *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition*: 337-56.

the street for their own" ("Essay", 229). Broch goes on to explain that for many Catalan authors the city of Barcelona connects the personal to the historical and the political:

> La biografia personal participa d'elements de la biblografia col-lectiva. I atès que el cosmos social necessita d'un espai físic y d'una geografia d'identificació on els personatges han de viure el sue periple personal, social I emotiu, aquest context deriva cap a l'espai urbà que millor coneixen les autores, Barcelona, que, d'altra banda I degut a la seva capitalitat política y econòmica, es converteix en un espai de confluència I exponent del pols històric del país. (30)

Barcelona instills in the authors that inhabit its boundaries (real and fictional) a sense of ideological and personal connection to its physical construct. By way of example, in Roig's work the city becomes an anchor by which female protagonists are able to stabilize their sense of place and identity. Using Barcelona as a backdrop, Roig addresses the connection between memory, family and social history, and the urban space. *Ramona, adéu*, published in Catalán in 1972 and in Spanish translation in 1980, conveys the story of a grandmother, daughter, and granddaughter all residing in the same *barrio* in Barcelona. Living in the same city, each woman inherits her mother's past cultural baggage and struggles to claim her own identity. In this narrative, feminine genealogy provides the women with a sense of place and history which makes breaking with past traditions difficult. Duplaá writes in *La voz testimonial en Montserrat Roig* that feminine genealogy is an important component to Roig's work because "la creación de ina genealogía representa para el pensamiento feminista de la diferencia, la manera más clara de ir concediendo autoridad a las mujeres a lo largo de la historia" (91). However,

achieving a sense of authority through reexamination of the past consequently problematizes separation from former models because it destabilizes traditional foundations of definition, leaving the subject vulnerable to a volatile self-understanding.

Ramona, adéu places women's experiences during three separate historical periods at the center of the narrative, while throughout the text, the women search for answers to explain their particular socio-political situations. Their connection to the city is one aspect that remains constant and the city stands as a powerful symbol of inherited space, memory, and history. Portraying the women's self-development as interconnected through a shared history means that a separation from their feminine consciousness is precarious because it deconstructs historical foundations of self. For the women there exists an intergenerational misunderstanding that causes them to make decisions based on their inherited assumptions about womanhood. In fact, feminine genealogy and its effects on subsequent generations are the focal point of the narrative. Catherine Davies writes in *Contemporary Feminist Fiction in Spain*: "One of the most important themes of the novel is this lack of communication between successive generations of women, between mothers and daughters" (40). Just as all three women share the same name, Mundeta (or Ramona), all experience challenges to their subjectivity according the political atmosphere of the time. Thus, the women connect to one another through a collective history and simultaneously resist one another to claim a space liberated from former confinement.

The opening passage of the novel relates a fraction of the story of the Ramona who is, both in a literal and figurative sense, caught in the middle. For instance, she is the daughter of the older Ramona who represents past social customs and the mother of the younger Ramona who is coming of age as Franco's regime is coming to an end. This

situates her textually as both the inheritor of a feminine history but also a provider and an example of feminine behavior, passing down her inherited information to her daughter. Beginning with a scene "en plena guerra," Ramona is making her way through the chaotic streets of Barcelona in an effort to locate her husband, with whom she shares no deep relationship. Rather, her mission is born mostly out of a sense of duty, but there also exists a sense of curiosity and adventure in the undertaking. The middle Ramona is the character least likely to demonstrate profound gestures of courage and daring, yet she finds herself making her way through dangerous streets of destruction and violence. Her determination to reach the site of the bombing leads her through a labyrinth of marred city blocks. This journey, set in the beginning pages of the novel, is a striking contrast to what the reader discovers about Ramona throughout the rest of the text.

In fact, the middle Ramona exhibits a more extreme form of the grandmother's timidity and passivity. She is a simple, homely woman consumed with a general fear that she will never marry (130). She eventually has a brief love affair with a man who commits suicide after having witnessed the brutalities of the Civil War. While her lover (Ignasi) was alive, Ramona enjoyed a brief period of fulfillment. His suicide, however, leaves her even more susceptible and fragile than before and she marries a man whose job profits from the war's continuation. She lets her husband, Joan, control all aspects of her life.

Having led a limited existence (32), the decision to walk through the city becomes her one moment of liberty and throughout her life she reflects back upon the experience with excitement. What the journey of Ramona reveals is that there exist moments of resistance even for the women most silenced. In other words, Ramona traveling through

the city during a period of instability places her in opposition to the forces that attempt to contain her. This scene, threading its way throughout the narrative, is the most significant of the novel because it involves the character least likely to assert herself against the system that surrounds her. Yet, it places this unlikely subject in the center of war-torn Barcelona, pregnant with her future daughter. Ramona occupies the space of the resistor, the one who, despite all odds, stands in contra to domination, if only for a moment. Her observations are again reminiscent of the *flâneur* who engages the city in his/her interior dialogue.

As she continues through the city she thinks of her friend Kati, whom she holds in high regard and considers a strong example of womanhood. "Quiero hacerme la fuerte," thinks Mundeta as she wanders among the ruined city blocks (12). These images of being the strong woman defy what the reader learns of Mundeta's life later in the novel. Yet, this scene is transformative for her in the sense that she reflects on this one day as the day in which she was most in possession of herself. The fact that she is carrying her child, who she admits she would rather have been a boy because all girls "somos todas unas tontas," further establishes this event as subversive. Mundeta does not totally redefine herself at this juncture but she does manage to imagine herself as different than she is; as a strong woman with the ability to make her own decisions and decide her own fate. Her daughter will have more of an opportunity to defend herself against cultural imposition due to her mother's stance in this one instant. This one moment diverts from the normality of Mundeta's life, occurring in the epicenter of Barcelona during the height of its destruction and capitulation to Francoist forces.

The Spanish Civil War becomes for the three women both a way of connecting—together they engage in conversations about the war—and a dividing force with each having very diverse experiences with the war. The abuela sees the war as those against religion and those for religion while Mundeta experiences the war in its entire catastrophe. The daughter feels the generational gap between herself and her mother when they speak of the war. The daughter belongs to the postwar generation that is trying desperately to forget the crimes and destruction caused by the war. This fractured generational divide is mended by the women's connection to their collective memory as embodied by the city. The memory that unites these women has as its central focus an intimate connection to the cityscape. Barcelona becomes the unifying element between the generations, inviting a connection of space, time and memory despite the distances created by historical events.

In *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida* (*Dime que me quieres aunque sea mentira)*, Monserrat Roig writes about how Barcelona fosters her literary imagination. In this work of non-fiction, Roig takes a literary walk through Barcelona's history. She relates how history has impacted the physical and cultural makeup of the city. The city, Roig tells us, has been narrated throughout its history by its chroniclers in the feminine: "Desde entonces hasta hoy, todos nuestros cronistas han comparado a Barcelona con una mujer. Mientras el Estado representaba al padre, la ciudad era como una madre… Una ciudad que nos llevaba al agua y que nos hacía pensar en los orígenes" (130). Roig mentions that the city has not only been referred to as a revered mother but also has been called "ramera, vieja dama, un poco santa, un poco bruja, hechicera y rosa de fuego…, según los tiempos y las ideologías" (130-1). Prostitutes are apt examples of

women in the most public of professions who garner little respect in the larger population. While she engages the reader with this backwards glance into the past, she also reveals how the urban spaces trigger access to her own history. For instance, in the chapter "Barcelona, una geografía literaria" she speaks to how the city of her birth connects her to her writing via nostalgic visions and present-tense reality. She tells us that the city is a place of contradictions, offering hidden dangers and enticing adventures of transgression: "Una ciudad con fronteras que me anunciaban peligros, pero que también me incitaban a la transgresión" (161). In many respects, the trajectory of *Ramona, adéu* follows this same premise; revealing how the city mirrors each woman's personal history.

Roig points out that women's history is subject to changes in the city's makeup. Roig uses bodily images to describe the urban geography: "Las calles y las plazas son la epidermis de las cuidades. Las casas, sus órganos interiores; en ocasiones el corazón, otras las entrañas" (125). This description is important because it locks the city into a connection with the subject. The subject who wanders city streets, experiences its structures, and moves through its various public parks and buildings also constructs her life around its influences. The city provides a visceral connection that ultimately imprints itself onto the subject's development.

Roig's feelings about the city as a nexus of feminine connection are apparent in *Ramona, adéu*. Telling the story of three women, a grandmother, mother and daughter, each with an unshakeable connection to Barcelona, Roig explores how collective experience influences subjectivity. Told from the perspective of the petite bourgeoisie class central to Barcelona's main culture, much of the novel is a criticism of the

hypocrisy embedded in the social behaviors of the time. The women's collective history is rooted in this particular urban center and is not transferable to other city spaces. The weight of feminine ancestry anchors the women to Barcelona and commits the city as an integral part of their development. For instance, the older Mundeta visits Paris on her honeymoon and while her new husband finds joy in the journey, Mundeta compares the Parisian landscape to Barcelona, finding them to be similar with the difference that Barcelona pertains to her sense of place and self: "Y cuando lo pienso, París me parece tan mezquina y provinciana como Barcelona, con la diferencia de que no es mía en absoluto" (Roig 52).

The grandmother of *Ramona, adéu* marries a man who, she soon discovers, is unable to provide the interesting life she had hoped for. Relying on romantic images, she creates a fantasy world that is more akin to her expectations. With a life of relative luxury and boredom, she develops images of love and passion but never acts on her desires for fear of losing her position in society. The end result is that she remains enclosed within her bourgeois environment, never achieving her aspirations of love. Conforming to patriarchal expectations of marriage and femininity, the grandmother passes her legacy of submission to her daughter.

The city acts as a bridge between generations that seem lost to each other. In a section dated June 3, 1899, the grandmother engages in listless walks through the city, reflecting on its ability to incorporate peoples of various classes and occupations:

> Me gusta la Barcelona de fuera de la murallas, abierta y europea. Entre el Paseo de Gracia y la Rambla me quedó con el primero. Pues por la Rambla camina gente despreocupada y sin trabajo, gente de toda clase,

> entremezclada, gente vocinglera, como las vendedoras de la Boquería, los matones de la Barceloneta, los desarrapados de la bohemia provinciana, las criadas y los soldados, las modistillas. (Roig 104)

She then explains how the monotony of the city bothers her and she wishes for more excitement. However, this boredom comes not from the city but from the grandmother's social class that denies women room to develop. Instead they are only permitted to walk through the city but not engage with the inhabitants, keeping a distance meant to separate the upper classes from the lower ones.

In the following passage, Ramona the granddaughter also reveals her observations of Barcelona. The city, as for her grandmother, encompasses feelings of extreme attraction and feelings of being overpowered by its presence. For instance, Ramona is contemplates her father's behavior and immediately afterwards makes a connection between his dominating persona and the city's architectural significance:

> Para ella el enemigo más real era su padre. Porque representaba la posesión, el triunfo, la necesidad de vencer sobre los débiles, de sentirse poderoso. Contempló la ciudad: hubiera querido abarcar Barcelona entera de una sola mirada. Era una ciudad que la atraía con la fuerza de un amante cruel. Le resultaba difícil comprender por qué sentía una atracción tan intensa por aquella masa informe y desquiciada. Barcelona era una ciudad en vestigio de historia heroica. (106)

Here the city reflects a masculine reference point. Ramona equates her father with the city's presence and its history. She also admits to being attracted to this power despite knowing its damaging effects. A consequence of patriarchal ideology, as

demonstrated by Althusser, is that it portrays a feeling of belonging and participation. This makes the break from such a system become tangled with feelings of desire. The narration then continues and Ramona reveals that her boyfriend Jordi also has a strong bond to the city's architecture, especially modernist works: "Aunque Jordi Soteras no había nacido en ella, se apasionaba por los edificios modernistas que desaparecían ante la impasibilidad de Barcelona" (106). Once more the male character has an attraction to the city pertaining to sanctified metanarratives, the ones from which women have historically been excluded. Ramona concludes that this is the case with Jordi's perception and attraction to the city: "Admiraba la capacidad de análisis de Jordi, que lo relacionaba todo dentro de insistema de valores y de una ética hecha a la medida del hombre" (107). She finds that Jordi subscribes to views that are on a "escala universal," consistent with master narratives that uphold one history as the only recognized history.

Ramona rejects Jordi's universal view of the city as insufficient to describe her experience with the urban space: "El amor que sentía por la ciudad era muy distinto del del Jordi. Para Mundeta [Ramona] la ciudad representaba el núcleo no escogido pero sí aceptado de su mundo, local y familiar" (107). Ramona accuses Jordi of loving Barcelona only for the sake of locating his passion on some icon, an accusation he does not deny: Ramona feels Jordi's attachment lacks a visceral connection. In other words, Jordi's supposed deep connection could be felt for any city, not only for Barcelona. The difference between their two connections to the city is that Ramona's is not transferable to another location. Ramona outlines the differences between them:

> Ella estaba hecha a base de pequeñas lealtades, mezquinas, sujetas a los instintos, como si el afecto, el amor a la amistad dependieran de una ciega

> relación mercantil. Mientras que Jordi amaba las coas del mundo no en relación a su circunstancia personal, histórica o geográfica, sino porque correspondían a su realida momentánea. (108)

Ramona reveals her relationship to the city as distinct from Jordi's and that hers is a personal struggle:

> Mundeta notaba que partían de puntos muy distinctos e irreconciliables: ella se encontraba en un universo en decadencia, sin imaginación, corrompido, cuyo único final plausibe, a lo sumo, sería el triunfo de la felicidad personal. El caso de Jordi era muy diferente: él pertenecía a una familia para la cual la palabra <<lucha>> poseía, por tradición, un significado optimista y ascendente. (108)

Jordi, whose personality is wrapped in a thick blanket of existentialism, has a relationship with the city that emphasizes a masculine view of power and control. While for Jordi the word "lucha" is synonymous with positive outcome, for Ramona the result of struggle is much more ambiguous. Her struggle to be free of societal constraints on her body and destiny are not readily applicable to the traditional meaning of "lucha."

The generational divisions stem not only from social changes but also rotate around the axis of the Civil War. Each woman has experienced the war in a particular way that is not easily transferable or communicable. Ramona the daughter finds that the war is what separates her from understanding her mother. She cannot understand how her mother can talk about the adventures of the war while, at the same time, live in constant fear of her husband (143). Her frustration at the constant reference to the hardships of the war period, and at her mother's inability to leave the past behind results

in her screaming "¡Me importa un rábano la guerra y todos vuestros líos! Lo de ahora es distinto, ¿comprendes?" (158). This phrase summarizes the rift between her and her mother's generation and outlines the desire for those who did not live through the war to distance themselves from what is perceived as "their" problem.

Ultimately, Ramona decides to leave her family's house, physically removing herself from her inherited past of confinement and rejecting her feminine genealogy. However, this physical distancing does not liberate Ramona from incorporating history's learned lessons and she, at least partially, experiences the same obstacles to liberty as her female ancestors. As Adrienne Rich describes, there exists a dualism in the mother-daughter relationship that both repels a daughter from her mother and, simultaneously, pulls her towards the mother's shared experiences:

> Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through which the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted. Easier by far to hate and reject the mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her. (235)

Rich goes on to say that this practice results from the fear that if complete rejection is not administered, then full identification with the mother will take place (235). Ramona, in a valiant effort to achieve emancipation, practices this maternal rejection. Nevertheless, recognition of the need for separation from the past in order to claim a different space does not mean that Ramona achieves full liberation from her matrilineal lineage. She herself admits that she will never leave Barcelona (108), indicating that her collective history, her inherited feminine past, will continue to

influence her quest to establish her own identity. Catherine G. Bellver echoes this conclusion by stating that Roig's writing implies that "despite the exterior signs of change in the role of women in Spanish society, woman's time—her time to live her own life, to dream her own dreams, to express herself in her own way—has not yet arrived" (120). While the young Ramona interrupts the connection to her past, it is overly optimistic to conclude that she is completely unhindered by the male dominance experienced by her predecessors.

Furthermore, Dupláa mentions that Roig, by writing about how women pass on, and perpetuate, the frameworks that constrain them, reveals the importance of rewriting history that includes women's ignored experiences. Hence, in writing a women's history and by giving voice to those left unheard, Roig invokes a dialogue about women's identity that cautions against relying on utopian visions based on women-oriented retelling of histories, but rather reveals the possibility of change through the recognition of a shared past of feminine subjugation.[32] The hope of *Ramona, adéu* is that once patterns of repetition are acknowledged and understood, then change becomes possible.

Ramona, the daughter, is the emblem of change in this novel and the words "Mundeta, cómo has cambiado" are repeated frequently and from various reference points. In this sense, Ramona is the incarnation of the city's transformation as it adjusts to modern life. Ramona describes the city's transformation:

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[32] Emilie Bergman draws a similar conclusion about female relationships, specifically lesbian ones, in "Lesbianism, Homosociality, and the Maternal Imaginary in Montserrat Roig's *L'hora violeta*" in *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture*. Eds. Susana Chávez-Silverman and Librada Hernández (Madison: University of Wisconsin P, 2000): 275-98.

> Habían desaparacido las tranvías, se veían más autobuses, parecía como si hubieran instalado todos los bancos del mundo, una alegre exhibición de supermercados, una lista inacabable de almacenes, de sucursales de almacenes, de cajas de ahorro. La Plaza de Cataluña era una calcomanía ejemplar. La ciudad...En los cines hacía la termperatura adecuada y además, podías escoger entre un excelente musical o una película a favor o en contra de la guerra. Se estaba extinguiendo la raza de *gogo-girls*. En el mercado aparecían, dinámicos, veloces, confortables y seguros, los nuevos automóviles. Fidelidad al slogan, la inversión es el motor de la economía. Se multiplicaban los parkings subterráneos. Los coches reducían la velocidad. Faltaba espacio. Polémicas, para los iniciados, sobre las zonas verdes que estafaban al ciudadano. Barcelona de finales de los sesenta, diversa y ecléctica, llena de tópicos que servían para engolosinar con imágenes gratuitas a quienes culitvaban la literatura gris, de oficina, carente de nervio e imaginación. (177-8)

Here the city's changes are described with a sense of melancholy, with a feeling of loss and nostalgia. It is interesting to note that without the reference point of "los sesenta" it would be impossible to know if the writer was referring to the end of the 1960s or the 1990s. Modernity has encompassed and erased temporal points of reference from the city's topography, resulting in a confusion of identity for Ramona. Whereas her grandmother had long promenades and the structure of turn-of-the-century society to mold her being, and her mother remains fixated on the war as her most crucial defining point, Ramona must look outward to a rapidly changing world where previously held

realities are disintegrating. Roig speaks to this change in *Dime que me quieres* while comparing her vision of Barcelona with that of Mercè Rodoreda:

> La casa de su abuelo ya no existe. Hoy es un garaje en una esquina sin flores, sin la estatua de mosén Cinto, sin el aroma del atardecer. Polvo y suciedad, cláxones y estampidos, asfalto y chirridos de autobuses al frenar. Su añoranza no encajaba con mi Barcelona, porque yo sí la había visto cambiar. (75)

The result of Ramona's confusion is a series of actions that perhaps can be attributed to an unknowingness of where one fits into society and how one should go about asserting change. This attitude is understandable when considering the fact that Spanish women were facing a dramatic social change from a very narrow view of female existence to one with more openness. At first glance, Ramona attempts to disassociate herself from the past and achieve a sense of awareness outside the boundaries experienced by her grandmother and mother. For example, she joins a group of leftist students and mimetically follows their actions. In an attempt to assert her independence she rejects the bourgeois life-style and capitalism, disregards her mother, participates in anti-governmental demonstrations, and plans to establish a personal space different from that of past generations.

While Ramona appears to sever herself from former patterns of behavior and subjugation, there exists a strange twist to her path that reminds us of the many challenges facing women directly before Franco's final years in power. In Ramona's case, she is continually influenced by Jordi, who infantilizes her with names such as "nena" and "pequeña." He dictates Ramona's political beliefs, which, not unexpectedly,

leave a wide perimeter for his personal growth and a much narrower one for hers. After Jordi's repeated rejections, Ramona sleeps with a stranger. The sexual encounter works on two primary levels: It is, on the one hand, an open display of the sexual freedom that is beginning to stir in the consciousness of the 60s generation and is a rejection of a system that seeks to control bodies and minds. On the other hand, Roig seems to plant this scene as a cautionary tale for women who attempt political liberation through sex. For Ramona, the contact with the stranger is devoid of intimacy and warmth and the pages reveal her sense of shame and sexual immaturity. Ultimately, this act serves to complicate what seemed to be a cut and dry rejection of past tropes of feminine behavior. Ramona is still mired to many of the ideological constraints found in her mother's and grandmother's experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter explores the relationship with the city of Barcelona expressed by three Catalan women writers who were writing during a specific period in Spain's historical past. The city space is clearly expressed in each work as being crucial to their individual protagonists' development and experiences. Perhaps the most pertinent discovery is that these stories could not exist in another space. The city and its history, along with the language in which these texts were written, directly impact how the women in these stories respond to their life circumstances. Yet, the city remains pliable

and is not a static backdrop with the action taking place out in front. The action integrates with the space, with space being as important as any other character, circumstance, or occurrence.

I find that there is a contradiction in what a city means for a geopolitical state and what this particular city means for the women who inhabit its streets. For Franco's Spain, Barcelona was a space to be controlled with strict vigilance. The women in these narratives defuse the state's intent to discipline by traversing the streets while engaged in their own thought processes, their own observations that allow for alternate visions to exist. The feminist heroine of these narratives within dictatorship exists in an altered version from her later peers who have acquired more liberty to speak out against systems of domination. These women heroines, mostly girls on the border of womanhood, use what is available to reject the boundaries that have been drawn around them. These resistances take the shape of a defiant walk down a street after it has been forbidden, or the use of the city street as a space to develop feminine friendship, or a revisioning of architectural structures meant to impart certain ideological messages. Despite the political agenda for women promoting home and hearth, these women find solace in their presence in the city space.

While I read the cityscape as a positive element in these women's ability to express their conditions, I also mentioned that they experience moments of defeat: Andrea does not become the independent women that some readers long for; Natalia spends years flanked by her domineering husband, father, and under the constraints of motherhood; Cecilia suffers abject poverty, abuse, and prostitutes herself for food, shelter, and in some cases, companionship; the three Ramonas struggle through societal

changes, war, and irreconcilable generational divisions. Yet, the city space is not meant to exist as a filter for these ills, rather it provides space for women to navigate their own passages, even if that passage consists of a brief solitary outing. The defeats these women encounter disown any utopian vision that would be incongruent with the realities of a nation recovering from a civil war. Hence, the social realism of these works is their primary strength because it supports the idea that women's movement through the city space is a resistant practice. The realism of the time does not permit much in the way of radical protest, which is why these small instances of rebellion often speak with the loudest voice.

The women in these novels are rooted in a sense that their city influences their identity. Massey's proposal for a more global vision of identity via the spatial seems to falter when attached to the narratives studies here because clearly Barcelona's specific characteristics are tightly woven into each narrative. Yet, what Massey is proposing is not a complete disassociation of place with identity. Rather, she is arguing for the on-going process of reformation of identity based on the idea that space is not static. In this sense, the women protagonists created by the Catalan women authors studied here follow this notion. They do not 'achieve' identity but rather experience development of self that reflects Massey's proposal of metamorphic spaces encompassing identity based on memory, reflexivity, and interaction with others. The 'solitary wanderings' bring to light that these women do, ultimately, resist concretized identities and move through the cityscape in a way that challenges cultural preconceptions about feminine existence.

CHAPTER THREE:

Mapping Feminine Identity in Carmen Martín Gaite's Later Work.

Carmen Martín Gaite (Salamanca, 1925-Madrid, 2000) is considered one of Spain's most prolific women writers of the twentieth century. Her death in 2000 at the age of 75 felt premature and left her readership with the unshakable feeling that, despite her copious literary production, she had many more stories left to write. First associated with a group of writers identified as the "generación de 50", Martín Gaite's work only commences during this period and she retains literary prominence up until and beyond her death. The life work of a writer of such accomplishment is difficult to describe succinctly or with accuracy. Indeed, Martín Gaite herself often struggled with voicing the most prominent or significant areas of her work, resulting in her authoring numerous articles and books about her writing.[33] Here I will not attempt a comprehensive summary of this writer's work. Rather, this chapter examines a reoccurring theme in Martín Gaite's later narrative—the intimate connection between mapping the cityscape and the development of the female subject.

Martín Gaite's work spans both the Franco years and post-Franco era, which makes her work especially interesting for those scholars studying how women's writing

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[33] For example, *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas* (1973 and 2000)—a book that went through several additions and metamorphoses—examines her process of writing and is considered one of her more emblematic works. She also continued her exploration into her narrative production and communication through writing in *El cuento de nunca acabar: Apuntes sobre la narración, el amor y la mentira* (1983) and "The Virtues of Reading" (1989).

evolved through the various political shifts occurring in Spain during the twentieth century. Her literary production represents a bridge connecting two periods of time that are often superficially divided along the lines of the Franco and post-Franco periods. In fact, Martín Gaite's work implicates both the social realism of the post-Civil War years and moves beyond the objective, almost testimonial, characteristics of that period into the exploration of more subconscious elements of human experience. Her most prominent works, namely *El balneario* (1954,), *Entre visillos* (1958), *Retahílas* (1974), and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), have been the subject of countless studies and critical reflection resulting in the publication of a collection of essays, *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaite*, in 1983.[34] She also won numerous prestigious literary honors such as the Café Gijón Prize, the Premio Nadal, and the Premio Nacional de la Literatura. The past twenty years have seen an even more marked response to this writer's talent and ability to attract readership on an international level.

Martín Gaite grew up in an upper-middle class family in Salamanca where she lived out her childhood during the years of the Civil War. In 1948 Martín Gaite moved to Madrid and the city remained her home until her death in 2000. The contacts that Martín Gaite would make with other contemporaries in her Madrid home leave their imprint on her narrative. During her university studies she befriended a group of young writers, including Ignacio Aldecoa, Jesús Fernández Santos, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio (whom she married), and Alfonso Sastre, whose main literary contributions consisted in revealing the

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[34] For a more complete list of Carmen Martín Gaite's work, see Servodido and Welles's *From Fiction to Metafiction*. Juan Cantevella in *Semblanzas Entrevistas* also provides a comprehensive list of Martín Gaite's literary awards: (44).

social realities of Francoism through social realist narratives.[35] Martín Gaite's writing is influenced by these literary and personal connections and she, too, adopts the social realist consciousness of relating images of everyday experiences.

Martín Gaite maintained an intimate connection with her native city even though she relocated to Madrid early in her adult life. In *La búsqueda de interlocutor* Martín Gaite speaks about how Salamanca, its spaces and streets, engaged her literary imagination despite the many years and physical distance of residing in another city. In the chapter titled "Salamanca, la novia eterna," Martín Gaite takes the reader on a journey of remembrance as she recollects the scenes of her childhood in the city. We pass by Salamanca's familiar places such as its Catedral, el río Tormes, el Puente viejo y el Puente nuevo. We visit her house (now a bank) and wander past Unamuno's house while she recalls her encounter with him as a young girl:

> Yo, algunas veces, me cogía la bicicleta y me aventuraba por las callecitas un poco en cuesta que llevan a la casa dondé vivió tantos años don Miguel de Unamuno, dónde murió también. Unamuno era amigo de mi padre y a veces le venía a visitar. Aunque yo tenía ocho años, me acuerdo. Es el primer escritor que puso su mano, como al descuido, sobre mi cabeza infantil. (195)

This short, and rather romantic account reveals the connection that Martín Gaite sees between her writing and her sense of place. To have Unamuno, the famous

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[35] Much of the autobiographical information on Carmen Martín Gaite comes from Janet Pérez's *Contemporary Women Writers of Spain*:137-142. See also Biruté Ciplijauskaité's *Carmen Martín Gaite (1925-2000)*. Madrid: Ediclás (2000): 11-74.

generación de 98 writer and philosopher, place his hand upon the young writer's head must be given its full weight in symbolic moments.[36]

As she takes us along through familiar streets and alleys, we encounter the architectural markers that contribute to her literary and personal constitution:

> Por las callecitas en torno a San Esteban, al Patio de Escuelas, a la torre del Clavero, se deambula como fuera del tiempo sin que los ojos den abasto para ver ni la imaginación para evocar. A cada paso el silencio zurce lo nuevo con lo viejo. Puedo asegurar que a caminar sin prisa, trenzando la mirada con el paso, aprendí en Salamanca. Es el legado más importante, junto con el del habla, que me ha dejado de herencia. (196)

That Martín Gaite would place the act of wandering, the process of *callejeando*, along with active observation, on the same level as speech, highlights the importance 'place' reflection. While composing this essay, Martín Gaite involves us as readers in her process of *flanerie* and we become the privileged participants in her reflective journey. She does not attempt to decipher all the moments of influence that the city has imprinted on her own identity, but rather acknowledges that there exists a level of complicity between the two of them:

> Salamanca despierta al ritmo de mis pasos y sé que me reconoce, que guarda mi imagen, aunque no diga nada, como yo la suya. En eso se cimentan los amores eternos: en el secreto. (198)

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[36] Miguel de Unamuno is mentioned and used as a historically significant marker throughout *El cuarto de atrás*.

The result of this relationship is that Salamanca occupies a larger role than that of a mere local, acting rather as participatory agent in the author's literary and personal development.

This chapter examines a novel that was written in the late 1990s, *Lo raro es vivir* (1996) and briefly considers her novel for children *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990). Both these works contain threads of Martín Gaite's past literary production in the sense that they employ what Adrián M. García points to as her most salient characteristics, which he defines as a metafictional premise, the development of an independent female protagonist, and the use of play and uncertainty in the narrative. They are also novels that make no direct reference to the Franco era or Spanish historical circumstances and, according to García, moves "beyond themes grounded in the Franco era and focuses on the personal development of protagonists in Spain after the dictatorship" (7). Yet they are two novels that demonstrate a use of the urban for further exploration into the development of the woman subject. For example, *Caperucita en Manhattan*, as the title indicates, is set in New York City and *Lo raro es vivir* is set in Madrid, a city that is central (geographically, politically, and emotionally) to Spanish identity.

However, I suspect that these later works reflect a tension between Spanish society's desire to look ahead to new political challenges and the continual lure to define oneself according to the past. Franco may not make an appearance in the two novels studied here, but his regime's psychological influence cannot be completely disregarded nor eradicated from the pages.

Among others, Martín Gaite's writing focuses on themes surrounding the ability of the fantastic to access the internalized self. For instance, *El cuarto de atrás* starts out with a dedication to Lewis Carroll and has the protagonist, in a fit of insomnia, reading Tzvetan Todorov's work on literature of the fantastic. From here the protagonist confronts various elements of the unreal in order to regain her muse as a writer suffering from a stubborn bout of writer's block. This novel, in many ways, marks Martín Gaite's journey and continuing love affair with the world of make-believe to reveal elements of truth about the human condition, with particular concern and attention for women's position in society. Robert C. Spires in his study *Post-Totalitarian Spanish Fiction* sees Martín Gaite's writing as political subversion. Spires reminds us that Martín Gaite chose to write from within Spain, while many other Spanish writers wrote from outside of the peninsula (through either forced or voluntary exile), thus operating under the repressive and ideological apparatuses of the Franco regime that sought to control not merely political thinking but gender roles as well. Spires interprets Martín Gaite's work, especially *El cuarto de atrás*, as directly challenging the apparatuses that were still exerting their "pernicious influence" even after their official demise: "The process centers on an attempt to free past, present, and future female subjects from their subjection to the various ideological apparatuses fashioned by the modern post-totalitarian state" (64-5).

Another critic characterizes Martín Gaite's literary trajectory as a series of dualities:

> Desde el día de su nacimiento la vida se le ha presentado como un haz de dualidades: cuidad/campo; sociedad burguesa de horizontes estrechos/añoranza de libertad; optimismo, orden, limpieza exagerada,

> "claridad" impuestos por el régimen/indagación del misterio, ambigüedad, inclinación hacia el desorden; realidad/fantasía; grupos de chicas ñoñas/camaradería entre representantes de los dos sexos; conversación superficial, esterotipada/diálogo verdadero. (Ciplijauskaité 13).

Others critics involved in the study of Martín Gaite's work, Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles, also tend to describe her narrative along divisive lines:

> Implicit in all her writings is the eternal dialectic between a social determinism on the one hand and the autonomy of the individual on the other. This struggle often surfaces explicitly in thematic patterns that are strikingly antithetical: conformity/dissent; alienation/the struggle for communication; gender-defined roles/individual liberation; desire and dread of freedom. (10)

Despite these presumed lines of duality, I would argue that part of Martín Gaite's appeal to the reader lies in her ability to enhance permeability among these juxtaposed states. She manages to deconstruct each position mentioned without aligning herself with one side or the other. Creating links between these somewhat binary divisions by way of her writing, Martín Gaite 'maps' alternative ways for the feminine subject to find expressive systems that resist indoctrination into old models.

It is presumptuous to characterize Martín Gaite as an "urban" writer for she allows herself significant freedom in terms of spatial representation. That being said, she conscientiously chooses the city space for a number of seminal pieces with the urban space allowing further exploration of the subconscious self. One can go back to a much earlier work than the two considered here to glimpse the impact of the city space on her

literary explorations. For instance, in *Entre visillos* (1958) the city is used much in the same way as in other post-war novels of the same *tremendismo* genre (*Nada* and *La familia de Pascual Duarte*) to reflect the difficulties and harshness of the period. *Entre visillos* is set in Martín Gaite's native city of Salamanca but also mentions other cities such as Madrid, Barcelona, Oviedo, Ávila, Valladolid, etc.[37] Aside from this city being representative of the larger Spanish social milieu, this novel begins a spatial narrative that reflects the author's personal experiences, for Martín Gaite has mentioned that the story is the Salamanca of her childhood.[38] In an interview she explains why this novel has achieved international success:

> Además, fíjate, una novela como Entre visillos, a pesar de lo local que parece ser, en Norteamérica gustó mucho a las chicas jóvenes, porque en Norteamérica no es sólo Nueva York, sino muchas ciudades de provincias donde las chicas todavía viven con muchos prejuicios, más que aquí quizás; hay mucho sitios pequeños, fíjate. Muchas chicas entre visillos he conocido yo; es rarísimo, pero es así. (*Entrevista con Juan Cantavella* 69)

Here we gain insight into the importance that Martín Gaite attributes to space; it has an ability to speak a broad language and appeal to those existing beyond the geographical boundaries of the narrative. She especially attributes the success of the novel to the

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[37] *Entre Visillos* was the recipient of the Nadal prize in 1957 (same prize awarded to *Nada* in 1944) and was a finalist for the Biblioteca Breve awarded by the publisher Seix Barral the same year (1962) that Mario Vargas Llosa won for his novel *La ciudad de los perros*.

[38] See Joan Brown "Carmen Martín Gaite, Reaffirming the Pact" in *Women Writers of Contemporary Spain* p.77.

readership of women and hints that this may be due to the novel's appeal to the geographic imaginary that permits travel beyond physical enclosures.

In her later novels, the city transforms from a place that mimics the social turmoil of the time to become more than a place from which to tell a story. Rather, the urban space interlaces itself into the protagonists' ability to re/construct their lives. Examining two novels published and written in the 1990s, I focus on how the urban space acts as a catalyst for lost memories that, in turn, play a role in how the protagonist defines herself. I consider how Martín Gaite's narrative utilizes the city as a place of stimuli for the subconscious elements of femininity. I also take into account the melding of the fantastic with the realist word of the cityscape for its effects on the woman subject.

Mapping Liberty in *Caperucita en Manhattan*:

One of Martín Gaite's less studied works—*Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990), invokes the city in a way that draws from her past themes of liberation but also implies a new vision of urban space. This novella marks the final phase of Martín Gaite's literary career and, I would argue, acts as a thematic precursor to several of her later and more ambitious works—namely *Lo raro es vivir* (1994) and *Irse de casa* (1998). Adding an intimate quality to the text, *Caperucita* contains illustrations by the author which provide extra insight into those elements of the narrative she considered worthy of visual enhancement. There exists, perhaps, a reluctance on the part of literary critics to place this novel within the repertoire of Martín Gaite's 'serious' work because the novel, published by Siruela as part of 'Las tres edades' series is, decidedly, intended for a younger audience. Yet, one must keep in mind that this work is written at the height of

this writer's public acclaim (she would win the Premio Nacional de las Letras in 1994) and during a time when she was experimenting further with her characteristic mixing of the fantastic with the everyday. Therefore, *Caperucita en Manhattan* should not be looked upon as a trifling project or as a diversion, but must be considered an essential link to understanding this writer's creative trajectory during the final decade of her literary production.

In *Buscando un lugar entre mujeres: Buceo en la España de Carmen Martín Gaite*, Mercedes Carbayo Abengózar examines Martín Gaite's final two decades of literary production and believes that the feminism expounded in Martín Gaite's writing is a way of counteracting the loss of the mother through the symbolic order and creating a new world through fantastic literature mixed with realist modes: "Ambos acercamientos están relacionados con el origen de las cosas y con la niñez de las mujeres: los cuentos de hadas se consideran cuentos de niñas y ayudan a recrear una nueva sociedad desde el principio y la relación con la madre es la primera que experimentamos" (129). In fact, each of the works considered here involves the image of the mother, combined with a unique use of the city space, and not only calls into question the role of 'traditional' mother but challenges her existence as well. Ultimately, this method of retelling stories that hold a familiar pattern works to dilute the image of the mother so often portrayed in the subtext of fairytales, revealing her underlying contradictions.

Caperucita en Manhattan begins with a dedication to Juan Carlos Eguillor, a Spanish illustrator and filmmaker: "por la respiración boca a boca que les insufló a las dos en aquel verano horrible," a reference to the summer of 1985 when her only daughter

died at age twenty eight.[39] Little has been written about what must have been one of Martín Gaite's most devastating personal tragedies. While art must be considered separate from the personal life of the artist, this death surely influences the thematic currents of her work in the 1990s, with its central preoccupation with the role of motherhood and the mother/daughter relationship.[40]

Following the life of Sara Allan, a ten-year-old girl who lives in Brooklyn with her parents, the text chronicles Sara's introduction to the city space. The customary characteristics already mentioned of Martín Gaite's work are found in this work as well. It is a novel, like others written by Martín Gaite in the 90s, that makes no reference to Francoism or Spanish historical circumstances. Instead, there exists an acute emphasis on the spatial with the aim being to demonstrate how the urban space can challenge the mythical foundations so readily associated with female development. One of the foundations that Martín Gaite seeks to disturb is the notion of bounded and enclosed spaces (i.e. existence) for women.

Caperucita in Manhattan is a revision of several fairytales, wrapped in a contemporary and urban code that portrays not only the changing values of the audience but also takes issue with traditional patterns and ways of understanding the world. The city in this novel acts as a participant in the *Bildungsroman*-type adventure that the heroine Sara Allen experiences. The city of Manhattan provokes Sara's imaginative

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[39] Martín Gaite also lost a son in 1955 who was less than a year old (Ciplijauskaité 26).

[40] Ciplijauskaité concurs, writing "Tal vez hayan influido estas adversidades en la presencia constante del tema de la maternidad en su obra. Se desarrollan de novela a novela no sólo la figura de la madre, sino los ambientes de los jóvenes que introduce por conocerlos de primera mano y deliciosas escenas con niños" (27).

power, leading her into unlikely urban places. The pen and ink illustrations in *Caperucita en Manhattan* help give form to the images conveyed as well as indicate what parts Martín Gaite felt were integral to the plot line's development.

The first illustration following the dedication is a crude map of Manhattan meant to orient the reader and establish a sense of place. The title of the first part of the novel points to the novel's intimacy with geographic location and identity: "Datos geográficos de algún interés y presentación de Sara Allen". Here personal identity is intertwined with the geographic posturing of the narrative. The first lines of the chapter are telling because they begin with Sara Allen's perception of the city space: "La ciudad de Nueva York siempre aparece muy confusa en los atlas geográficos y al llegar se forma uno un poco de lío" (Martín Gaite 13). From the outset the reader is made aware of the city's ability to destabilize perception. Sara Allen makes sense of this confusing space by associating it with a familiar presence in her life—food: "Se trata de una isla en forma de jamón con un pastel de espinacas en el centro que se llama Central Park" (13). This imaginative mapping focuses the reader's attention onto the surrealistic aspects of the city space and reveals the protagonist's ability to invent alternate representations. In the first three pages the reader is made aware of the effects the city space has on children and how it represents both the mundane as well as the magical and exotic. Of special interest to Sara is the emblematic Statue of Liberty and its ability to relate to and monitor the nocturnal vigils of children.

In the first part of the novel we learn about Sara's everyday existence. A precocious ten year old whose mental abilities make the adults around her uncomfortable, she is stigmatized as having a "complejo de superdotada". She is the quintessential

"chica rara" that dominates contemporary Spanish literary depictions of girls. Other than her heightened intellect, her life is overly monotonous and her parents are painfully normal. Demonstrating a penchant for books and words, her favorite stories are, not unexpectedly, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Little Red Riding Hood,* both of which act as surrogate story lines for the novel. Sara is already an independent thinker who feels an emotional rift with her mother and longs for adventure and freedom. The real heroine in her life is her grandmother Rebecca Little, a washed-up music-hall singer whose stage name is Gloria Star. Her grandmother exhibits many of the same independent and uncanny characteristics as Sara and her unconventional lifestyle contrasts with the relatively traditional values exuded by Sara's mother. This grandmother stands as the antithesis of the model women once heralded by the Sección feminina. Sara also feels a deep attraction to her grandmother's transitory partner, Señor Aurelio, who owns a used book store and whom she has never met. Señor Aurelio, or El Rey de los libros, sporadically sends Sara gifts, the most important one being a map of Manhattan, in which she first realizes that Manhattan is an island. This gift introduces the theme of islands and the imaginative conjuring that often follows island literary motifs, especially in children's literature.

Sara abhors the normalizing features that so often characterize stories written for children. As someone who has not yet learned to distinguish reality from fantasy, Sara is troubled by story endings that dissipate dreamscapes in exchange for real life, as in *Alice and Wonderland* and *Robinson Crusoe* (*Caperucita* 23). Sara longs for an ending that remains unresolved; one that welcomes interpretation and refuses the classical lines of

childhood narratives. This open-ended approach means that Sara will defy the standardization techniques that allow for only a brief departure from the everyday.

Another significant characteristic is Sara's keen ability for inventing language. She devises her own words, called *farfanías,* with imaginative underpinnings that relate to her own Symbolic Order. For example, *miranfú* means that something surprising and different is about to occur. This use of language underlines Martín Gaite's interest in exploring the blurred line between life and literature, between experience and writing. Her novels tend to elevate language as a means of exploration of identity that without linguistic pillars of support would exist in chaos. As Kronik tells us, for Martín Gaite language and literature are inextricably linked: "Desde las primeras ficciones de Martín Gaite hasta las más recientes, sus narradores interiores exaltan el lenguaje al cominicar no sólo una conciencia del yo adquirida a través de la palabra, sino una apropiación de su identidad por vía de la palabra" (Kronik 36). Similarly, using Irigarayan concepts of language, Christine Arkinstall points out that Martín Gaite's inventive language transforms meaning and identity by dismantling formal structures based on masculinist paradigms.[41]

The weekly trip Sara and her mother make from Brooklyn to Manhattan to visit the grandmother, Rebecca Little, and bring her strawberry cake instigates Sara's adventure. The strawberry cake marks the essence of Mrs. Allen's existence and she considers the dessert her most important contribution, jealously guarding the recipe from the prying eyes of the neighbors. As Lucía Llorente points outs, this kept secret mirrors

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[41] See Arkinstall, "Towards a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughter in Contemporary Spanish Narrative by Women," in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*. Ed. Adalgisa Giorgio. New York: Berghahn Books, 2002: 64-70.

the novel's epitaph to the second part: "A quien dices tu secreto, das tu libertad" taken from Fernando de Rojas' *La Celestina*.[42] Some critics have interpreted the strawberry cake as symbolic of Mrs. Allen's entrapment in patriarchal modes of domesticity and submission.[43] However, Mrs. Allen received the recipe from her untraditional mother, meaning the cake could be read as a representative of feminine knowledge passed down from one generation of women to the next and, hence, as an important symbol of feminine genealogy. That Mrs. Allen does not grasp how to utilize this knowledge points to the fragmentation that often occurs in mother/daughter relationships.

The weekly trips into the city are a cause for great agitation on the part of Sara's mother, but for Sara they are trips into a strange and fascinating urban world that stimulates her imagination. During these trips via metro, Sara makes a point of looking at people who normally pass under the radar of the regular traveler—the dispossessed and those marginalized by mental illness and poverty.[44] Taking on the role of the *flâneur*, she observes the city and the people that inhabit its less savory corners. She relishes the time spent traveling underground and is annoyed when her mother tries to interrupt her cerebral ruminations with insignificant mumbling. Here Sara begins her urban wanderings that, echoing Certeau, allow the space of new stories and legends that disrupt the established order through voyeurism and observation. This is evidenced by the fact that Sara's wandering gaze has a disquieting effect on her mother and she commands that

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[42] In "Caperucita en Manhattan: Caperucita en el país de las maravillas." *Espéculo. Revista de Estudio Literarios.* http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo.numero22/capercit.html

[43] See Dorthy Odartey-Wellington in"De las madres perversas y las hadas buenas: Una nueva vision sobre la imagen esencial de la mujer en las novelas de Carmen Mart.n Gaite y Esther Tusquets," 529-55.

[44] Here we see the beginnings of Martín Gaite's use of the metro as a metaphysical entrance into the world of imagination, a theme that repeats in *Lo raro es vivir*.

Sara stop staring at people. Mrs. Allen treats the short trips as major voyages into the unknown, forcing Sara to don her red rain jacket despite the good weather. Wearing the tell-tale red cape and hood, Sara embodies the role of a modern Caperucita who refuses to act in accordance with the established trajectories anticipated in *Little Red Riding Hood.* Of course, the original Red Riding Hood wandered through the forest; a natural world prototypical of fables and children's story. Sara, in contrast, eschews this setting in exchange for an urban setting that displaces former structures of fairytales that equate nature with fantastical possibility.

This leads to another concern often encountered in an urban novel—the inherent violence of urban centers. One such tale of violence in this narrative involves the story of the Bronx Vampire, whose supposed killings of women have reached mythological proportions. Sara fears this monster while her grandmother dismisses the notion of imminent threat and walks around at will. Sara is clearly enamored of her grandmother's obstinate refusal to follow the norms expected from a woman of her age. Sara's mother, on the other hand, is scandalized by what she sees as her mother's salacious behavior. I read the myth of the Bronx Vampire as indicative of how culture often works to keep women in a predestined and immobile position through fear tactics and the claim that the world is too dangerous for unfettered movement. Domosh and Seager echo this idea by recognizing that women often live under a self-imposed 'curfew' that inhibits women's access to the streets, which is a direct result of the city being coded masculine while the home is habitually perceived as the only legitimate place for women: "Women's perceptions of risk from crime in the city, and the gendered association of the city as

male, are mutually reinforcing" (100). The fact that the grandmother refuses to circumvent her movement dissipates the impact the myth has on feminine mobility.

The second part of the novel titled "La aventura" introduces Miss Lunatic, who acts as an urban savior for the people of the street and who embodies characteristics of the Good Witch. The wise woman eschews the motives typically associated with 'brujas' of children's fairytales who are generally interested in entrapment and enchantment and, according to Carbayo Abengózar, embodies an American utopian ideal of liberty (141). Also, we recall that Sara is not traversing a darkened wood, as in *Little Red Riding Hood*, but rather is exploring a vast urban center not ordinarily known for its welcoming of children. Befriending Sara when she is on an outing alone, Miss Lunatic acts as Sara's figurative guide through the city's streets of fantasy. She is the representative fairy godmother who conveniently appears when most needed and retreats once the lesson has been instilled in her protégé. Miss Lunatic provides Sara with the information to access freedom of spirit by providing her with knowledge. Her final gift to Sara before parting is a quote from the Renaissance philosopher Giovani Pico della Mirándola (1463-1494) who wrote the *Discourse on the Dignity of Man*. This works exalts the human creature for his/her freedom and capacity to know and dominate reality as a whole. In addition, *The Discourse on the Dignity of Man* urges one to pass through the familiar and multifarious world of images and fields of knowledge towards the lofty goal of self-perfection. In other words, mapping of one's life according to what one learns along life's path is the essence of happiness. Miss Lunatic hands Sara the keys to this path by bequeathing to her the knowledge of freedom and self-actualization. The ability to map

one's identity according to an alternate paradigm is what moves Sara out of a destiny predefined for her to one in which she decides which path to explore.

Miss Lunatic represents a literal incarnation of freedom for her alter ego is Madame Bartholdi, the mother of Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, sculptor of the Statue of Liberty, and whose face is said to be the inspiration behind the Statue's steady gaze. It is upon meeting Miss Lunatic/Madame Bartholdi that Sara is encouraged to focus her attention on the outside world and marks her first moment of unrestraint in terms of her identity.

In *Caperucita*, the traditional Wolf of *Little Red Riding Hood* is reincarnated in the more palatable and less threatening version of Edgar Woolf, a lonely mega-millionaire whose only preoccupation in life is finding the perfect strawberry cake for his enormously popular pastry shop called *El Dulce Lobo*. Gone are the latent sexual innuendoes of the wolf 'devouring' a little girl once she reaches grandma's house. In fact, the ending does not mirror the original *Little Red Riding Hood*, but instead culminates with the discovery that Edgar Woolf has long been an admirer of Gloria Star (Sara's eccentric grandmother), and the scene ends happily, with Mr. Woolf dancing in the arms of the former singer with the quest for the strawberry recipe all but forgotten. Sara, afraid of being trapped in a scene of 'happily ever after,' chooses not to disturb the cozy ending and sneaks out to find the underground passageway to the Statue of Liberty, employing the information imparted to her by Miss Lunatic. As Sara delves into the city space, she 'eludes discipline' of both the cliché story line of children's literature that ends with exchanging the world of imagination for one of practicality and of the predicated boundaries established for young girls about their access to the city streets. Sara begins

the journey of 'Constructing Liberty', the name of the book she is reading about the building of the Statue of Liberty, not based on a essentialist ideal of the term, but rather on what liberty means for her.[45]

At one point, Miss Lunatic recommends to the police commissioner that he read Italo Calvino's *The Nonexistent Knight*, a parody on medieval chivalry. This intertextual reference reminds us that fairy tales are not just for children, but rather speak to the universal subject. While *Caperucita en Manhattan* is a children's story and it is to be understood in that context, it establishes the foundation for one of Martín Gaite's more substantial works of her later period, *Lo raro es vivir* (1995). This novel also enlists the city space and the surreal in a woman's personal quest for answers about self and family.

The Speculative Cityscape

At this point, it is useful to mention Martín Gaite's use of speculative traits to move her characters through 'real' space. The speculative presence is rather unrestrained in *Caperucita* because of its basic commitment to story telling through fantasy. However, the use of the speculative technique is not limited to her works of children literature, the most famous example being the dark visitor in *El cuarto de atrás*. In this work the fantastical takes shape in a much more subtle manner than in *Caperucita*. As mentioned earlier, in *El cuarto* the reader is introduced to Martín Gaite's interest in the work of Tzvetan Todorov in which he combines ambiguity with the real—which he terms 'the strange' or 'the marvelous.' Italo Calvino, whose fictional work is mentioned in

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[45] In many respects *Caperucita de Manhattan* is a continuation of another children's story of Martín Gaite's, *El pastel del diablo* (1985). In this novel the main protagonist Sorpresa achieves mental autonomy and her life is left open without a defined ending.

Caperucita, traces the beginning of speculative literature to the Enlightenment. For Calvino the fantastic forms part of a "rebelión de lo inconsciente, de lo repremido, de lo olvidado, de lo alejado de nuestra atención racional" (9). This idea suggests that there exists a correlation between the imaginative processes of the mind and the reality of the physical world and that the imaginary has the potential to confront norms of rational. Calvino points out that the world of images—the spectacle—is an essential component of fantastic literature. For instance, when Calvino writes his *Citt'a invisibili*, he is using the speculative function to conjure up spatial imagery that is based both on our concrete perceptions of reality and our imaginative capacities.

The importance placed on the visual aspect of fantastic story telling puts the use of the city space in a unique light, for the urban space is very much a visual experience. While its presence enters through many senses, the visual retains the most prominence in works of literature. For instance, a city's architectural structures point to a world that is real yet defies imagination at the same time. The city lends itself well to the feelings mentioned by Todorov of the strange and marvelous converging in a material space. Jiménez Corretjer, in her study on feminine fantastic writing in Spain and Latin America, provides an explanation as to why women find this genre or technique useful for their literary expression by stating that through fantastic writing they counteract the effects of masculine hegemony that has circumvented women's experiences (108-09). However, this is precisely the same argument that one cites for women's writing in general and Jiménez Corretjer fails to demonstrate exactly *how* fantastic elements allow for further resistance against systems of domination.

What I believe we gain as readers from texts that incorporate the speculative into the everyday story is an opportunity to 'read' familiar places with a sense of irony or displacement that facilitates the imagination to think beyond one's boundaries of current existence while not stepping outside the actual boundaries of locale. For example, we see how in *Caperucita* Sara imagines her way to a new 'place' without ever leaving the confines of Manhattan. While the differences of speculative writing and fictional writing in terms of the issues explored by women who write may not be immediately identifiable, we can point to boundary pushing as a plausible explanation. This idea is perhaps best illustrated by T. Minh-ha Trinh who writes "Working right at the limits of several categories and approaches means that one is neither entirely inside or outside. One has to push one's work as far as one can go: To the borderlines, where one never stops walking on the edges, incurring constantly the risk of falling off one side or the other side of the limit while undoing, redoing, modifying this limit" (218). The risk to which Trinh refers moves women writers engaging in the speculative side of literary expression to tease and stretch the established boundaries of feminine experience. Attebery in *Strategies of Fantasy* points to metafiction as a way for the postmodern subject to cope with the deconstruction of absolutes. He says, "The postmodern prospectus…involves a return to early narrative forms—the fairy tale movements and mythic structures that never really disappeared from more popular forms of literature—but with an awareness of their artificiality. Postmodern is a return to story-telling in the belief that we can be sure of nothing but story" (40). Connected to this idea, what the belief in story achieves, as pointed out by Patricia Waugh, is the exploration of the "possible fictionality of the world outside the literary text" (2). Waugh points out that metafiction works with innovation

and familiar tropes to rework and undermine conventions of constraint (12). I find this motive of seeing the world through an imaginative lens that subordinates the perceived real, as one of the principal concerns of Martín Gaite's narrative.

Maternity, Legend, and the Cityscape in *Lo Raro es vivir*

In his study, *Silence in the Novels of Carmen Martín Gaite*, García writes about how much of Martín Gaite's feminism comes about in an understated manner: "Her narratives lead the reader to fill in silences of discourse and story and, in the process, to concretize implied feminist messages" (2). García also points out Martín Gaite's reluctance to define herself as feminist, stating that she distrusts the term "crítica feminista" (3). At this point, as I concentrate my study on how the urban space affects the development of the woman subject, I believe it necessary to discuss the general unwillingness on the part of many Spanish women writers to align themselves with the word 'feminist'. Constance A. Sullivan provides a plausible explanation as to why Martín Gaite hesitates to use the word feminist, stating that the "Spanish academic community and news media..." are guilty of portraying feminists as "aggressive man-haters, wildwomen on the margins of society." Sullivan sees Martín Gaite's "reluctance to be associated with that image, even though the totally appropriate application of the word 'feminist' to her work is shared by many younger women writers in Spain today, who want, as she does, to achieve validation in and from the mainstream culture and the men who control its movements" (53). One can see an example of the refusal of the literary culture to embrace the word 'feminist' in a multifaceted manner in Juan Cantavella's account of when Martín Gaite received the Premio Nacional de las Letras, given out by

the Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, in 1994 and their description of her as an "escritora moralmente comprometida, aunque nunca le haya llevado a la militancia política, e imposible de catalogar con etiquetas feministas" (qtd. in Cantavella 44).[46] This statement, clearly meant as praise, gives the indelible impression that to be aligned with the feminist cause, whatever that may mean in the minds of those bestowing the award, is to be one of the women described by Sullivan. It also points to the inscribed attitudes on the part of the culture at large against movements that hint at "militancia política," especially those involving and concerning women. In her study of Doris Lessing and Carmen Martín Gaite, Linda E. Chown cites the preoccupation with authoritarianism as the reason why neither woman has embraced the word feminist:

> Feminism as a social movement is also liable to authoritarianism, moral authoritarianism, ethical prescription, a condition directly analogous to the literary authoritarian narrative influence with which these authors are familiar. Recognition of the analogy is very probably what provokes the authors' supposed rejection of feminism, both authors finding feminist groups too ready to establish or accept prescriptive norms. (6)

This concern notwithstanding, the statement by the Premio Nacional de las Letras is a microcosm of the larger issue that is perhaps being overlooked both by institutions granting literary awards and the women authors themselves: Writing about women and

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[46] Cantavella lists no direct source for this citation in his published interviews with added commentary, but given the fact that since its inception in 1984 only two women have been awarded the Premio Nacional de las Letras (the other being novelist Rosa Chacel), a questioning of the Minister of Education, Culture, and Sport's attitude towards women writers seems reasonable.

women's concerns is worthy as long as the writing avoids extreme positions. The problem is that what constitutes 'extreme' seems to be marked by an invisible line in the sand.[47]

Perhaps further explanation of Martín Gaite's avoidance of the word feminist can be observed in her work. *Lo raro es vivir* demonstrates suspicion of the feminist movement when the protagonist questions the effectiveness and current commercialization of feminism. This criticism takes place when a male acquaintance of the protagonist explains the "feminist" theme of his short film which depicts a woman being killed by her roommate for becoming pregnant, stating "El feminismo vende" (Martín Gaite, 40). Nevertheless, for the most part, her work addresses the difficulties and discontinuities of being female in a culture that fosters certain preconceived ideas about femininity and debunking these prescribed formulas of womanhood is a central preoccupation of Martín Gaite's narrative.[48] It is my intention to explore how the spatial aspects of the urban have a positive bearing on feminine development.

Lo raro es vivir begins *in media res* with Martín Gaite's characteristic sense of play and introduces the unusual or strange into everyday occurrences. The text is a remembrance of a short period of time in the protagonist's life, in which, over the period of five days, she unravels her decades-long struggle with identity. As a result of this identity crisis, there is an immediate sense of disorientation and confusion. Triggered by her mother's recent death, the protagonist begins a self-examination that leads her through

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[47] The continuing hesitation to embrace the word 'feminist' on the part of other Spanish women writers will be discussed in terms of Rosa Montero's work in the subsequent chapter.

[48] Biruté Ciplijauskaité sees Martín Gaite's writing as also confronting stereotypes of masculinity in *Carmen Martín Gaite (1925-2000):* 16-17.

the city streets and has her reencountering past disturbances. The story occurs in Madrid and follows the life of a presumably middle-aged woman concerned with her own mortality and sense of place. Águeda, the main protagonist of *Lo raro*, whose name is not revealed until after three quarters of the text, embarks on an urban sojourn that winds her through the mundane, everydayness of life with turbulent interruptions caused by life's more fantastical, yet often subtle, elements. Within the first pages, the protagonist introduces the themes that will dominant the novel: "la maternidad y la leyenda" (Martín Gaite 12). In this work, Martín Gaite engages the city in a virtual game of perception versus reality while exploring the correlation between space, memory, and identity. The protagonist's search to separate herself from an imposed identity based on her maternal ties dominates the text's central development.

José Jurado Morales affirms that space holds an important function in this novel that goes beyond mere backdrop and finds equal distribution between closed spaces and open spaces. Morales mentions that Martín Gaite uses many real places in Madrid throughout the work such as la Cuesta de la Perdices, el Bernabéu, la Moncloa, El Plantío, Las Rozas, etc. and attributes the rapid and multiple changes of space in the novel from the interior to the exterior to an attempt to create narrative mobility to help "formentar el carácter existencial de la protagonista" (47). He cites Martín Gaite's description of the movement given in an interview a few days after the book became available: "[...] la protagonista es joven y durante la semana que transcurre el relato sale mucho de casa. No se la pasa encerrada en un cuarto" (Morales 47, Cantavella,

entrevista cit., 43). The fact that this protagonist moves about and uses the city space for her own ends, points again to Certeau's concept of 'eluding discipline' by movement through space.

I interpret Águeda's solitary travels through the city as the point of instigation for the troubled memories of her relationship with her mother. While she struggles to release herself from her inevitable connection to her parents' identities, Águeda also steps deliberately into her mother's shadow, continuing her story after death. As one of the main preoccupations of the text is the blurring of the line between the real and trickery, Águeda shares not only the physical attributes of her mother, but also her name. This deliberate tactic of melding the mother/daughter relationship serves to heighten the tension around Águeda's identity. Her mother's death has awakened an acute sense of mortality and she struggles to accept her own inevitable demise. What the reader experiences is the remapping of Águeda's sense of self.

The text emphasizes that to tell history is to lie, or that in order to write history one must invent and embellish. Águeda, influenced to participate in a game of deception, decides to "become" her mother under the pretext of protecting her ailing grandfather from the shock of his daughter's death. In actuality, however, this ploy represents an attempt to reestablish boundaries of identity. The interplay with identity coaxes the protagonist into reexamining her relationship with her estranged mother:

> Pero había sido un farol, ahora quedaba claro. No me estaba preparando en absoluto para suplantar a mamá, no me atrevía con ese papel. No me atrevía con ella, hablando en plata, a despecho de todas mis alharacas de

> insumisión, nunca me había atrevido a derribarla de su pedestal (*Lo raro es vivir*, 56-7).

Based on this divisive relationship, she is resolute never to have children to avoid further entanglement with motherhood: "¡Dios me libre! No quiero tener hijos nunca, nunca. ¡Jamás en mi vida!" (20). As Águeda reflects on her tumultuous past with her mother, we learn that for the past ten years Águeda has been avoiding using the city's metro system because of the memories it disturbs. Explaining how the metro stimulates her memory and sensorial input, Águeda paints the connection between space and identity:

> A mí, cuando viajo en metro, siempre me da por pensar mucho, pero además con chasquidos de alto voltaje, relámpagos que generan preguntas sin respuestas y desembocan en la propia pérdida, en los tramos umbrios de ese viaje interior donde se acentúa la desconexión entre la lógica y los terrores. Desde niña lo supe y me dio miedo, pero también me gustaba; claro que entonces el desamparo de sentirme viva entre desconocidos quedaba paliado por la referencia incondicional a quien, además de servirme de eslabón con el mundo, sabía mucho de viajes subterráneos: mi madre. (Martín Gaite 31)

We recall how in *Caperucita* the metro served as a porthole to alternative visions of reality. In *Lo raro*, the subway is where the protagonist's mother once taught her the magical constructs of language—the metaphor—along with its ability to mold thoughts and amplify surroundings. As a child, trips to the metro were called "bajar al bosque," which introduced the function of metaphor into her consciousness. The comparison of

the urban space to the forest transforms the city into an image that recollects childhood fantasy stories of possibility. This game of inventing metaphors used to be enticing, but now Águeda avoids all alternate representations as well as "a todos los bosques que proliferaron insensible y progresivemente a partir de aquella primera metáfora infantil" (32). It is when the protagonist agrees to personify her mother that she again permits herself to travel via metro. This is an intriguing decision because it highlights the connection between the maternal presence and one's introduction into the realm of representation through linguistic markers. Once underground she experiences a feeling of disorientation and confusion that leaves her frightened: "tenía ganas de salir a la superficie donde las casas son casas y las calles son calles sin más; caminaría un rato por calles que conozco y eso me ayudaría a despejar la cabeza" (35-6). With the urban passage acting as a symbolic return to the roots of language and representation, Águeda rediscovers the descriptive possibilities resident in metaphorical description.

As an adult she has refused to acknowledge the interlacing between the maternal and the introduction to representation through language. Yet, the city offers itself as a place of reflection where emotions such as nostalgia, fear, and melancholy become increasingly exposed as the subject navigates the streets. Moving through the city, Águeda's pondering nurses her need for reconnection to the human desire to communicate through metaphor. Movement through the streets sparks movement into the unmitigated space of ideas and language; a space that is formed by the protagonist's relationship with her mother. Águeda's difficulty in finding comfort in the space introduced to her via the maternal connection points to the problematic relationship between mother and daughter in the symbolic realm. As Rich explains, the

mother/daughter relationship is based on "the deepest mutuality and the most painful estrangement" (225-6).

The gap of understanding that the mother and daughter experience in this text reflects Martín Gaite's concern with the mother and her effect on identity formation. Martín Gaite addresses the mutual confusion that exists between the two generations in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987), which is dedicated to "todas las mujeres españolas...que no entienden a sus hijos. Y para sus hijos que no las entienden a ellas". Marianne Hirsh recognizes this spilt in the mother/daughter paradigm in her work *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, in which she writes "The multiplicity of 'woman' is nowhere more obvious than for the figure of the mother, who is always both mother and daughter" (12). The premise of Hirsh's works focuses on reestablishing the story of the mother, on understanding and strengthening the mother's position so that her story does not succumb to discourses of insignificance. The need to recognize the mother's significance is essential in this text. The fact that the mother is dead at the outset of this work reaffirms Hirsh's position that as long as the mother continues to be voiceless, the daughter will struggle to emerge with her own story.

While the underground passage stimulates a feeling of returning to the maternal introduction to the constructs of language, the city streets offer a sense of the familiar. The protagonist invents metaphors more reflective of a feminine experience, subverting the logical ordering of the urban space: "Obedecer a ese mandato equivalía a asesinar mis embriones de pensamiento imprevisto, era como prohibir el acceso a los espermatozoides que se precipitan a fecundar un óvulo o destruirlos cuando han conseguido entrar, yo había elegido siempre el primer sistema, abortar me aterraba" (36). By describing how

rejecting the metaphoric description would equal a separation of a part of her self, the part nurtured by a maternal link to the space around her, Águeda equates linguistic representation to life. Through the urban wanderings, the body imagery mixes with the maternal experience of birth, inviting the streets to participate in the discovery of language. For Águeda, there is a decidedly organic relationship with the city space which manifests itself in either physical pain or pleasure: "La ciudad a veces se convierte en una víserca que empieza a funcionar mal, a al llegar a una esquina determinada te asalta de improviso el dolor desconocido, como una punzada en el páncreas" (127). This bodily experience of the city space is natural according to Grosz who writes that "the body [...] must be considered active in the production and transformation of the city" and that the body and the city possess a "two-way linkage" or "cobuilding" (248). For Grosz, the body and the city are not separate entities. Thus she argues,

> The body and its environment, rather, produce each other as forms of the hyperreal, as modes of simulation which have overtaken and transformed whatever reality each may have had into the image of the other: the city is made over into the simulacrum of the body, and the body, in its turn, is transformed, 'citified', urbanized as a distinctively metropolitan body. (242)

While I agree that the body does 'produce' the city, as can be witnessed in architectural structures, it is debatable how far this analogy can be taken. After all, cities and bodies are not one and the same. However, in the context of this literary piece I believe it is sufficient to recognize that Águeda experiences the city via the body, inviting more than just visual input. The city provides a visceral experience for Águeda and she,

in turn, casts her gaze on the city space. In this sense, the two spaces, the urban space and the body's space, are being mutually inscribed.[49]

As alluded to by Certeau and Wilson, often the streets appeal through the freedom they extend to pursue alternative representations. Similarly, Águeda enters the street to encounter new modes of experiencing the world: "La calle abre otra persepectiva, ¿no lo sabes ya?, da pie para bajar a bosques inexplorados, es calle, pasa gente que también va perdida en su propia espesura" (66). The protagonist participates in solitary wanderings which give rise to unexpected occurrences. Again we see the now prototypical *flâneur/flâneuse* who reflects upon how the city influences her perception. It is within the city space that she recognizes her participation in the narrative of life,

> subía de la calle anochecida un trepidar de motos y un runrún de gente, es una zona de mucho pub, trasiego y bar al aire libre, me hacían una compañía como de hospital aquellos riudos que decoraban una novela urbana sin final intrigante, ya la he leído mil veces esa novela, y la he visto en el cine. (54)

The urban novel in which Águeda finds herself reflects her perpetual frustration about the meaninglessness of life, prompting her to see herself from the outside. She becomes a spectacle of herself, unable to control her life. Once in the street Águeda visits a local bar that she frequents "generalmente sola" where she and a friend commence a discussion about Existentialism and its founding philosophers such as

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[49] For more on Grosz's descussion on cities and the body see "Bodies-Cities" ed. Beatrice Colomina. *Sexuality and Space*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992: (248-9).

Kierkegard, Sartre, and Heidegger.[50] This chapter, titled "Cuatro gotas de existenicalismo", has Águeda discussing Sartre's *La náusea* and Kierkegaard's *El concepto de la angustia*. This experience is mired in the existential premise of attempting to make rational decisions despite living in an irrational universe; hence, *Lo raro es vivir* is not only the title of the text but is repeated throughout as a testament to the difficult terrain of representation that the protagonist must traverse. The existential tinge of this novel serves as a base that truth is hidden behind endless ambiguities. Martín Giate uses her literary space to expound on the idea that 'truth is stranger than fiction' or that 'truth is fiction.'

Upon leaving the bar, Águeda experiences a moment reminiscent of the modern subject meandering along city streets: "Antes de volver a casa di un rodeo largo y sin designo. Era muy tarde y las calles estaban casi desiertas y recién regadas. Algunos semáforos en rojo me los saltaba pisando fuerte el acelerador, estremecida de placer. Unas briznas de aire fresco entraban a alborotarme la melena" (81). Here we have an updated version of meandering through the cityscape; a person aimlessly driving her car while pondering the internal space. The identity confusion that Águeda suffers reflects Massey's concept of space—that places are pliable, they do not 'house' a certain identity, but rather consist of a multitude of changing boundaries that adjust according to the

[50] Feminist geographer Linda McDowell in *Gender, Identity, and Place* points out that Heidegger's idyllic description of the home as the locus of spiritual happiness ignores the invested labor, especially on the part of women, to maintain such a domestic space. In *Lo raro*, where domestic space is akin to psychological space, Águeda, as we shall discuss, abandons any notion of domestic labor in favor of intellectual pursuits.

social relations occurring within and around them. These precarious boundaries parallel Wilson's position that the city's chaotic nature destabilizes systems meant to circumvent women's existence.

Martín Gaite does not necessarily rely on direct speculative occurrences, such as one finds in the magical realism of Latin American "Boom" authors, to create an element of the surreal. Rather, her approach consists of deep psychological probing relying on various references as a means to bring to light the inconsistencies of life. For example, one of the reoccurring leitmotifs is Joseph L. Mankiewicz's 1950 film *All About Eve*, starring Bette Davis. In this film, Eve Harrington, a young ingenue played by Anne Baxter, gradually implicates herself in the life of Margo Channing (Bette Davis), an aging actress trying to sustain her fading career. During their initial meeting, Eve reveals something of her true nature while speaking about her childhood games of make-believe: "But somehow acting and make-believe came to fill up my life more and more. It got so I couldn't tell the real from the unreal. Except that the unreal seemed more real to me" (*All About Eve*). This line from the movie reveals the underpinnings of the novel that there exists no identifiable line between reality and make-believe as well as Águeda's claim that "me alarmó mi permanente y viciosa instalación en lo irreal" (121). In addition to the importance of the film to *Lo raro*, *All About Eve* also recently has surfaced as a metaphor for contemporary Spanish urban life in Pedro Almodóvar's film *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999) in which what appears to be 'true' is actually only an ironic reflection of reality. In *Lo raro*, Águeda blames *Eva desnuda* (*All Above Eve*) for causing her confusion about her mother and her mother's relationship with Rosario, one of Águeda's Art History professors.

This three-way relationship deserves closer consideration. While Almodóvar's film openly revolves around the deception of identity based on gender, *Lo raro* quietly explores issues of identity and desire. Rosario Tena, a postmodern woman who rejects "totalidades," introduces Águeda to the intense intellectual pleasures of reading. This intellectual pleasure intertwines with desire and Águeda finds herself attracted, at least intellectually, to the "profesora de las gafitas." Here we are reminded of what García has coined the "narrative silences" of Martín Gaite because, as this relationship quietly unfolds, it must de deciphered for its critical impact on this work. For instance, it is upon meeting Rosario in the classroom that Águeda utters her name for the first time (177).

It is Rosario who inaugurates Águeda's fascination with Dante's *La divina comedia* This text marks Águeda's symbolic entrance into literary representation with Rosario taking on the role of Virgil, Dante's Poet guide through the three levels of Hell. Through Rosario's teachings, Águeda comes to see *La divina comedia* as "un libro de viaje con ilustraciones" and it reflects her own attempts at wandering through life in search of the figurative map to guide her through. When referring to an Italian Renaissance fresco, Rosario makes the comment that "Vivimos en los suburbios de la muerte" echoing Dante's obsession with realms of the dead which points to Águeda's future struggle with her mother's death (183). In addition, we discover during this class experience that the personal mantra that Águeda has appropriated, 'lo raro es vivir', actually originates from Rosario: "Para mí, si quieren que les diga la verdad, lo raro es vivir" (184). This encounter with Rosario sparks an intellectual change for Águeda and she begins a life dedicated to the premise of *carpe diem* by leaving her mother's house and engaging in numerous mind expanding activities.

What makes this situation border on the strange is the developing friendship between Rosario and Águeda's mother. The boundaries of this friendship are never defined but there are hints of intimacy. The Virgil/Dante relationship between Águeda and the professor is inverted when Águeda encounters a tearful Rosario despondent over her chronic bad fortune. The story parallels more closely that of *All About Eve* when it is discovered that Rosario has always desired to be a famous painter, but due to her unfortunate life circumstances, she has never had the chance to obtain the illustrious career she craves. When Águeda decides to intervene by asking her mother to look after Rosario by renting her a room in her house the result is an attempt at mimicry: "Pero además es que también la imitaba en la manera de vestir y de moverse, hasta incluso un poco en la voz" (195). The eerie and sinister sensation brings to Águeda's mind the manipulative presence of Eve Harrington (196). What makes this scenario more complicated is the physical resemblance that Águeda and her mother share. They are, in essence, identical (121).

Therefore, while Rosario is supplanting Águeda's mother she is also taking the place of Águeda. When one takes into account that Águeda herself is attempting to mimic her mother in order to appease her grandfather, the game of who's who becomes even more entangled. Here the question of pure identity is demystified by revealing the layering process that constitutes each subject. When Águeda agrees to the *hombre alto*'s proposed role play, she enters into the same territory as Dante when he traversed the various stages of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise. The venture she enters into with the Devil (the *hombre alto*) will, just as Dante's journey did for him, eventually bring her

closer to a state of grace.[51] In this way, *The Divine Comedy*, a text very much preoccupied with the visual mapping of the Inferno, Purgatory, and Paradise, becomes the metaphorical blueprint for Águeda's identity struggle.

As in *Caperucita*, *Lo raro* exhibits an immense preoccupation with geographic spaces, demonstrating a keen perception about the links between spatial representation and identity. With a touch of irony, Águeda works as an archivist, whose obsessive concern is the meticulous preservation of the past through the charting and mapping of history. Her domestic partner is an architect and, before her death, Águeda's mother was working on a series of paintings titled "geografía urbana". In addition, we learn that as a child Águeda's mother used to draw her maps of imaginary cities. These maps illustrate the importance of fantastical spaces to stimulate reflection and memory. As an adult Águeda also draws maps to access her imagination. For instance, upon sitting down to write her doctoral thesis she first draws a map: "Dibujar mapas se me da bien, me produce un placer especial, la historia no puede entenderse sin la geografía, me alegré de haber traído a la bandejita algunos lápices de colores; en torno a las costas, el azul del mar se intensifica a modo de nimbo" (87). Drawing a map speaks to the desire to put in order, to have an identifiable marker from which to say with authority "here it is". Yet, maps, like metaphors, are representational devises used to help make sense of a place that is out of reach and illusory.

Lo raro pays special attention to the spatial imaginary. Águeda tells us that her first question, her first word attributed to representation, delved into the linguistic realm

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[51] The comparison between the 'hombre alto' and the Devil can also be witnessed in *El cuarto de atrás* in which the 'hombre (vestido) de negro' acts as C's Faustian Mephistopheles guiding her through the various realms of her mind.

of space: "¿Dónde?" (57). This question is posed not in response to a statement but rather stands as a linguistic marker of curiosity, one to which there exists no identifiable response. The open-endedness of the question relates back to Martín Gaite's attempt to avoid a predetermined answer that would obstruct women's ability to search out alternative modes of expression.

Águeda's profession as an archivist means that she is concerned not only with space, but more importantly with time and the past. The past, ironically, is precisely what she ignores in her personal life. Her job is not her only connection to the past. She is also a doctoral student working on a thesis titled "Un aventurero del siglo XVIII y su criado" that has to do with an explorer by the name Luis Vidal y Villalba, and his right hand man, Juan de Edad. The story of these two adventures reads like a novel with twists of intrigue and romantic gestures spilling out onto the pages of her research. However, when her boyfriend laments the fact that the story will not be retold as a novel, she quips "Hombre, qué cosas tienes. Eso no sería una tesis doctoral" (45). As of this point, Águeda still makes a clear delineation between what narrative form is considered worthy of an academic degree and what constitutes fiction, even when sources as well as the subjects themselves are known to contain falsities, exaggerations, and embellishments. Still, she admits that the thesis would be easier to write if she could only center the story not on Vidal y Villalba and his wingman, but around whom she considers to be the real hero—the Inca named Tupac Amaru, who would appear in the first chapter "como contrafigura heroica del sórdido don Luis. Cuando lo pienso, me parece oír los cascos de su caballo blanco vadeando un río a todo galope para escapar del fuego enemigo" (51). Hence, the story turns from a "historical" account to a novelistic encounter between a

subject and his/her creator. This blending of historical scholarship with the fantastical and inventive mode of writing is analogous to the protagonist's blurring of reality and the surreal in her own experiences.

According to Lisette Rolón-Collazo, the project concerning Luis Vidal y su criado is central to Águeda's personal journey, stating "marca el proceso de re-encuentro y definición personal que atraviesa Águeda desde las primeras páginas de la novela, constatándose la preeminencia de la búsqueda subjectiva, a la par con la subordinación o postergación de la histórica" (183). Indeed, there exists a connection with the process of collecting and storing information for the purpose of recalling it at a later date. As Rolón-Collazo argues, Águeda makes the connection between memory, identity, and her maternal links:

> Revivido a través de la copia de quien me transmitió una escena protagonizada por mí, archivada con los propios recuerdos como si hubiera visto, junto a los préstamos, testimonios y versiones laterales que aportan argamasa al pleito de vivir; así a base de fragmentos dispares, se fragura la memoria y se va recomponiendo el destino. (57)

As her research about Vidal y Villalba uncovers the many layers of untruths concerning her subject, Águeda also discovers the false assumptions upon which her life has been based. For instance, receiving a letter from a well-intentioned friend, Águeda learns that "Vidal y Villaba no era italiano, como pretendía hacer creer, sino hijo de unos humildes menestrales de Barcelona" (123). It is upon receiving this new article, in Catalán, that she first is introduced to the word "taranná", a word that will shape her developing perspective.

However, before the meaning of the word can be worked out, Águeda, who is experiencing writers' block and so far has written down only the title of her thesis in her notebook, must find a place in which to write. She discovers such a place in an unlikely space in her home that inspires her creativity—the kitchen:

> Nunca se me había ocurrido escribir allí, me parecía un milagro verla despejada de chismes culinarios, convertidos en libros y carpetas, haber sido capaz de crear un espacio tan mío sobre la geografía de otro que nunca dejó de rezumar tedio ni de imponérseme como ajeno. Inventarle nuevas posibilidades era como acariviar a un enfermo abandonado y logar arrancarle una sonrisa. (84)

The kitchen is one of the most highly gendered spaces in the house. Traditionally coded 'feminine' the kitchen is associated with cooking, cleaning, and other domestic duties but it is not a space that generally conjures images of literary production. However, our protagonist informs us that the traditional functionality of the kitchen bores her and she rarely eats at home. Despite its reputation as a space that limits feminine existence, it can also be read as the space of feminine creativity and authority. That the protagonist employs this space for the construction of a historical study, a geography of the intellect, marks a clear renegotiation of the use of the traditional feminine space along with its embedded meanings.

While the kitchen is the locus of intellectual endeavor, the city comes into play by providing space that amplifies introspection. *El cuarto de atrás* relies on the imagery of the house to create a metaphorical space of the subconscious to lead to literary creation. In my opinion, *Lo raro es vivir* utilizes the city space in a similar way by allowing space

to mold and influence subject development. One of the arising issues of the narrative is the search for the meaning of the word "taranná" that was part of the Catalán article concerning Vidal y Vidalba. This word, meaning character or mode of being, becomes a central concern for Águeda: "Caminaba perdida entre la gente, a paso perezoso, concentrada con insistencia obsesiva en la palabra 'taranná' [...]" (127). Instead of contemplating the exterior world, Águeda, adding a twist to the role of the *flâneur*, turns her contemplation inward. As she continues through the city, the word 'taranná' becomes of increasing significance and her urban wandering incites a consideration of her own identity:

> Me gustaba haber aprendido esa palabra nueva que invadía mis ramificaciones cerebrales exterminando cualquier germen maligno de preocupación, taranná, me hacía gracia y compañía como un amigo nuevo topado por azar, intrascendente; yo de mi propio taranná sé poco, bueno, pero no importa, vamos Gran Vía adelante, espera, semáforo en rojo, taranná, taranná. A ratos me sonaba un poco a tarambana, el taranná de don Luis, otras a nada, simplemente a redoble de tambor, y yo desfilaba a sus acordes, balanceando la bolsita con el libro de cuyas páginas surgía aquel vocablo amigo que había originado mi placentero deambular. Y así hasta la esquina del metro Santo Domingo (128).

The city space combines with the search for identity and Águeda's wanderings allow external and internal space to intermingle, awakening old memories and fostering self-speculation. The Gran Vía is a place that has inspired Águeda's ruminations about the past and her present perspective of history: "¡Qué fina, qué moderna esta avenida

cuando la inaguró Alfonso XIII a principios del siglo! Y tan decadente ahora, tan abandonada, tan invadida de cajeros automáticos como de mendigos, esplendor enlatado y miseria en rama" (125). This observation is reminiscent of the traditional *flâneur* whose presence stood to counteract the industrialization of XIX century Paris. Similarly, Águeda's remarks about the decaying streets of Madrid could be read as a social commentary about Spain's impotence against the changes occurring in the world economy. This observation notwithstanding, Águeda is not the *fin de siecle* dawdling passerby. Rather, the former image of the meandering *flâneur* has been superseded by the woman walker in active search of self-discovery. In this way, *Lo raro es vivir* parallels what Rita Felski defines as the novel "of awakening":

> self discovery…is represented as a coming to consciousness of a latent female self. Identity is not a goal to be worked toward, as in the Bildungsroman, but a point of origin, an authentic and whole subjectivity from which the protagonist has become estranged; the protagonist's journey is a circular one in which the destination coincides with the starting point…This discovery of female self can best be described as a process of awakening rather than learning, a recovery of what has been present but suppressed. (143)[52]

Following this logic, Águeda does not create an identity out of a vacuum, but rather 'discovers' the multiple facets of what constitutes her 'taranná'. Felski's description of a circular journey parallels this protagonist's recovery of self. For it is only once past digressions have been acknowledged and incorporated that Águeda moves out of stasis.

Another space worthy of mention is the *urbanización* in which her father lives that Águeda visits once during the course of the novel. The suburb has all the characteristic motifs often associated with these residential developments. In Águeda's case the suburban house also comes furnished with a materialistic step-mother named Montse and a young bratty half-brother. At the funeral of Águeda's mother, her father quickly jots down the directions to the *urbanización* along with a map and marks a certain point with a large red X and writes "Pista engañosa. Por ahí te pierdes seguro" (96). However, the chance of loosing oneself along the path is an experience Águeda welcomes and she recognizes the figurative implication of such a journey: "Bueno –suspiré–, me había metido por la pista engañosa, no es una situación desconocida para mí y tiene su aliciente porque invita a reflexionar" (96). When she arrives, instead of visiting the people she visits the *space*. While staying out of sight, she overhears conversations and reflects on the sterile tidiness of the garden and house. Taking pleasure in her game she states "¡Qué gusto!, nadie podía suponer que estaba allí. <<Me he metido en un cuento>>, pensé" (102). The game of toying with reality excites her and when her half-brother calls her a liar she quickly retorts with a refrain that underlines a need to bend the truth: "Mentirosa aquerosa, / tonta ni un pelo, / me vuelvo mariposa, / mira, levanto el vuelo" (103).

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[52] Adrián M. Garcia sees *Nubosidad variable* in this same manner.

When she leaves the urbanización, Águeda is absorbed with internal reflection:

> El regreso con su correspondiente extravío por calles, rotondas sin señalizar y descampos a oscuras convirtió en leve el peso de la melancolía, al echarle encima el de la repetición como condena, otra vez dando vueltas, siempre igual, perdida, sin saber por qué hago lo que hago, tomando indecisiones, qué pesadilla. ¿Cuándo despertaré? <<Cuando la ciudad sea murmullo de cenizas cociéndose allá abajo y vengan limpios todos los arroyos.>>" (106-7).

Here the image of the city is directly linked to the image of awakening. Águeda's confusion of identity recalls the existentialist philosophy of the aimlessness of life. However, it also highlights the existential idea that, despite ultimate meaninglessness, one can choose how to act according to certain principles. As a result, "tomando indecisiones" becomes a dangerous endeavor because it leads to stagnation.

While there are moments that subvert the traditional use of the domestic space (such as the attic and the kitchen), the urban grants a certain precariousness that best characterizes Águeda's search for a reconnection with the maternal. It is through the city passage that she eventually encounters what she seeks, making peace with the broken parts of her past by accepting the path of uncertainty and deciding to relinquish the desire to discover ultimate truth. Carbayo Abengózar remarks on the way the novel meshes the uncertainty of life with the renewal of the maternal presence, stating that the text trys to "llevar la angustia de Kierkegaard al mundo de la calle, un mundo ahora mulivocal. Lo raro, y lo maravilloso a la vez, es poder vivir ese hoy cambiante y posmoderno cada día, teniéndonos que enfrentar a la angustia que provoca la inevitabilidad de la muerte, que es

lo único que no cambia" (164). Águeda's own daughter, named Cecilia, continues the maternal connection to language, metaphor, and space. As they are looking out the window Cecilia states the question ¿Dónde?, to which Águeda reponds "Lejos [...] no se ve porque hay niebla. Más allá" (*Lo raro* 229). Hence, embracing Kierkegaard's maxim of ambiguity and absurdity—*Lo raro es vivir*—the protagonist continues the journey of maternal linguistic inheritance and embraces life in an incomprehensible world.

Conclusion

A writer like Martín Gaite makes it difficult to separate her fiction from what she reveals to us about her personal journey. Perhaps this is due to her authoring works of non-fiction that speak not only about historical facts but also to her own experiences and thoughts. As I mentioned earlier, her daughter's premature death is never directly referenced in her work and is only cursorily discussed in interviews. However, one can read within her novels characters grappling with deep loss and confusion over the meaning of death as well as with the loss of the mother. In 'Apéndice Arbitrario,' her final section of *Desde la ventana*, a work of non-fiction, Martín Gaite gazes across the New York City landscape and imagines herself composing a letter to her deceased mother.[53] She imagines her message traveling across recognizable geographic spaces such as the Queensboro Bridge and the East River. However, rather than finding her mother in the 'logical' places such as Long Island or Queens, Martín Gaite writes that she sees her

[53] This piece is published later in a collection of short stories titled "De su ventana a la mía" in *Madres e hijas*, which includes stories about the mother/daughter relationship by Laforet, Matute, Aledcoa, Tusquets, Peri Rossi, Moix, Puértolas, Sánchez, Díaz-Mas, Soriano, Grandes, and Castro.

> mucho más allá, en ese más allá ilocalizable adonde precisament ponen proa los ojos de todas las mujeres del mundo cuando miran por una ventana y la convierten en punto de embarque, en andén, en alfombra mágica desde donde se hacen invisibles para fugarse. (114)

Desde la ventana is based on the idea that women have always traveled through their narrative voices, even when physical travel was prohibited. In the words of Emily Bergmann, the appendix reveals that the essays are "not simply a writer's response to her literary foremother; rather, they are an homage to the author's biological mother" ("Narrative" 179).[54] During this section we learn how her mother often gazed out the window just at sunset across the city of Salamanca and that as a child Martín Gaite knew never to disturb this moment of her mother's 'journey' (115). She relates how her mother traveled "desde la ventana" and "desde aquellos espacios interiores" to places such as New York City. Perhaps the most convincing revelation concerning Martín Gaite's intimate connection with space is that her maternal grandfather was a "catedrático de Geografía" and that there existed an abundance of maps around her mother's childhood home. Martín Gaite invokes her grandfather's voice speaking to her mother as a child, 'Mira América qué grande—le diría alguna vez—, cuánto espacio abarca. Y eso tan chiquitito es Nueva York, con dos ríos, el Hudson y el East River' (116). Through her writing, Martín Gaite connects her mother's geographic wanderings of the mind with her travels, inviting feminine genealogy to map her literary production. In fact, the geographic imaginary, as expressed throughout the works considered here, reflects the

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[54] In her article "Narrative Theory in the Mother Tongue," Bergmann investigates the connection between maternity and Martín Gaite's essays in *Desde la ventana* and *El cuento de nunca acabar: Apuntes sobre la narración, el amor y la mentira*.

argument expounded upon by Wilson that women in the city represent a challenge to the rational world; they represent the disorderly and the unknowable—el más allá. Sara Allen and Águeda Soler are two fictional characters that present just such a challenge.

CHAPTER FOUR: City Space/Feminine Subject in Rose Montero's Later Novels (1993-2003)

The previous two chapters explored the vital relationship that Spanish women authors have forged with the city space in their writings. The Catalan women authors I chose for this study primarily saw the city space as an active witness to the historical changes that occurred as a result of the Spanish Civil War. Working within a social realist perspective, they included Barcelona as a living testimony to the intense difficulties experienced by the woman subject during the postwar years. Their focus was on using the immediate surroundings to denounce, albeit not openly, the oppressive political climate. Carmen Martín Gaite, working from within the social realism movement as well as the post-Franco period, incorporates the city experience as an essential component of feminine psychological development. Using a mixture of realism and metafictional devices, Martín Gaite deftly negotiates the urban space to uncover feminine sources of expression. Her social commentary is less obvious and her writings, while not apolitical by any means, do not immerse themselves in any obvious or identifiable posturing concerning the downtrodden and dispossessed.

The position I take in the following pages is that the work done by novelist and journalist Rosa Montero is a hybrid of these two movements. Moreover, I consider her use of the urban space as fundamental to her concern with the political present. Montero's writing is more pronounced than Martín Gaite's in terms of addressing

contemporary social ills, yet, like Martín Gaite, she experiments with myth building and explores the psychological underpinnings of female subjectivity. Her use of the urban space both provides testimony to happenings within the Spanish urban reality and probes questions of a less tangible nature concerning women's experiences. The current chapter explores how Montero employs the urban space both to reconstruct women's subjective experience and to offer a cultural and political critique the Spanish social milieu. Such critiques range from exposing dogmatic systems of control to hands-on commentary about issues concerning the social reality of women such as motherhood, poverty, abortion, drug abuse, violence, etc. For this study I focus particularly on the question of motherhood as it pertains to the urban space in Montero's narrative. I find that a critique of motherhood speaks to how the urban space alters embedded perceptions of Spanish femininity. My position is that Montero involves the city space as part of her desire to counteract the traditional Spanish mother and, rather than simply deconstructing her image, provides alternative maternal representations that are more reflective of Spanish social realities. While I draw from a number of works from Montero's corpus, I focus my primary analysis on two novels published within the last decade: *Bella y Oscura* (1993) and *El corazón del Tártaro* (2001).

I have relied throughout this study on the innovative work being doing by feminist social architects that seeks to redraw our understanding of space and how it relates to gender. These scholars often take issue with how geographical knowledge has been used to espouse empirical frameworks. The analysis of the spatial becomes a way to critique overextended power. Blunt and Rose explain, "We might say that spaces are constituted through struggles of power/knowledge; we certainly think it is important to

consider the ways in which different epistemological claims about women's identity produce different interpretations of space itself" (5). In fact, one of the foremost concerns of these women scholars is to achieve visible and practical changes in the societies they study. It is my position that through the narrative voice Montero pursues a similar result. By challenging systems that subjugate women based on gender, Montero, as witnessed in her journalistic writings as well, establishes the quest for social change as the axiom of her work. That said, there also exists a concern on her part to deconstruct the image of women from within modes of perception. In other words, Montero, similar to Martín Gaite, employs the fantastic to coax a critical examination of reality. While Martín Gaite's protagonists tend to be middle-class women, Montero takes more risks in representing people that fall outside of the main stream. Her characters arise from the range of humanity that one finds in an urban setting. They include, among others, the aging anarchist, the unwanted girl, the recovering drug addict, the violent criminal, the overly naive woman, the scoundrel, and the unlikely savior. In a recent interview with Javier Escudero, Montero responds to the question of why her writing consistently portrays grotesque and marginalized populations:

> Yo uso lo marginal y lo canalla, los monstruos, a los cuales tengo verdadera afición, a los únicos, a los seres distintos,. A mí me parece que esas vidas extremas y canallas están más desnudas, carecen del maquillaje de la vida que da lo burgués, lo burgués en un sentido cotidiano de la palabra; lo burgués, lo democrático, los usos sociales y las costumbres democáticas y todas esas cosas, es un intento desesperado del ser humano por poner maquillajes a los horrores, al horror de la vida, al horror de la

> muerte inequívoca e imposible de evitar, al horror del sufrimiento, al horror de los abusos del poder, del dolor, todos los horrores que puede haber en la existencia. (Escudero, "Rosa Montero" 330)

Given this statement, it can be asserted that Montero attempts to strip away superficial masks used in everyday existence. The city space, with its emphasis on harboring those on the periphery, becomes the logical place in which to explore political injustices.

Elena Gascón Vera situates Montero's essay writing and journalism as part of the *movida madrileña* which developed in Madrid in the 1980s. This movement, begun in the final years of Franco's dictatorship, developed around an urban youth culture that emphasized artistic exploration. Gasón vera explains,

> The purpose was to bring together an apparently dissonant, cacophonous discourse that metaphorically established the legitimacy and the acceptance of a whole marginal culture: that of workers, prostitutes, transvestites, and homosexuals. The *movida* converted them into a creative subject of artistic expression. (257)

While the basis of the *movida* was primarily apolitical, Montero's essays reflect the urge to expose the social injustices that existed not only in the marginalized communities of Madrid, but also in most other Western cities.

In fact, the city space is also the characteristic setting for most of Montero's narrative production. Using her training as a journalist, Montero tends to see the city space as harboring mysteries and intrigues. A number of her novels tend to have a journalistic feel in the sense that there is generally a story to be uncovered with the help of embedded clues. This is especially the case for *Te trataré como a una reina*, *La hija*

del caníbal, and *El corazón del Tártaro*. Other novels such as *Amado Amo* and *La función Delta*, both occurring in the city, focus on the development of a principal character as she or he grapples with feelings of identity loss. Some of her other works are more difficult to classify. Her speculative novel, *Temblor*, can be read as a criticism of the abuse of power in general, while *Bella y oscura* is a reworking of foundational myths in conjunction with a look into the lives of the urban poor. What I see as the indelible link between these novels is an unflinching commitment to expose social injustices against women as well as the various underserved populations that make up contemporary culture.

How does Montero's fiction situate herself and her writing within the feminist movement? Given the fact that I read her writing as a challenge to patriarchal modes of thinking via the urban space, I feel it is important to clarify her position as a feminist. As examined briefly in the previous chapter, the word 'feminist' has been slow to be incorporated as part of the daily lexicon that Spanish women writers use to describe themselves and their work. This has proved challenging for other Western feminists to understand and Spanish women writers often spend at least portions of their interviews explaining this reluctance. For instance, Spanish women writers have been just as bold as their international contemporaries in their explorations women's subjectivity. Literary scholars, myself included, have trouble reconciling narrative production that is clearly preoccupied with the social concerns of women with authors who refuse to be identified as 'feminist writers'. This complex issue is not easily deconstructed. Part of the

hesitation can be attributed to Spain's lingering machismo culture that dismisses women's movements as overly aggressive and incongruent with cultural ideas about femininity.[55]

However, employing the word 'feminist' has become problematic for women outside the Peninsula as well. As a pointed out in an article in *Ms.* magazine's 2001 February/March issue titled "Is Feminism a 4-Letter Word?", the word feminist no longer provides adequate definition for those involved in issues of women's equality. Several women interviewed for the article indicated that they prefer alternative names to define their commitment to fighting for the worldwide recognition of women's rights. Ingrid Rivera-Dessuit, a racial and economic policy analyst for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute was quoted as saying "one reason I don't call myself a feminist is that when I think of feminists, the image that comes to mind is white women. Another is the image of a man-hating dyke" (54). What is telling about this statement is that the word 'feminist' holds certain connotations for different groups of women, resulting in the failure to encompass the self-defining desires of every woman who strives for social change. What I find useful about the discourse between the appropriation of the word 'feminist' and the city space is that as we speak about a revisioning of space in terms of gender, it becomes necessary, by the same token, to define how Rosa Montero situates herself inside the gender debate.

Montero, a prominent contemporary novelist and journalist for Spain's premier newspaper *El país* since 1977, addresses the underlying issues of Spanish feminism and what it means to be a Spanish woman in a nation with a complex history in terms of its

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[55] For an analysis about the changing attitudes towards the woman's movement in contemporary Spain see Vanessa Knights 13-43.

treatment of women. Women's narrative can be linked to a collective feminist consciousness as it relates to the complicated web of cultural production and reception. In this regard, Montero's work is both timely and fundamental in understanding how the feminist movement is perceived and digested within the Peninsula. In actuality, Montero is a self-proclaimed feminist but is careful to appropriate her own definition of feminism rather than align herself with any part of the movement that may limit or impose a predefined position on her point of view.[56] Knights summarizes Montero's positioning within the feminist movement:

> In interviews and articles, whilst on the one hand rejecting the ghettoisation of difference feminists and arguing against a mode of writing tied to women's corporeal experience, on the other she would seem to be accepting some of their tenets by embracing some sort of essential difference which limits and defines gender. (35)

In other words, Montero may identify herself as a feminist but that does not stand in complete agreement with, or acceptance of, a particular brand of feminism.

Spain has been in the unique situation of being under the gaze of Western feminism since the demise of the Franco dictatorship in 1975. Lisa Vollendorf notes how Spanish feminists have been ignored and excluded from major debates taking place in Western feminist thinking, stating that "More than twenty-five years after Franco's death and the peaceful transition to democracy, Spain continues to be perceived as peripheral to western Europe" (2). As far as the development in feminism in Spain, after thirty years

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[56] When Lynn Talbot asks Montero if she considers herself a feminist, the reply is "Claro, por supuesto que sí" (Talbot 92).

of a dictatorship that allowed for only the very narrowest of feminine existence, the country suddenly found itself under the spotlight in how it would incorporate feminism into its new political agenda during its shift to democracy.[57] For the most part, the political transition is marked as one of great improvement for the equal rights of women. From 1976 to 1980 the Feminist Movement gained notable momentum, initiating reforms for women in both the private and public spheres. Social achievements for women meant a marked change in the urban landscape as women become increasingly visible in the public sphere. Still, these years saw conflicting notions about which policy changes should constitute the major concerns for the Movement. During this time of transition, feminist groups had divergent opinions about how feminism would be incorporated into the national consciousness, causing tensions within the various factions. It was during this impassioned period of feminist vitality, and conflict, that Rosa Montero began her career as a novelist.[58]

What is clear is that Montero's work addresses the 'invisible patriarchy' by questioning foundational myths concerning the representation of women promoted and created by the dominant ideology. She deconstructs the archetypal depictions of women, allowing for a multi-dimensional, non-binary woman to develop. In an attempt to portray the diverse components of womanhood, Montero's narrative moves across many genres

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[57] It should be noted that before the Spanish Civil War and Franco's subsequent victory, Spain was enjoying a particularly fruitful period for women's rights. The constitution of the Second Republic created in 1931 was one of the most progressive and liberal in Europe, establishing the separation between church and state, legalizing divorce and abortion, and ensuring women the right to vote (see Scanlon 1986: 274, 265, 308). However, Franco's fascist regime rolled back many of these gains (see Scanlon 1986: 320-28).

[58] For a complete discussion on Spanish feminism of the 1970s and 1980s see Lidia Falcón's *Mujer y poder político*, 1992. See also Margaret E.W. Jones' discussion of post-Franco feminism in Spain in *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition* (2001: 311-36).

from more "realist" work to the use of fantastic and speculative fiction. Through her writing she unravels culturally laden images such as the Spanish mother, denying these images the opportunity to dictate Spanish women's subjectivity. Surely, the approach of creating characters that personify the complexities of Spanish women's existence is the basis for the wide appeal and commercial success of her work, as can be seen in her status as a "best-seller" and in the numerous editions published of her earlier works. I would argue that her narrative's attraction lies in the representation of feminism as permeable, shifting and adapting to the varying needs of women. In addition, I believe that Rosa Montero's narrative falls under the explanation provided by Blunt and Rose concerning the preoccupations of feminists today: "The central task [...] is to articulate the extraordinarily complex and simultaneous interaction of gender, class, race, and sexuality (to name just four of the most frequently mentioned axes of identity, oppression, and resistance) that create differences between women" (6). While Montero's work is not so "Spanish" in nature that it cannot speak to women of other socio-political circumstances, she does not shy away from exemplifying her unique cultural position. For this reason I do not find Montero's narrative asagreeign with the views developed by essentialist feminists who argue for a "pure space free of the distorting mediations of power" (Blunt and Rose 6). Rather, Montero's narrative works to expose the dynamics of power as they pertain to the subordination of women. Nevertheless, the reluctance to embrace an identified feminist movement highlights Montero's emphasis on the affirmation of feminine identity unyoked from ideological specificities and, moreover, can be read as a conscious decision to avoid totalitarian perspectives.

An example of Montero's aversion to joining any particular movement of ways of thinking is witnessed in her confrontations with postmodernist theory. Often writing of her mistrust and skepticism concerning postmodern intellectual pursuits, Montero takes to task ideas she sees as elitist and devoid of meaning. Escudero takes note of Montero's direct (and sometimes indirect) criticism of Baudrillard, Lacan, Kristeva, and Guattari and Deleuze in her syndicated column published in *El País* (357). Escudero points out that in an article titled "El bla-bla-bla de los santones," Montero accuses such thinkers of deliberately obscuring texts and misusing scientific principles in a manner that is "pretenciosa, ignorante, errónea y superficial":

> Estamos hablando del poder intelectual de unos grandes santones atrincherados en sus jergas sagradas, en discursos que 'suenan bien', pero que no se entienden: y de todo es sabido que los lenguajes crípticos pueden ser un arma para el despotismo, porque ocultan la vaciedad del mensaje e impiden la respuesta al no iniciado. ¡Y pensar que este bla-bla-bla dictorial y hueco pasa por ser un producto intelectual de primer orden! (Montero 6, Escudero "Destrucción" 357).

This scathing criticism is directed more at the misuse of the power and claims of intellectual superiority rather than at the musings of philosophy. For instance, in another article in *El País Digital* 858 titled "http://" Montero mentions a web page created by Australian Andrew Bulhak where one can create a paper that is "hermético y pomposo … perfecto en su construcción gramatical y completamente sin sentido."[59] This criticism

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[59] This article can be found at www.csse.monash.edu.au/community/postmodern.html under the title "The Postmodern Generator".

makes a clear connection between the authoritarianism of the high priestesses in her speculative novel *Temblor* and what she considers the rhetorical language used by blabbering postmodern philosophers (Escudero 357). Considering that Montero is interested in dislodging systems that claim absolute notions of truth, her aversion to postmodern theory does contain a dash of irony since postmodernism, after all, prides itself on the deconstruction of absolutes. Still, it must be noted that it is the postmodern elitism and patronizing attitude of its most revered thinkers that Montero finds threatening because it is reminiscent of the Patriarch (Franco) who sought to control his children by disseminating and imposing what he deemed his morally superior ways of behavior and thinking.

Despite her suspicion of postmodern thinkers, Montero admits to reading feminist literary theory, in particular Simone de Beauvoir, stating, "Te abre los ojos porque en algún libro que has leído tú, te das cuenta de las propias trampas en las que tú has caído como lectora acostumbrada a una tradición cultural machista" (Talbot 91). These 'trampas' of masculine culture come up in Montero's narrative with frequency. For instance, in one of Montero's more recent novels, *La hija del Caníbal* (1997), she creates a realist setting in which the protagonist, Lucía, is coming to terms with the various components that comprise her identity.[60] *La hija* examines the personal issues that women face in terms of establishing a subjectivity in a culture that continues to align and support itself with a masculine paradigm. Playing with the limits of identity, *La hija* is a novel that Montero writes "es una reflexión sobre la identidad, qué somos, cómo nos percibimos, cómo conseguimos la continuidad del ser, si es que la consequimos, cómo

logramos reconocernos a nosotros mismos o cuál es el enigmático mecanismo que nos permite recordar nuestro propio nombre" (351). I would add that this novel reveals the way people play a role in their own construction of self and in their own subjugation. In a humorous yet telling scene, Lucía is engaged in an internal dialogue of condemnation of a man whom she is convinced is looking at her derrière, only to be shocked and sadly disappointed when she discovers that he has paid her no heed. This scene demonstrates one of the 'trampas' in which women find themselves within masculine culture. Other recurrent themes in this work that question women's assumptive position in society are motherhood and its connection to the feminine definition of self, families and their effects on identity, the process of maturing and growing older, the intertwining and retelling of history, and the constructed realities that each person must reconfigure in order to reconcile oneself to his/her particular situation.

Even though Montero, unlike the hesitancy displayed by other Spanish women writers, appropriates the name "feminist" for herself, she rejects the imposition of the word feminist, choosing rather to define feminism on a personal basis. In an interview with Davies, Montero explains her version of feminism:

> I have considered myself a feminist for a long time; but feminism for me is not an ideology. Which does not mean I agree with that right-wing movement (postmodernism?) which avoids ideologies altogether and ends up nowhere. What I mean to say is that for me feminism is something more basic, more animal-like, it's a way of being in life, something definitive, defining. (Davies 19)

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[60] For this novel Rosa Montero won the Premio Primavera de Novela in 1997.

Montero has stated that her work is meant to be neither commercial nor militant.[61] In another interview, when asked if her novel *Temblor* could be considered feminist literature, her response echoes a non-militant stance:

> It's women's writing. I prefer that term, not because I'm rejecting the adjective feminist as a person, but when you qualify literature as feminist you seem to be qualifying it as the same as for example socialist or pacifist, you're qualifying it as militant… and that it is not. (Knights 227)

Escudero asks her a similar question and receives a similar response:

> JE: —¿Has leído teoría feminista?
>
> RM: —¡Buah! ¡Me aburre…! He mirado un poco por encima algunas cosas pero me aburre hasta extremos inconcebibles.
>
> JE: —¿Estás cansada de que se te califique de escritora feminista?
>
> RM: —Sí, me parece ridículo. ¿Por qué no se califica a los hombres, como los muchísimos que hay en la literatura, de escritoras machistas? Yo me considero feminista como persona pero no creo en la narrativa utilitaria, la odio, me parece que es una verdadera traición. Abomino de la narrativa utilitaria, ya sea pacifista, ecologista, socialista, feminista, y todos los "istas" que sea, aunque yo me considere ecologista, pacifista y feminista, pero eso no tiene nada que ver. Soy feminists y además soy latina y urbana y tengo cuartenta y cinco años. Y todo eso son influencias de mi vida que recaen sobre mi obra, como otras miles de cosas más.[…]

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[61] I will return to the issue of the commercialization of Montero's writing later in the chapter.

JE: —¿Qué te parece el que se te incluya una y otra vez en la ya tópica lista de "mujeres escritoras"?

RM: —Eso es un gueto, un gueto ridículo. Me he propuesto no volver a ir, nunca jamás, a una mesa sólo de literatura de mujeres. ¡Es que me niego, ya está bien, es ridículo! Te vas a un congreso y hay mesas de literatura y poder, literatura y fantasmas, literatura y fantasía, literatura lo que sea y luego hay una que es de literatura y mujeres. ¡Como si las mujeres no tuviéramos nada que decir sobre los otros temas! ¿Pero qué es esto? En el siglo veintiuno, que estamos ya, me parece alucinante que se siga con esto. (Escudero "Rosa Montero" 336)

I reproduce the above section because I believe it raises several points crucial to this study. To begin with, Montero demonstrates a clear desire not to separate from the feminist movement but rather to see it absorbed into the everyday. Refusing to categorize her work as femininst should not be read as an attempt to denounce the basic philosophy of the women's movement. On the contrary, as Montero reads it, the ultimate goal of the movement is that there no longer be a need for the separation of literature based on gender. Furthermore, that she lists her urbanism as one of the significant influences on her life and work, supports the need for a more in-depth examination of this particular aspect for its impact on her literary work.

In fact, given Spain's history, adopting a policy that rejects any militant posturing, even with feminism, is a powerful political statement. As Spain continues to struggle with internal terrorism, an anti-militant posture conveys a strong message of non-violence that makes a meaningful statement about the humanist concern with justice. And herein

lies the connection with Spanish culture and feminism. It is not so much that Spanish women writers reject the fact that they work for the recognition of women as full participants in society, but that they are highly suspicious of being labeled from the outside. Many Spanish women writers, having experienced true confinement in a very real way, are not interested in further limitations on their identity. The wariness of being coined, defined, and of being told who they are by others comes from a keen historical understanding of how false labels and deceptive image construction work to support totalitarian ideologies. In interviews Montero has mentioned her sympathy with the anarchist movement in the sense that she believes in an individualistic approach to working for the larger good of society. In other words, for Montero it is the need for the elimination of feminism that underscores the classification of herself as a feminist:

> The day that men and women are no longer mutilated, the day when sex does not condition people's full development, the day when male domination and supremacy pass to the Annals of History…, the day when communication between the sexes is born out of mutual respect between free human beings, that day there will be no need for feminism. (Davies 18)

As a writer of the XXI century, Rosa Montero has also written about her feelings regarding feminism and "escritura feminina" at the following website: http://www.clubcultura.com/clubliteratura/clubescritores/montero/escritura_mujer.htm. In this article, which is written on a page that claims to be Montero's "página oficial", she explains her position regarding the progress of women:

> Por eso los esfuerzos de objetivación que se han hecho dentro de las teorías feministas más extremas me parecen risibles, dogmáticos y verdaderamente obsoletos. Eso es un concepto del feminismo antiguo, limitador para la mujer y reaccionario. La obsesión por colocar la literatura de la mujer en un espacio aparte pudo servir como punto de reflexión y de ayuda en cierto tiempo pasado, pero hoy resulta discriminador y sexista. Y no porque el mundo haya superado el machismo, que no es así (aunque las condiciones han mejorado enormemente, sigue existiendo el sexismo), sino porque la evolución de la mujer ha sobrepasado ese encierro ideológico. El verdadero feminismo está más allá de esos límites.

Although Montero's work is difficult to align with any particular movement of feminism, there are certain traits belonging to the overarching goal of achieving justice for women. In many texts she explores both capitalism and patriarchy as it belongs to the subordination of women, as can be seen in *Te trataré* and *Crónica del desamor*. In addition, her work reflects a breakdown of class issues and focuses on women's work as it pertains to childbearing, careers, wives, and caretakers. One also finds an examination of the institutionalization of women's subjugation in terms of mass culture, motherhood, and violence. Her narrative, thus far, has not experimented a great deal with the idea of gender as an illusion or ideological construct and she maintains a fairly identifiable division between men and women. For example, while I find instances of 'gender performance,' drawing from the ideas of Judith Butler, I do not believe Montero consciously subscribes to this view. In addition, she works, with a few exceptions,

primarily within heterosexual relationships and her writing generally does not concern itself with the underlining issues concerning queer culture and identity.[62] Her erotic prose is restrained and never ventures into pornographic depictions. Rather, her writing contains a clear objective to politicize injustices based on already defined gender lines. I have briefly explored the topic of feminism in relation to Montero's narrative because I believe that orienting her writing within the discourse of feminism serves to explore deeper issues of gender and space. Montero's objective is not unilateral support for a particular movement but rather her emphasis is on social change free from predefined boundaries. This means that Montero's use of the city space invites us to reconsider the instabilities and contradictions that exist in the everyday, while envisioning ways to move beyond fixed identity structures.

Motherland/Fatherland: The Search for Place in *Bella y Oscura* and *El corazón del Tártaro*

As previously discussed, Rosa Montero's work often concentrates on the position of the female subject in modern Spanish society. This concern for the political immediate is exemplified in *Bella y oscura*. In this work, Montero presents a prepubescent girl whose need for a maternal foundation is masked by the urban reality in which she resides. Described as a transitional novel from her more journalistic works to ones that encompass a broader range of representation, *Bella y Oscura* shifts between an intimidating urban reality and a metafictional space (Harges 117). What ultimately

[62] Her first novel *Crónica del desamor* (1979) contains a homosexual male character but issues surrounding homosexual culture are not profoundly explored. In addition, her non-fiction work *Amantes y enemigos: Cuentos de parejas* and *Pasiones* contains stories about homosexual relationships.

occurs in *Bella y oscura* is a revisioning of the maternal role in girlhood development, while revealing the power exuded by the paternal as illusory. In this text the urban is a space of imaginative forces that initiates a journey into a dualistic fantasy world, quelling the protagonist's sense of abandonment and loneliness. The spatial metaphors of this work serve to create a binary world that depicts the urban space as violent, dark, and threatening and the metafictional world as more in tune with feminine consciousness. The force of the novel lies in a young girl's ability to navigate an unpredictable and menacing urban space via the creation of a unique mythical foundation that counteracts her immediate spatial reality.

In both novels considered in this section, the protagonists' relationship with the father overshadows the importance of the maternal. The internal topography inscribed by the paternal makes it difficult for them to see beyond his presence. A desire to reach the father holds the protagonists in a perpetual Electra complex that leads them to deny their maternal influences. As indicated by Luce Irigaray, this desire signifies that the woman "remains forever fixated on the desire for the father, remains subject to the father and to his law, for fear of losing his love, which is the only thing capable of giving her any value at all" (87). These novels eventually reveal that the maternal exists just beneath the surface of the façade of paternal primacy. The result of this curtain of concern for the father is that the maternal must be revealed gradually and must come through the back door in order to reclaim its space as an integral part of these protagonists' search for selfhood. The city space and its ability to provoke alternative representations becomes central to the quest to uncover the paternal as detrimental to more inclusive modes of feminine subjectivity. However, as we shall see, the maternal does not constitute a full

discovery of self and Montero does not allow overly optimistic tales of motherly nurturing. Her narrative depicts the mother as a complicated and problematic influence that has devastatingly powerful effects on protagonists' identities.

It is often noted that contemporary Spanish women writers consistently destroy the mother figure.[63] This is especially true for narrative written during the Franco years.[64] In effect, in Spanish women's narrative the mother is often dead or dying. When she happens to be present she is more often than not portrayed as inconsequential, overbearing, inadequate, distant, mad, religiously fanatical, ill, or generally mean. This characterization stands for most maternal substitutes as well, usually found in the form of a paternal grandmother or aunt. Despite her chronic absence, the Spanish mother has the uncanny ability to reach beyond the grave (or whatever mental obstacle afflicts her) to become the single most important influence in protagonists' lives. The novels I consider here also follow this trend. In both *Bella y Oscura* and *El corazón* the mother is already dead at the outset yet both exercise immense influence despite their physical demise. While the problematic image of the mother in Spanish culture is mostly attributed to the ideological underpinnings of the Franco regime, one wonders about the residual influence of this image in recent fiction nearly 30 years after Franco's death. While 30 years does not constitute a considerable amount of time in terms of human culture, it does raise the question as to why the image of the mother gone awry continues its grip on Spanish

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[63] A superb summary and analysis of the absent mother in Spanish women's writing in the 1940s and 50s, along with corresponding political influences, can be seen in Christine Arkinstall's "Toward a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughts in Contemporary Spanish Narrative by Women" in *Writing Mothers and Daugthers*. Ed. Adalgisa Giogio. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002: 47-84.

[64] One is reminded in particular of the absent mother in the works of Ana María Matute, Rosa Chacel, Mercè Rodoreda, Carmen Laforet, and Elena Quiroga among others.

feminine consciousness even when such an image is no longer promoted as part of the official political agenda. The answer to this question does not come easily, yet one can point to the relatively late gains made for women in Spanish society as well as continued depreciation of motherhood in general. I find that the explanation provided by Arkinstall for literature by Spanish women of the 40s and 50s that "the relationship between mother and daughter is at all times engaged in a quest for representations of both figures that question and often subvert cultural prescriptions" still rings true for Spanish women writers of the present (47).

What both of the narrators/protagonists discover is that logocentrism has failed them, or will fail them within the course of their lives. For both women the need for auto-definition reaches beyond the available signifiers provided by the Patriarch. The Father, as the symbol of the dominant power structure, proves insufficient in providing a sense of self identification for the two women characters. In the case of *Bella y oscura* the young protagonist, known only as Baba, is confronted with the symptomatic absence of motherhood. Her biological mother is dead and she is sent to live with her relatives, an aunt and uncle, a male cousin of about the same age, and her paternal grandmother. Also forming part of this family is a Lilliputian dwarf, or *enana*, named Airelai who, while she is not a relative, has an emotional relationship with the family and is treated as an ad hoc member. Nothing is known of Baba's life circumstances before she came to live in the Barrio, except that she was previously at an orphanage. Longing for the return of her absent father, Baba begins to rely on her maternal substitutes for support.

The fragmented motherhood that exists in *Bella y oscura* is a motherhood that falls short of the ideal of maternal domestic happiness promotted during the Franco years.

Since the traditional mother exists as an impossible ideal, all other perceptions of the mother fail to reach the iconic standard. Insufficient examples of motherhood abound in this novel. For example, Baba's aunt Amanda is a mother but is so victimized that she ignores her own child. Baba's grandmother oversees her brood like a matriarchal hen but renders herself powerless by relinquishing all control to her prodigal son. The enana, Airelai, is incapable of biological motherhood but embodies the mythical aspect of motherhood through her exotic stories and fables. These maternal figures help Baba navigate the city streets, teaching her valuable lessons about survival in the urban barrio.

The city is revealed to the reader in the first chapter of the text. Initially the urban represents for Baba, as it did for Andrea in *Nada*, a place of luminosity and wonder:

> A nuestro alrededor se extendía la ciudad, cegadora como un incendio. Torres de cristal, escaparates luminosos y recargados, hipnotizantes anuncios de colores. Arriba, un trocito de cielo rosa y un chisporreteo de vidrios encendidos por el sol de la tarde.
>
> —Cauntas luces… —exclamé, admirada.
>
> —Es bonita, ¿verdad?—contestó Amanda con un suspiro—. Por esta parte la ciudad es muy bonita. (Montero 7)

Amanda's comment that "esta parte" of the city is pretty, disrupts its benign appearance and highlights the social and class divisions inherent in the urban space. Baba, dazzled by the commercial section of the urban space, begins to imagine arriving at a large house and becoming part of this urban wonderland. However, as Baba and Amanda move to the outskirts of the city, the shiny image of the city fades and the luminous surroundings are replaced by darker, more sinister imagery:

> Las casas por las que pasábamos ahora estaban abandonadas y ruinosas. Ciegas ventanas con los vidrios rajados. Puertas tapiadas con cartones. Muros desconchados, Negros almacenes con la techumbre rota. El aire olía a orines y dejaba en los labios como un sabor a hierro. (9)

The subsequent pages chronicle a deterioration of space as the two figures move out of the "ciudad maravillosa" into barrios of less economic privilege. This movement is mirrored by the loss of light and witnessed by the encroaching darkness: "y se acercaba ya la línea de oscuridad definitiva, la noche secreta, adulta e inhabitable" (8). As people and lights disappear, Baba is left with the indelible feeling of being out of place, that she does not belong to this world. The narrative relates the impending danger with images of decay and the lurking unknown: "La calle era un túnel oscuro; junto a las escasas y débiles farolas se agitaban las sombras. La noche se extendía sobre el mundo como una telaraña descomunal: en algún rincón acecharía la araña, con las patas peludas, hambrienta y esperándonos. Caminábamos cada vez más deprisa" (9). The vague feelings of uneasiness are then transformed into actual threat as Amanda and Baba further penetrate the city's less hospitable sections: "Subimos por la calle y nos decían cosas. Hombres extraños que había debajo de las bombillas y que nos invitaban a pasar. Y por las puertas entreabiertas salía humo y in replandor rojizo, un aliento de infierno" (10). The above passages illustrate Baba's physical and psychological movement to her new home in a marginal urban neighborhood obscured by crime and poverty. Powerless at this point to choose her own destiny, Baba absorbs her surroundings and incorporates them into her everyday perspective. She realizes she is trapped in a world in which she

does belong: "Miré por la ventana. La calle estaba oscura, el asfalto mojado. Y al fondo, las bombillas, los hombres, la enormidad del mundo" (12).

In this novel the protagonist takes on less the characteristics of the feminist version of the *flâneur* than in other novels considered up to this point in which women protagonists wander the cityscape in order to infuse their own presence in the urban space. Despite the above description, Baba is more an observer of people and events than of spaces. A reason for this is that her movement is extremely limited to the Barrio. Rather than internalizing her surroundings, she describes them to the reader as if she were recounting a story with a certain amount of detachment. In fact, in the first line of the novel we are told that the story is something to which "fui testigo" (5). The events constitute something that happened *to* her rather than something in which she was an active participant. She also admits that she is not sure if the story is something she remembers or something she has invented, emphasizing the tricky constructs of memory.

Once in the Barrio, Baba quickly acquires the street smarts necessary to navigate her way through life with the least amount of harm. The Barrio is a ruthless and mean section of the city: "un vertiginoso laberinto de sombras y esquinas" (13). Despite the Barrio's reputation, there exist even more dangerous places that Baba is forbidden to enter. Baba's cousin Chico helps orient her to rules of the Barrio: "Y dos cosas muy importantes: una, no cuentes nunca nada a los extraños, y otra, si oyes ruidos por las noches no te levantes de la cama" (14). Providing no shelter from the menacing presence of the Barrio, the domestic space loses its former position as a place sheltered from harmful outside influences. For instance, when her uncle, Segundo, arrives at the home, Baba feels threatened: "Yo, medio dormida aún pensé, no sé por qué, que al otro lado de

la puerta había un animal grande y salvaje; y que si lograba penetrar en la habitación nos arrollaría" (15). The direct infiltration of street life into the home disrupts the idea of the house as existing separate from the public sphere. The resulting entanglement of these two spaces is that Baba must learn to negotiate both with equal astuteness. Her lesson, imparted to her by Chico, is that one must recognize one's literal and figurative place in the Barrio and not step outside the lines, and that surviving means one must "conocer el lugar que uno ocupaba y en actuar en consecuencia" (16). With the help of Chico, Baba learns the cartographic spaces which she is allowed to inhabit, both in terms of the Barrio and in terms of her own existence.[65]

This decidedly dark urban environment contrasts with the fantasy world created by Airelai. Something of a fantastical figure herself, Airelai's stories rely on familiar scripts of mythical fairy-tales that provide an element of possibility and, more importantly, mental escape from the Barrio. The myths expound upon the magical constructs of the natural world, a world that has been snuffed out of existence in the urban landscape. Through these stories, Airelai teaches Baba that people are capable of creating or inventing themselves through words (22). The stories are a strategic transgression of the marginalized urban environment. Portraying fantastical worlds where women are both celebrated and vilified (54-7, 77-83, 126), the myths become a way of coping with the distress of living in a violent underworld and reach past the limiting space of the Barrio.

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[65] Here the reader is witnessing the beginnings of childhood interpellation in which Baba's ways of thinking and behaving are being determined by the discursive practices occurring around her (Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*). The urban system, similar to the capitalist system, interpellates and then subjugates Baba within a determined ideology.

Harges sees the role of Airelai as political in the sense that she is an "ametaphor for Francoist manupulation and defraudation" (117). I read Airelai's role as achieving a "feminine space" that fosters Baba's ability to see beyond the immediate via a new mythical foundation that confronts the difficult urban realities. That is, through these stories Airelai teaches Baba the inventive "poder de la palabra" (51) and introduces her to an inner space that unravels the exterior binaries of the city space. Baba internalizes the stories and uses them to visualize positive endings for her future. Davies reinforces this position: "As Baba grows up, she acquires through Airelai a feminist consciousness of her own worth, innate power, and potential" (168). [66] Similarly, Kathleen Glenn reads Airelai's myths as counteracting "mitos generados por los hombres" that "ensanchen nuestros horizontes culturales" (82). Finally, Geraldine Nichols finds that Spanish women writers who engage the fantastic paradigm in their writings "invert, distort, or otherwise unsettle a particular, specific, historically grounded status quo" (109). My reading of Airelai's mythical inventions concurs with the expressed ideas that these worlds disrupt the patriarchal constructs to which Baba is continuously exposed. However, more specifically, I see the integration of the new myths integrating into the city space to act as a reconfiguration of 'place' for Baba. The stories crack the urban shell which has been calcified with intimidation and menace and allow alternative visions of being that, while not free of their cultural specifics, incorporate messages of feminine renewal.

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[66] Catherine Davies distinguishes between the magical world presented to Baba that promotes her feminist awareness and the magic that is used as a guise for deception, practiced both by Airelai and Segundo.

In an interview with Knights, Montero discusses linking the fantastic realm with female development, stating that the creation of new spaces is a necessary part of women's writing.

> VK—¿Piensas que la literatura de mujeres puede crear su mundo propio con nuevos mitos y arquetipos?
>
> RM—Claro, evidentemente. Bueno, yo creo que es el reto que tenemos precisamente. O sea que no sólo que se puede, sino que se debe y además ese es el momento en el que estamos, obviamente ¿no? Justamente, eso es lo que he creado la literatura feminina. (Knights 227)

Later, Montero explains her understanding of reality and fantasy:

> VK—¿Qué entiendes por los terminos [sic] realidad y fantasía?
>
> RM—Pues mira, para mí la fantasía es parte de la realidad. [...] Para mí, la realidad es algo mucho más complejo, la realidad es lo mesurable, lo tangible, lo exterior pero, también es los sueños, los miedos, los deseos, es todas las dimensiones del ser. (259-60)

Given Montero's views on the correlation between real and fantastical space, the myths created by Airelai's storytelling represent not only a way for Baba to endure her daily realities, but also move her toward a feminine claim of subjectivity.

Baba does not yearn for the traditional mother created for and by the Franco regime. In fact, in this novel mothers are broken people. Baba is a girl who has not yet been exposed to what a mother should or should not be. Abandoned and neglected, Baba allows her father to become the focal point of her fantasies. She decides, for example, that he will be the one to save her from the urban realm darkened by domestic violence,

infanticide, fratricide, prostitution, child abuse, and criminal deviancy. While her father is the ever absent figure, existing for the most part only in the abstract his name, Máximo, leaves no doubt as to his position as the symbolic ruler of the family. In the seedy backdrop of *Bella y oscura*, the empowerment of women still lies under the thumb of the patriarch, and the women in this novel continue to be subjected to masculine authority. We see, for example, that Airelai is working as a prostitute; that Amanda suffers the misery of domestic violence; that the grandmother adheres to the wishes of an absent son; and that Baba is left to imagine her father as her savior.

Baba imagines her father as the one who will rescue her from her current precarious existence and remains unshaken in her belief that he will one day return: "Y desde entonces tuve la absoluta seguridad de que mi padre vendría, antes o después, para buscarme" (*B y O* 27). However, when Baba's father does return at the end of the narrative and the promised or imagined security does not accompany him, we are left to hope that Baba will find comfort in her skills acquired by her maternal contributors. Once her father arrives, he refuses to take her with him--this representing a literal and figurative abandonment of paternal omnipotence. As a token he gives her a picture of her grandmother as a young girl who looks exactly like Baba and is, incredibly, signed with the nickname of her grandmother--Baba. This photo indicates the importance of female genealogy and the effects of motherhood. Baba gazes at the photo and sees her grandmother not as she knew her, old and eccentric with bouts of cruelty and extreme favoritism, but as young girl full of vigor and promise. Baba is caught between these two extremes; on the one hand, she teeters on the edge of being able to hold onto her girlhood and incorporate her acquired knowledge into her development as a woman or,

on the other hand, having to surrender herself to the father, relinquishing her future self to the patriarchal forces that surround her. Therefore, the grandmother represents a binary image. She is both a woman who bestows on Baba the key to her female genealogy and a woman unable to sustain a position of power in her own life. Consequently, Baba sees herself mirrored in the photo and recognizes the possibilities that life can hold for a young woman and, at the same time, the potential for loss. The image is both awe inspiring and frightening because the photo holds a glimpse of a pattern on the verge of being repeated. For instance, as a young girl the grandmother dedicated the photo to her father, a symbolic rendering of her self to the paternal. Baba is now at these crossroads, caught between repetition of the past and escape into the future.

The reader hopes that Baba will continue to hold onto her memories of the maternal forces embedded in Airelai's stories that demonstrated alternate ways of looking at herself and her surroundings. As the novel comes to a close,Baba sits on the edge of a water tank waiting for her father. The observation of the city's surroundings absorb both her time and her thoughts:

> Era ahí donde yo me instalaba a cumplir las largars horas de mi espera, contemplando la línea decendente de la calle y el pasar de las gentes. Llegué a aprenderme todas las manchas y las grietas de las viejas casas de alrededor, desconchones con forma de perro, de palmera, de molino [...]. (B y O 183).

The contemplation of space takes the place of Baba's interactions with people. The only witness of the gift of the photo is the space that surrounds her.

The last word of the novel is "padre" and an image of Baba waiting for a father that will never appear. Yet, the maternal imagery of this final scene is significant. Baba sees the light of the star from one of Airelai's stories and recalls that this star is a symbol of hope. Ironically, this star is actually an explosion of the plane that is carrying her father, a literal death of the paternal monopoly of control, facilitating Baba's exploration of her maternal roots. For example, when Baba sees her father's plane explode, she thinks she is being watched by Airelai's star and that her happy life is about to start: "La reconocí enseguida, supe que era ella, no podía ser otra, la Estrella mágica de la Vida Feliz, una bola de fuego cegadora que devoraba toda la oscuridad" (197). Unfortunately, the power of the patriarchal hold is great and one can not help but feel the unfairness of the final sentence that has Baba waiting, still, for the return of her father: "Y así, tranquila al fin, regresé al áspero borde del estanque y me senté a esperar que voliera mi padre" (Montero 197). This is where Baba exits the novel and the reader wonders if the girl will be able to escape the insidious atmosphere of the Barrio to claim her own identity. Knights writes that this final scene "encapsulates the beauty and horror of life referred to in the title of the novel" yet it also invites the reader to write beyond the ending and create other possibilities for Baba's future (206). The narrative duality and the binary system is apparent throughout this text. On the one hand exists the 'Bella' and the possibility of discovering the maternal and creating new modes of expression and self definition and, on the other hand, the 'Oscura' where the shadow of the paternal voice persuades women to surrender to the paradigm created to shroud women's subjectivity. Yet, it is through the discovery of new ways of defining that the binary system is questioned and other possibilities of identity are explored. One indication of Baba's

success is that we are being told the story by Baba at some time in the future, indicating a successful arrival. On the other hand, the retelling of the story signifies that the events of this period in the Barrio, along with her exposure to Airelai's stories, still provoke memories influencing her (we assume) adult life. The most significant message that Airelai instills by the retelling of her fantastical stories is indeed the ability to redefine one's self and the possibility of escape.

The maternal role, as portrayed in this novel by Airelai and the grandmother, is not without failures and setbacks. In this novel the feminine voice is on the verge of discovering a new place of auto-definition via the creation of alternative myths that provide a cornerstone for feminine expression. However, Montero is careful not to engage in false optimism and we recall the criticism of the misuse of matriarchal power in this text as well as in *Temblor*. Even though Baba experiences a process that is akin to an awakening or a birth, the process of redefinition is complicated and difficult, especially when the signifiers of patriarchy are still in place. In this narrative, the process of breaking the molds of femininity and maternity is closely scrutinized and, not only does it call into question the discourse that allows women subjectivity within laws created by males, but is reveals how the process of redefinition can be tedious and tenuous. Still, there exists the hopeful message that the Vida Feliz may come as a result and Montero leaves the project of Baba's future in her own hands.

As with *Bella y Oscura* and other works, *El corazón del Tártaro* (2001) takes place in an urban setting. This work stylistically follows the same thread of past novels by centering the action on the development of a main protagonist through the disruption

of her previously cozy reality.[67] In the case of *El corázon del Tártaro*, the city's criminal aspects also come to bear on the protagonist's personal story. While there is no interchange between a fantastical world and the real, as in *Bella y Oscura*, this text tells a story within a story that provokes a renegotiation of self. This newest work introduces a middle-aged woman whose scrupulously guarded past catches up with her, forcing her to relive and confront veiled family secrets. *El corazón del Tártaro* weaves in and out of the urban space, dipping occasionally into surrealistic modes of expression. Similar to other works by Montero, this novel oscillates between a gritty, everyday reality and a much more fantastic realm, with the two worlds often colliding to create a new terrain of representation. By deciphering the cartographic spaces, I examine how the urban space becomes a means to an end in terms of the protagonist's process of self-salvation. As with the other works examined, I contend that the cityscape is a crucial component to the protagonist's self-reflection that moves her towards a fuller acceptance of self. Essentially, a cognitive re-mapping occurs that corresponds to discoveries based on the urban experience, with personal change triggered by the city's ability to elicit suppressed memories and to accept and absorb new modes of being.

In this novel the city of Madrid is turned into a maze harboring past secrets amidst its various urban points. The urban space of this novel reflects Raymond Williams' observations about the mystery stories of Conan Doyal's *Sherlock Holmes* in which an "isolated rational intelligence" penetrates the "otherwise [...] impenetrable city" (42). In this work, the main protagonist acts as the detective, criminal, and justice seeker in her own story. Still, this is not a prototypical detective story, for the crime has either already

[67] Midlife interruption is also the premise for *La hija del caníbal*.

been solved or it has not yet been committed. Instead, the protagonist's main preoccupation is the reassembling of her past in order to make sense of the present. In telling the story, Montero engages her characteristic blending of journalism and narrative form. Mirroring her Modernist forefathers (Dickens, Poe, Baudelaire, Zola) who acted as journalistic urban *flâneurs*, relaying their impressions of the streets of real cities, Montero transposes the urban scene of Zarza's life. Yet this novel is unique in that it uses realistic markers to create false realities, adding to the sense of disorientation. Mentioning in an interview that "Hay un juego que hace que el lector no sepa en toda la novela so lo que se le ha contado es verdad o es mentira," Montero links reality to the world of fantasy, with fantasy becoming another facet of everyday experience (Escudero, "Rosa Montero" 331).

Zarza, the protagonist of *El corazón*, navigates her way through the labyrinthine streets, back alleys, and dark spaces that make up the urban underground culture. Zarza's name is actually a diminutive of her last name Zarzamala. The word zarza, meaning brambles, holds clues to her identity, alluding to the obscure life that led to self-imposed isolation. In her youth, Zarza's experiences were mired in her father's perversion, her mother's retreat from daily life and subsequent death, an unhealthy attachment and dedication to her twin brother, and her younger brother's mental disability. By her adulthood, Zarza, as her name implies, is a thicket of dense and impenetrable emotions that have been meticulously locked away, yet continue to corrode her carefully constructed life. That is, until she is forced to confront her brother and, more importantly, her own demons. It is through wandering the city, passing by old places of former transgressions, that Zarza eventually re-maps her own awareness of self.

The title of the text, *El corazón del Tártaro*, points to the essence of Zarza's journey. The Tartars, formerly a nomadic tribe occupying parts of what is today western Russia, are known historically for their ferocity as skilled invaders of Medieval Europe, usurpers of property and land. When used idiomatically, such as 'to catch a Tartar', the meaning is to grapple with an unexpectedly formidable opponent. Zarza uses the city as a place from which to outwit her pursuer but discovers that it is also the place where she must confront a more subtle but nonetheless threatening assailant—her participation in her own self-destruction. At the beginning of the narrative, Zarza subscribes to the belief that chance dictates her life: "El azar, ese novelista loco que no escribe, le había hecho pasar frente a un café que Zarza frecuentaba antiguamente" (18). By the end of the novel, she has shed this position of passivity for one that is based on self-determination.

Like the other protagonists considered in this study, Zarza embodies the characteristics of the *flânuese.* Zarza's narrative relates the contemporary city back to the reader, altering and questioning preconceived notions of urban identification. She wanders the street encountering figures reminiscent of Benajmin's categorizations of the urban dweller: the rag-picker, the prostitute, the dandy, et cetera. Not only does she cross paths with various urban figures, but she identifies within herself each of their constitutions. During these encounters she acts not merely voyeuristically, as Baudelaire's *flâneur*, but rather participates actively in the development of her own narrative. She is also being observed and followed as she travels through the city. This falls in line with the women's experience of the city for, as Massey reminds us, the

female *flâneur*, unlike the male who is the observer, always finds herself the subject of the gaze (234-5).[68]

Forced to flee her apartment after years of living in anonymity after her imprisoned brother is released and discovers her hiding place, Zarza sets out on a compact, twenty-four hour adventure in which she revisits a life previously abandoned. Her flight from her apartment has her exploring corners of the city and of herself of which she would rather not be reminded. Her urban passage becomes a way of reconnecting with old memories and, in turn, a way of re-forming herself in the process.

When the reader first meets Zarza, she has, by her own admission, consciously constructed a non-identity. Her apartment looks the same as it did when she moved into it years before, completely devoid of any personal artifact, memento, or special decoration of any sort. All signs of self-expression are absent from her living space. Other areas of her life reflect this sterility as well: she has no intimate friends and, despite being an attractive woman bordering on the exotic, no suitors. Her life is filled with monotonous gestures of self-sufficiency: she brushes her teeth, drinks her *café con leche*, showers, goes to works, returns home, sleeps, and repeats the tiresome scene the following day. Living a life of "austeridad absoluta, una cotidianidad desnuda y calcinada", or "como un monje de la Edad Media," Zarza avoids all external stimuli (175, 182). That is until a person whom she believes to be her twin brother, recently released from prison, discovers her hiding place, sparking a psychological game of cat and mouse.

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[68] Massey contends, as does Wolff, that the *flâneuse* not a possibility in late nineteenth century, stating "In part, the notion of a *flânuese* is impossible precisely because of the one-way-ness and the directionality of the gaze. *Flâneurs* observed others; they were not observed themselves" (234).

One of Zarza's obstacles to claiming ownership of her life is her uncomfortably intimate connection with her twin brother Nicolás: "Pero desde la cuna Nico y Zarza habían mantenido un nivel de comunicación extraordinario, una complicidad tan absoluta que terminaba por resultar algo inquietante" (54). Zarza recounts that her bond with him parallels the story of the Nymph Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, in which the two become merged into one being, comprised of both male and female attributes. Inverting the gender roles of the legend, Zarza explains that when they were children Nicolás fell into the role of Salmacis who "siempre sintió por Zarza esa pasión devorada e ignorante de límites" (169). One notes that the unification of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus is born of Eros, carnal desire, and the quest to maintain a heightened sense of rapture. Zarza, in contrast, loves her brother but also reserves special reverence for her younger, less-abled brother Miguel, making her passion for Nicolás not quite platonic but erotically incomplete. Here then, the myth is reversed, for it was Salmacis who appealed to the gods for her and Hermaphroditus' transformation into one entity and in this case it is Nicolás who refuses to relinquish connection with his sister. Zarza observes that in the original myth the final being is one that loses its identity, incorporating only the negative traits of each gender, becoming in the process "algo monstruoso" (169). This abhorrent result is what has Zarza terrorized and fleeing her apartment's protective cube and her life's meaningless repetition.

This is not the only myth that gets infused into the story line. Interspersed throughout the narrative is the retelling of a medieval legend attributed to the poet Chrétien de Troyes called *El Caballero de la Rosa*. This story is fictitious in the sense that no such story exists among Chrétien's de Troyes literary corpus. Yet, a story within

a story develops based on the questioning of the text's authenticity. Montero invents, using her journalistic tone, an entire set of 'real' events that accompany the text's insertion into the main story line. For instance, Zarza is an editor of medieval texts who is presently reviewing the manuscript for publication and we learn that a controversy surrounds the story: a new ending has been discovered, questioning the authenticity of both versions. Montero suspends our disbelief by adding the element of authority to the story we are reading by inserting plausible sounding dates and names that appeal to our sense of the real. This is especially true given the historical difficulty in verifying aspects of Chrétien's authorship. The use of his work, however false the reference, orients us towards a specific genre of mediaeval writer best known for his Arthurian romances. Adapting the theme of chivalric and sentimental adventure accomplishes several things: First, it stands as an unadulterated world far removed from the urban grit of the present. Second, it opens an alternative space that contextually parallels the principal story's trajectory. Finally, the insertion of the story interrupts the notion of linear time, plunging the reader into a new time/space continuum that is unaware of the ticking clock of Zarza's journey. For this is a novel that plays with the linear notion of time. The space of the novel occurs within a day, yet decades of memories are revisited, causing time to be stretched through years.

Zarza admits that the dramatic plot line of the story concerning impossible love, deep-seated rivalry, incestuous relationships, and betrayal mimics her own life:

> No soportaba que no hubiera salvación para el protagonista, que no pudiera escapar de su destino trágico. El libro de Chrétien confirmaba los peores temores de Zarza sobre la existencia; la vida como trampa, la vida

> como un maligno rompecabaezas en el que cada pieza que colocas te va acercando más y más, sin tú saberlo, al diseño final, al dibujo de tu propia perdición. (176)

After Zarza's and Nicolás' father flees the country enshrouded in scandal and they squander the modest inheritance left by their mother, the world of drugs becomes their common home. The city of drug addiction which Zarza and Nicolás delve into is described in mythological terms. Using fairy-tale vernacular, Zarza refers to the drug itself at "La Reina" and "la Blanca." The realm she inhabits is "la Torre," transforming the real life of the city streets into a world comprised of surreal and fantastic elements. This descriptive tendency towards the external recalls the mythical symbolism of the cards of the Tarot, in which powers to a change one's destiny are inscribed in the various signifiers, reflecting Zarza's earlier assertion that life is determined by chance. In that same vein, *El Caballero de la Rosa* represents an analogous fairy-tale that incorporates all the powerful emotional turmoil of hatred, jealousy, desire, lust, injustice, and betrayal. Zarza's job as the editor of the story, the person with the power to ultimately change the story's meaning, is to determine which ending will being published in the final print. Here myth blurs with reality, demonstrating that Truth remains flighty and is always subject to alteration and interpretation. Zarza's life, like the unfolding story, holds no determinate facts, no logical endings. In fact, both possible endings revel in an exquisite pain and reverberate with tones of self-destruction; however, one offers a more conciliatory ending than the other.

The use of a medieval story line is not so far removed from the present urban environment as one may initially conclude. In *Travels in Hyperreality* Umberto Eco

describes how the inventions, both historical and material, of the Middle Ages continue to assert their influence on contemporary society. Eco rattles off an extensive list of ideas and systems that can be traced back to the medieval period. Everything from the Western notion of beauty and love to capitalist economies finds it roots in the medieval era. Eco argues, "it is not surprising that we go back to that period every time we ask ourselves about our origin" (64-5). As witnessed in *El corazón*, the allegorical references to an age that still lives in our imaginative and material reality, has the potential to transform the modern subject.

The invention and false attribution of *El Caballero de la Rosa* to Chrétien de Troyes is not the only misguiding story in this work. Montero turns the tables on Borges' now famous use of false citations and made-up authorities and makes reference to his *Historia universal de la infamia*. Playing the same game as Borges, Montero attributes her creative story "El traidor Mirval" to part of his *Historia universal*. She gives hints that she is thinking of such a game in an interview with Knights in July 1997: "Estoy empezando a pensar en ina próxima novela histórica, [...] de los caballeros, en donde haya al mismo tiempo referencias históricas y referencias completamente inventadas como si fueran históricas pero imposibles. La mezcla entonces resulta desconcertamente porque todo está tratado al mismo nivel" (Knights 271). The Borgesque story is meant as an allegory to Zarza's life. This story tells the fateful tale about a monarch in China whose kingdom is enclosed with impenetrable walls by a malevolent genie. The only way out of the enclosure is a small black door which the genie tells the king is "la puerta de tu infierno" (192). The genie forces the king to play a game of chess everyday, after which point he must choose between releasing something of value or walking through the

black door. At each loss the king loses part of his kingdom, but not any material objects, only people. As the kingdom's virgins, mothers, children, cooks, doctors, along with everyone else who makes up the realm disappear, the king moves closer to the inevitability of having to walk through the black door. When the unavoidable day arrives, the king discovers that nothing threatening exists behind the dreaded door. Everything is the same as it was before the walls went up. The king must return to his palace without the people who gave him legitimacy—his own idea of hell. Zarza, forced to walk through the figurative door of her fears, begins to realize that her behavior has been based on illusion.

Attempting to stay one step ahead of her pursuer, Zarza revisits people and places she left behind when she began her life of solitude. This journey conjures up memories long suppressed but not forgotten. Her first stop has her reentering the shady culture of the underground to pay a visit to a man with the dubious name of El Duque. This visits acts as the porthole to what Zarza refers to as the "ciudad de la Reina"—the nocturnal ambiance where people deep in drug addiction reside. The City of the Queen exists in its own dimension of space and time, separate from that of the real city: "La ciudad de la Reina estaba más allá del tiempo y del espacio. Mejor dicho, poseía su propio tiempo y su propio espacio, que eran distintos a los de la ciudad convencional de los atascos, las tarjetas de crédito y las oficinas" (31). When Zarza enters this space she realizes she has stepped back in time seven years to an identity that once was. The city of the Reina is no longer contained in the space that it once inhabited. Rather, its fragmented presence can be felt "por todas partes":

> El mapa de la ciudad convencional y el de la urbe maldita se superponían, compartiendo en ocasiones el mismo espacio: había zonas que eran cándidas y burguesas durante el día, pero turbias y marginales de madrugada. Incluso en el centro mismo de la ciudad podía imponer la Blanca su reino envenenado. (32)

Here we see a direct parallel between the space of the city that is being infested by la Blanca and Zarza's fragmented identity. She, like the city space, can no longer avoid the impending encroachment of her latent memories.

As she continues her passage through the city, Zarza reminds the reader that the city of the everyday world is not the city that she and her brother inhabited: "A su alredador bullía la ciudad comercial, la ciudad feliz y luminosa, que siempre había sido la ciudad de los otros" (48). Upon reentering the urban environment of La Reina, Zarza is struck with the feeling of not belonging to either the nocturnal world she previously abandoned or the one of daily life. Admitting that she never completely incorporated herself in her self-constructed monotonous life, she now feels lost on the border: "Zarza, ahora se daba cuenta, estaba flotando en medio del vacío, ni en un mundo ni en el otro, en una neblinosa tierra de nadie" (62). Once back in the city of her past, she calls on old friends and has new encounters with people who have now inherited her former place in the city's subculture.

One new person that Zarza meets while penetrating the city space is a creature of the urban underground, a young girl named Martillo. Martillo agrees to sell Zarza a revolver and she reminds Zarza of herself and the young people that she used to associate with during her times of perdition. The figure of Martillo represents the type of hybrid

creature who finds place in the streets because of the city's capacity to house those who are without home. She also acts as Zarza's figurative guide of reintroduction to the city she left behind. Zarza engages her descriptive tendency of the fantastic to describe Martillo: "Era como un gnomo o como un elfo, pensó Zarza; era una criatura irreal procedente de un mundo indefinido, entre el arrabal y el centro urbano, entre la niñez y la adultez. Entre la inocenia y la maldad" (85). Martillo, like others in the novel, acts as testament to the surreal spatiality that the city provides.

The various passages through the city work as a catalyst to free Zarza's long silenced emotions about her father's ritualistic abuse. Each of these "homecomings" reminds her not only of her past wrongdoings but also of her turbulent childhood, exacerbated by her mother's long illness and her father's penchant for sadistic games involving his children. The city, in this way, spurs association between the immediate and the past, inviting reevaluation, reflection, and a chance to see alternate paths of action.

Realizing that "La infancia es el lugar en el que habitas el resto de tu vida," Zarza attempts to divorce herself from painful remembrances through her isolationist behavior (173). Early in the narrative Zarza discloses her father's abusive nature and the consequent distancing and eventual death of her mother after she took to bed "para siempre" (73). The imprint of the image of her mother languishing in bed, a throwback to Romantic-era representations of passive femininity, adhers itself to Zarza throughout her life, affecting her ability to confront her torturous past. Similar to the other works in this study, we are once again presented with the absent mother whose influence continues to infiltrate the protagonist's deepest sense of self. In a telling passage, Zarza compares

the sterility of her life with that of her mother: "Zarza se abismaba en su pequeña vida de la misma manera que su madre se había hundido en la fosa pelágica de su cama de enferma" (71). Interesting to note is that Zarza has only a single memory of her mother in a standing position. Formed when she was four or five years old, Zarza recalls the day when her mother happens upon her and her father concealed in the pantry. The memory retained from this single event is that her mother is butchering a rabbit with a long knife, that her father is crouching in the pantry with her, and that "parecía que era el fin del mundo. Pero no" (75). Here there is a violation not only of the daughter/father relationship but also of the domestic space of the kitchen, the quintessential and traditional space of feminine representation. As a result, the enclosed domestic period of Zarza's childhood becomes a place more treacherous and threatening than the urban spaces she occupies as an adult.

Zarza's account of this scene is curious because of the absence of action of the people involved. Her memories are rather of the minute details of the space. She tells us of the bottles, the various smells, her mother's clothes, which windows and doors are open and which are closed. She remembers colors such as the white table, the red of her mother's hair and the crimson blood on the knife. The fastidious attention to objects crystallizes the moment with photographic accuracy, overshadowing the action of abuse and betrayal. I view this scene, as well as the various memories in which her mother appears, as crucial to the narrative trajectory of this work. The mother holding the bloodied knife with the sacrificial rabbit lying on the table is a dramatic metaphor of innocence lost and maternal culpability. Her mother's tacit participation in Zarza's abuse signals patriarchy's perpetuation and underlines its ability to implicate women in the

process. The fact that doubt is cast onto the cause of the mother's death whether it was natural or due to a gradual poisoning, also speaks to the matricide over which patriarchy constructs its territory.[69] Fundamentally, Zarza is dealing with the betrayal of the mother as much as, if not more so, the betrayal of the father. Again, the subtext parallels the emotional wound. In the *El Caballero de la Rosa,* the mother figure also represents deep betrayal, causing an irreparable rift between siblings. Biologically connected through paternal parentage, the bastard son is fostered along side the legitimate son, each sharing the affections of the mother. When the bastard son is discovered coupling with the mother, the heir banishes his brother and confines his mother to live the rest of her days entombed in a tower.

Continuing through the cityscape, Zarza tells the reader about a short reprieve from her hard life of drug addiction and prostitution when she met a man named Urbano. Urbano's character, whose name inspires an ironic twist to the image of the harshness of the city streets, offers Zarza a place away from the underworld, providing his apartment as a place of shelter and rest. He demands no payment in the form of physical comfort, but Zarza, knowing no other way of showing appreciation, eventually winds up his lover more out of guilt than desire. Urbano is a modern-day savior, demonstrating the three most prominent characteristics of a Christ-like figure: a self-sacrificial nature, never-ending forgiveness, and unyielding compassion. That he is a carpenter by profession only adds weight to this metaphor. Despite the sense of stability that his presence evokes, he succeeds in sheltering Zarza for only a short time until she leaves him (not completely unexpectedly) after clubbing him on the head and robbing him of a significant

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[69] See Irigaray "The Bodily Encounter with the Mother", trans. David Macey, ed. Whitford (1993): 34-46.

amount of money. Urbano's similarity to a Christ-figure is apparent in his various actions such as providing his house as refuge and knowingly allowing himself to be manipulated by Zarza, all for nothing in return. Embodying the role of the prodigal daughter, Zarza returns to Urbano after a period of five years with no contact and he receives her into his home again, demonstrating a remarkable tendency to absolution.

Montero successfully plays with Urbano's personification of a savior. She seems aware of the danger of Urbano's masculinity implicating his responsibility for Zarza's ultimate salvation and redemption. What this novel clearly delineates, however, is that a male presence is not able to "save" Zarza from her own choices and unfortunate circumstances. In fact, during one conversation with Zarza, Urbano tells her "Lo que sucede, Zarza, es que no quieres salvarte" (184). This significant statement focuses not on Zarza's capability to rescue herself but rather on her desire to do so. Second, it removes Urbano from the role of metaphorical savior and places Zarza's deliverance from her past directly into her own hands. Urbano is a man who imposes physically, but his demeanor does not emulate the machismo posturing often associated with Spanish masculinity. By the same token, as previously discussed, Montero is a writer known for her distrust of feminist literary theorists who seek to dogmatically apply their ideas unilaterally, seemingly unaware of their own issues with power and elitism. Montero also rejects the notion that her writing is "feminine literature," insisting that it is impossible to "adjetivar así."[70] One of Zarza's salient characteristics is that she is not engaged in a 'labeled' struggle that closets her into predetermined sets of rules about victimhood and recovery.

The question raised here is not whether Zarza is a victim, as clearly she suffered at the hands of her father, with her mother's chronic passivity, and with her brother's criminal path. Rather, this novel raises questions as to how much responsibility one takes for his/her own choices and circumstances. Victimhood is difficult coinage in this novel because Zarza makes specific decisions affecting her life and the lives of others. For instance, while Zarza and her brother choose to cloak their pain with the devouring effects of drugs, Zarza's sister, barely mentioned in the novel until the end, even though she suffered the same domestic horror as her siblings, chooses to surround herself with a sheltered upper middle-class existence, medicating her past nightmares with a strong dose of denial and wealth. Her sister's meticulously constructed life is based on an accepted formula of success that is becoming part of the Western cultural makeup.

In the culminating scene, Zarza confronts her accumulated fears about her past. Arriving at her childhood home, she catches a glimpse of her brother in a mirror. But his image melds with that of her father and readers are left with an ambiguous ending as to who was the "real" enemy in the novel. In a sense, the two men become one and the same, both having held equal sway over Zarza's development. They are no longer individuals with independent influences over her identity. Rather, the blending of their images represents the every man, or the patriarchal grip under which Zarza has been living.

Just as in *El Caballero de la Rosa*, the ending of *El corazón* provides alternate conclusions. Zarza winds up choosing one ending over the other, leaving her childhood house for the last time: "Con un esfuerzo de voluntad, Zarza se arrancó a sí misma de la

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[70] Escribano, Pedro. Interview with Rosa Montero in *Espéculo* (UCM), no. 14.

sala y de su quietud de víctima propiciatoria" (258). As she abandons this space she also frees herself somewhat from a repetitive idea that has plagued her up until this point, that "La infancia es el lugar en el que habitas el resto de tu vida" (173, 203).

To conclude, one cannot help but ponder the long shadow still being cast from Franco's defunct dictatorship. Spanish women writers such as Montero continue to work through the cultural effects, or aftermath, of the forty years of femininity defined according to the Franco paradigm. Adding to the confusion of national identity, Spain now faces the still-in-the-future-yet-imminent arrival of having lived as many years outside of dictatorship as within, forcing the present-day population to look ahead while still carrying the added encumbrance of painful twentieth-century memories. This is the larger cultural map that the Spanish community will be navigating in future years. Montero's work illustrates society's preoccupations and wrestles with issues of failed motherhood, the absent yet always domineering father figure, and family structures gone awry. This text points to a residual feeling of being observed through the Franco lens combined with a need to emphasize the less-than-perfect way society functions, which is a far cry from the Francoist visions. Connected to this thought, Spanish women writers such as Montero recognize the need for a new social realism, one that confronts today's urban problems of drug addiction, AIDS, dispossessed peoples, poverty, and violence. As opposed to the social realism of the 50s and 60s, this new genre incorporates what the magical realism authors taught the literary world—that the fantastic has the potential to express mundane and everyday realities. The urban space, with its way of morphing into different representational modes, along with its tendency to shelter and absorb cultures

refused a place elsewhere, is the ideal setting for those writers who base their narratives in a readily identifiable space that possesses the openness to explore alternate realities.

Montero's work demonstrates that resistance often springs from ordinary places. *El corazón del Tártaro* dwells in modern-day problems and does not shrink away from issues that form part of today's urban reality and are disturbing in their everydayness. Montero, a writer committed to the reflection of today's culture, keenly observes the cultural changes that force the reexamination of daily lives. For Zarza, returning to the uncertainty of the urban sphere allows her the reflection necessary to reevaluate her life and instigate the changes imperative for her to acknowledge her past while moving forward. This experience speaks to the effects of self-enforced amnesia meant to hide past mistakes. Ultimately Zarza's salvation does not originate with Urbano or another figure offering redemption, but rather is gradually procured by the city she inhabits. As Pike indicates, "The idea of the city triggers conflicting impulses, positive and negative, conscious and unconscious. At a very deep level, the city seems to express our culture's restless dream about its inner conflicts and its inability to resolve them" (18). Final salvation for Zarza comes from within and from the realization that all stories, like *El Caballero de la Rosa*, possess alternate endings open to new interpretations.

Commercial Urbanism?

One of the notable aspects of Rosa Montero's writing is that it has enjoyed large commercial success. In part, this can be attributed to Montero's relatively constant and thematically consistent literary work. She is also an author who makes herself accessible to interviews by scholars and the public. Interviews with her are abundant and frequently

published in books, articles, dissertations, and websites dedicated to her literary production. Knights publishes three separate interviews in her study of identity in Montero's writing. Interviews with scholars such as Talbot, Fontradona, Glenn, Davies, and Escudero (to name just a few) are widely referenced to gain insight into Montero's thought process concerning her writing. Escudero likes to publish especially chummy interviews that take place in Montero's Madrideño home (Escudero "Rosa Montero" 327). This particular interview is followed by a short commentary that begins with the assertion that "Cada vez que regreso a Madrid, me reúno con la escritora para hablar de sus novelas y de la situación política y social española" (Escudero "A la luz" 343). While this may bring up issues such as scholarly objectivity while critiquing the work produced by someone with whom you share "una creciente amistad," it also demonstrates Montero's relative accessibility and willingness to share her ideas about her writing.

In addition, her career as a journalist provides a platform from which she can further expound her political and social views, bestowing larger exposure to her reading audience. Knights tells us, for instance, that Montero was named one of the ten most influential women during the period of transition, and that her continuing work with *El País* has buttressed her stance as a social and political observer and commentator (14). This position has also, no doubt, honed her skills as both an interviewer and interviewee, making her adept at managing her public persona. Crossing many media genres, she has worked in television and her novel, *La hija del caníbal* has been made into a movie by Mexican filmmaker Antonio Serrano, renamed *Lucía, Lucía*. Her speculative fiction novel *Temblor* was made into an opera and her children's novel *El nido de los sueños* was adapted for the theatre.

In 1997 Rosa Montero was awarded the Premio Primavera de Novel for *La hija del caníbal* which I categorize as an urban novel for its depictions of Madrid, Venice, and Amsterdam. According to its official website this literary award is meant to "apoyar la creación literaria y contribuir a la *máxima difusión* de la novela como una de las formas escenciales de expresión artística de nuestra época [my emphasis]".[71] Conveniently, all novels awarded this prize, which is accompanied by an honorarium of 200,000 euros for the author, can be purchased directly from the website. The award is handed out by the editing house Espasa Calpe in conjunction with the "Ámbito Cultural de El Corte Inglés"; El Corte Inglés being one of the largest chains of department stores in Spain. The award for 2003 went to Manuel de Prada for *La vida invisible* which he wrote after the events of September 11, 2001. This story centers on the protagonist Alejandro Losada during a trip to Chicago. The runner-up for 2003 is *La otra ciudad* by Pablo Aranda Ruiz which tells the tale of a marginal barrio of Málaga. The winner of 2002 was Juan José Millás for his work *Dos mujeres en Praga* written under the pseudonym Luz Acaso occurs in Madrid and the imaginative space of Prague. The runner up for the same year is Andrés Neuman for the novel *La vida en las ventanas* which is set in a Spanish provincial city and chronicles a series of e-mails that he exchanged with his ex-girlfriend. The 2001 winner, Lucía Etxebarria, sets her novel *De todo lo visible y lo invisble* mostly in Madrid and London.

I mention the above selections to initiate a discussion which I continue in the subsequent chapter about the rise of the urban novel in contemporary Spanish literature. Part of this discussion includes a questioning of the connection between "urban" novels

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[71] http://libros.elcorteingles.es/biografia/4.premio.asp

and the business of marketing and selling literature. While I definitively do not accuse writers of tailoring their artistic creation to pursue commercial success, I do think it prudent to observe trends in both the business aspects of publishing and its connection to current literary production in Spain. Is there a continuum between the surge of the Spanish urban novel and the marketability of such pieces? We can observe how the authors individually respond to the presurres of the market. On May 14, 2003 Montero particpated in an open interview "cibernética" with participants from various parts of the globe and was asked to comment on the "'sed' en España por autores 'estrella'", to which she resonds,

> La literatura en España, como en el resto del mundo occidental, ha sufrido en los últimos años un cambio espectacular por la presión del mercado y por la aplicación de técnicas de publicidad tan agresivas como las que se emplean para vender coca-cola, por ejemplo.... Esto hace que el mundo del libro tenga ahora una vertiente de espectáculo y de fama fácil, de circo y variedades.... Pero por debajo de todo ese fárrago sigue habiendo estupendos escritores. Buscalos. Creo que la narrativa española está en un buen momento.

Another question focuses on the same issue and compares the bleak environment of television with the state of the new novel. The writer asks Montero if she feels pressured to "sacar libros como churros." Montero writes,

> Claro, hay una presión enorme del mercado para sacar libros superventas y "fáciles", digamos.... pero uno está obligado a contrarrestar esa presión e intentar seguir escribiendo aquel libro que cree que tiene que escribir. De

> todas maneras puede que lo que te pasa es que a mucha gente, a medida que crece, se le va pasando el gusto por la ficción, ¿te has dado cuenta? Es como si abandonaran la imaginación. Y no sé si eso es bueno.[72]

Montero does not name names and we are left to wonder if she considers any of her urban contemporaries, or herself, as producing "libros superventas." Considering that both *Bella y Oscura* and *El corazón del Tártaro* were enormous commercial successes, asking Montero about where she sees herself within the world of marketing and writing seems a fair question. I explore this question further in the following chapter which considers the present and future of the urban novel—and urban space and experience—written by Spanish women writers.

[72] To read the interview see http://www.elpais.es/edigitales/todas

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions

The foundation of this project revolves around the reclaiming of the city space as a place of personal expression for twentieth-century Spanish narrative written by women. Throughout this study we have witnessed how Spanish women authors have employed the city streets as a place of resistance to cultural restrictions, finding ample opportunity for self-acknowledgment. Their use of the urban space counteracts the traditional conceptualization of the city as a male-oriented locale of power and rejects the notion that women better associate with, or 'feel more at home' in, the natural world. Furthermore, writing the cityscape provides a 'safe place' from which women authors explore boundaries of expression. The five Spanish women authors, whose work composes the foundation of this study, embrace their urban environments as well as the accompanying experiences to challenge established conventions concerning femininity and gender-biased realities. In all five narratives studied thus far, each woman protagonist wanders the cityscape, creating her own story in the process.

To conclude with the endeavor of retracing the past 60 years of Spanish women's writing and its concern with the city, I will continue to examine more closely some of the recent trends of urban narrative being produced by Spanish women. There are several points to consider: For one, the urban experience can no longer be contained within the borders of the Spanish city. The Spanish metropolises such as Madrid, Barcelona, and Sevilla are part of the new world economy and their changing, increasingly international, populations are demanding (and producing) a new type of narrative expression. Second,

I believe, as do others, that there exists a correlation between the present urban culture and the publishing market. The result of this relationship is the production of a stylized type of novel that caters to the pessimistic and nihilist attitudes of twenty-first century youth culture and that is bent on portraying the underside aspects of the city sphere. Finally, despite these market-based influences, I find that Spanish women continue to embark on new urban-centered projects that still have, at their core, a desire to expose and unravel the social maladies that oppress and bind the human subject.

Others have noticed the rise of the urban novel as well. Toni Dorca writes about Spanish 'Generation X' writers whose work is dedicated to the realm of urban youth culture and the urban 'underclass,' This phenomenon has been connected to the disillusionment following the economic downturn of the 1990s and the disintegration of socio-economic circumstances (Dorca 309, Knutson 91). Both Dorca and David Knutson correlate the rise of the urban novel with publishing houses capitalizing on (dis)enfranchised youth culture: "Se trataba de satisfacer la demanda de protagonismo de un sector de la población que quería ver reflejadas sus inquietudes en unos relatos tallados a su gusto y medida" (309). Relentless in his assessment of the urban novel as a byproduct of market trend, Dorca states,

> Orquestrados por un aparato publicitario de muchos decibelios, los nombres de Loriga o Mañas sintonizaron pronto con un público que descubría, casi por ensalmo, que en la letra impresa de la novela era posible también hallar un testimonio del mundo en que vivían. Al amparo, pues, de una crisis social, política y económica nacía un nuevo realismo en la narrativa peninsular, que se situaba deliberadamente al margen de las

> convenciones de la sociedad adulta y exaltaba los valores de la juventud. (310)

Dorca's analysis goes on to mention that urban novels have suffered attacks on their quality. Often being classified as "bad" literature, the urban novel, some critics have argued, exists only as a consumer product that has found its niche in the consumerist demands of urban youth culture (310). Dorca aptly recognizes that authors are presented with the dilemma of wanting to voice their concerns through artistic creation on the one hand, and having to produce a consumer product that sells on the other: "Existe [...] un recelo hacia los jóvenes creadores que pretenden explotar bajo un disfraz de rebeldía las ansias de consumo de la sociedad. Paradójicamente, los propios escritores tienen conciencia de esta problemática y la trasladan a las páginas de su ficción" (310). Hence, there exists a tension between the publishing houses interested in supporting a project that will draw wide appeal, and the authors who desire artistic expression *and* appropriate compensation for their work. Placing the drive to market urban culture as part of Spain's new historical circumstances, Knutson sums up the tendency to publish literary representations of the Spanish youth culture:

> Publishers commonly promote the very latest from writers coming of age in our time, all of whom are purported to speak for their generations. This marketing strategy is particularly important in Spain, for it is inarguable that Spanish authors today, and their readers as well, distinguish themselves from their past, as they have lived through events much different than their parents and grandparents. (90)

Focusing on recent narrative by Spanish men, Dorca goes on to identify what he sees as the discernable characteristics of the Generation X Spanish novel: an antihero,

bordering on the picaresque, whose autobiographical story recounts his survival within the confines of Spanish urban culture; a detective-like trauma; metafictional tendencies; use of linguistic affects such as urban slang and verbal repetition; and an abundant reference to modern communication devices such as film, music, television, and computers (312-16). Making a more generalized statement, Ana María Spitzmesser defines thematic narrative tropes of Spanish postmodernism as "vida no realizada, relación humana difícil o fallida, deseos individuales inconexos y sin lógica, y auto-compasión/auto-indulgencia e insolidaridad (4).

Similarly, Knutson finds that protagonists of the new Spanish narrative frequently incorporate international references and that "following their consumerist desires, [...] participate fully in global youth culture" (102). Emphasizing their historical positioning, Knutson goes on to say that this new generation of characters are "truly children of the transition, and of the postmodern age" (92). In fact, Knutson notes a discernable difference in the characters of the late 1990s from those of the early 1990s, saying that the new male protagonists show a softer, more subtle side to their personal composition that "give[s] a less troubling face to Spanish youth" than the extreme youth behavior found, for example, in José Angel Maña's 1994 novel, *Historias del Kronen* (92). *Historias del Kronen*, Knutson points out, centers around males between 20 and 30 experimenting with extreme drugs, sex, and violence (92). While these elements are found in the late 1990s novels, they are toned down in their edgy extremeness.

In my view, to continue the discussion of the city space there needs to be a consideration of how urbanism presently is being addressed by Spanish women writers. Do there remain the same identifiable concerns that are found in earlier urban novels such as women's position in society, motherhood, identity, marriage, work, etc.? Moreover,

what are the differences, if any, between the new generation of the urban novel by women and its predecessors such as Rodoreda, Roig, Laforet, and Martín Gaite? To help address these particular questions, I turn to the novel *Últimas noticas del paraíso* (2000) by Clara Sánchez.

Últimas noticas del paraíso won the Premio Alfaguara in 2000, which is granted by the publishing house of the same name. According to the website, this prize comes with a $125,000 honorarium and that "Los autores ganadores han tenido una difusión intercontinental y han presentado sus obras en una decena de países a lo largo de mes y medio de promoción. Su éxito se refleja también en las traducciones a otras lenguas y en el interés que ha mostrado el cine por algunas de estas obras, como es el caso de Son de Mar, la película dirigida por Bigas Luna" (www.alfaguara.santillana.es/alfaguara/index.html). Evidenced here is an emphasis on distribution and narrative's broad appeal to the Spanish speaking world as well as the novel's ability to generate interest in other large media markets.

Últimas noticas del paraíso is an appropriate choice for the conclusion of the study of Spanish women's narratives and the urban space because it is exemplary of the current concerns of contempary Spanish society. This novel contains important differences that promote our understanding of the subject and the urban space, as well as how Spanish women authors are expressing new urban realities. To begin with, as opposed to the novels of earlier sections, in *Últimas noticias* the main protagonist is male. The other novels in this study have focused on female protagonists with a concentration on issues surrounding feminine development. This novel, however, employs the voice of a young man to comment on issues of masculinity as well as issues surrounding the present-day urban youth culture. Another notable change is that the novel does not occur

within Madrid proper, but rather in one of is many *urbanizaciones*, or suburbs. Therefore, the environment revolves around a distinct set of architectural structures that are related to, yet different from, the inner city space. This space speaks to the rise of those populations existing on the physical margins of a major metropolis who may not be fully integrated into the city, yet, at the same time, cannot be considered separate entities.

One crucial similarity that this novel shares with the others of this study is that Fran, the main character of *Últimas noticias*, is a solitary wanderer. For the most part, Fran is exclusionary in that he maintains a certain superficiality with those around him. Throughout the narrative he traverses the streets of his suburb either by walking, jogging, riding the bus, on bicycle, or occasionally in his mother's car. This allows him the time and perspective to participate in the same *flanerie* in which the women protagonists of the previous works participated. However, for Fran, wandering the cityscape does not equate freedom of either thought or deed, and his search for subjectivity leads him away from the urban space rather than towards it.

The front cover of the paper-back edition paints a thematic picture that incorporates many of the images we now associate with urban living. A young man stands on a city street with a backpack slung over one shoulder as a city bus passes him. His blond hair is cropped short and he is wearing sun glasses along with a T-shirt and jeans. The viewer is looking at his back with his face in profile. In the distance there is a large city building with mega-size neon advertisements blazing the brand names of Schweppes and Grundig, accompanied by the words Hi-Fi TV, Radio, and Video. Off to one side is another neon sign for the marquee of a theatre that reads 'Capitol'. On the side of the city bus, peering out at the viewer, is a large eye in extreme close up. The entire picture appears in hues of blue, black, and gray. The only distinguishing feature that

separates this city scene from any other are the few partial words in Spanish that appear on the side of the bus. Other than these signifiers, the city could be Chicago, Amsterdam, Berlin, New York, or any other urban center. This is a departure from most of the other novels of this study which draw upon cultural particularities of their urban environments.

Últimas noticias is divided into two parts. The first section revolves around the first-person narrative of Fran's childhood and adolescent memories. These memories relate the early events of Fran's life while living with his mother in a suburban development on the outskirts of Madrid. The second part takes place in the present and tells the story of Fran's late adolescence and early twenties. A quiet observer of the places and people that constitute the fabric of his suburban life, Fran is plagued by underwhelming ambition concerning his own place in the world. His existence is isolated by both imaginative and spatial constraints. As a result, what the reader desires most for Fran is the ability to summon up the mere desire to envision alternatives for his life.

The novel begins with an immediate description of space: "Vivíamos relativamente cerca del Híper y un poco más lejos del Zoco Minerva, de dos plantas y techo abovedado de cristal [...]" (Sánchez 11). The reader is introduced into a consumer-oriented culture as Fran orients his living space according to the closest shopping centers. Madrid, the closest metropolis, looms in the distance and Fran's suburb subsists directly on the fringes with the city in one direction and, in the other, open expanses of mountains. This geographical positioning determines Fran's sense of 'place' as existing on the periphery. As Knutson describes, "His life inverts the conventional relationship

between city center and outlying areas, because the fringe is in fact his center. His family geography influences his personal life throughout the novel" (97).

An only child, Fran spends his adolescence developing his perceptions and interpreting his observations of suburban life. He is, in many respects, a typical teenager of the late 1990s who is obsessed with girls, music, clothes, and going into the city whenever possible. He eats pizza, drinks Coca-Cola, and wears Levis. He spends too much time watching television and engaging in other mind-numbing activities. These insatiable pass times are consistently replaced with similar activities that involve the displacement of thought.

> Iba de acá para allá con los walkman puestos escuchando música sin parar y pensando en ella, seguramente porque no tenía otra cosa en que pensar. Digamos que no tenía la cabeza llena de ideas, la tenía más bien llena de cosas que veía y que escuchaba, o sea, de cosas que en el fondo no eran mías. Debía de ser porque no estaba acostombrado a poseer nada mío. Me pasaba el día así: Déjame el coche. Dame dinero. Cómprame unas deportivas. Necesito un boli. (27)

Throughout this final section, Fran's subjectivity is wrapped up with the consumerist pursuits of his daily life. He is no more or less than what he sees and hears. Fed on images of egoism and narcissism, Fran desperately tries to find something of meaning in his made-to-order existence.

The family structure in this novel is one that reflects a more present-day reality concerning the institution of marriage. Fran's bored mother occupies her time by attending countless hours of "Gym-Jazz" and sauna sessions: "En el fondo sólo le interesaban sus nuevos músculos y su nueva piel cien mil veces purificada" (23). Meanwhile, she is having an affair with the much younger gym instructor whom Fran has nicknamed "Míster Piernas." After several tries, Míster Piernas convinces Fran to start running by informing him "Las tías se vuelven locas" for 'rock-hard' bodies (34). In this suburban enclosure the body becomes another object to control, another commodity to acquire for the sake of image.

Fran's father, perpetually absent on business trips, eventually abandons the family all together. His father's absence and his use of the house as a stopping point between trips, molds Fran's views of masculinity and space:

> No sé, no me parecía que las casas no estaban hechas para los hombres, tan sólo para las mujeres y los hijos hasta que madurábamos lo suficiente como para no estar en ellas. Eran demasiados femeninas con tanto detalle y visillos y jabones de olores y flores y manteles bordados y cristalería. A un hombre le iba lo impersonal: habitaciones de hoteles y ropa que desaparecía sucia y aparecía limpia y planchada. (30)

Fran clearly understands the gender separation of the domestic space. The house as a locus of excessive femininity does not fit Fran's model of masculine behavior. Space in the novel becomes a metaphor for gendered conduct as masculine figures remain transitory and out of reach, never providing structure or stability.

Large sections of Fran's adolescence are dedicated to the simple task of using up hours. He often admits to doing nothing and, consequently, thinking about nothing. In this respect, he stands counter to the Cartesian subject whose rational thinking creates a stable subjectivity. Instead of thoughts, his life is infiltrated with a consumerism that is portrayed as a simple fact of daily suburban life. Madrid, with its large amount of material wealth and visual input, attracts Fran and his friends on the weekends:

> Madrid era la tentación. Cines, discotecas, conciertos, concentraciones los sábados en los bulevares. No pensábamos nada más que en la ropa. De pronto caí en la cuenta de que necesitaba de todo, desde calzoncillos hasta reloj, pasando por la chupa, las zapatillas y un traje para Nochevieja. (33)

Fran, a product of his generation, is consumer savvy and uses Míster Piernas to manipulate his mother into buying him new things by playing on her guilt: "A los pocos días recibí a través de mi madre un paquete con unas deportivas Nike, una cinta para la frente del Gym-Jazz y una sudadera O'Neill" (35). He also uses this strategy to procure other unnecessary purchases such as a new suit and new ski equipment, saying he would rather not ski at all than to go "hecho un espantapájaros" (108). While Fran's behavior may seem a convincing sign of materialistic youth, Massey, writing about the spatiality of youth cultures, gives these desires a positive spin. Massey explains how these material signs point to the development of 'hybrid cultures' that emphasize interaction and

that "involve active importation, adoption and adaptation" and thus, have the potential to counteract cultures that attempt to define themselves by closure ("Spatial Constructions" 122-3).[1]

The plastic feel of his environment notwithstanding, Fran is aware of the ensconced superficiality that surrounds him. He tells us that "La superficie normalizaba la vida en la urbanización. Nivelaba los sucesos extraordinarios con los habituales de modo que sólo se acababa viendo lo que sucedía todos los días, y lo que se veía todos los días hacía olvidar" (59). Despite the placid appearance, there are several incidences of violence that occur within the confines of the *urbanización*. Two of these events parallel each other, yet have very different outcomes. The first event takes place when Fran and his childhood friend, Eduardo, come across a dead bird in a manufactured lagoon that exists in a hidden corner apart from the suburb's carefully landscaped sections. The lagoon is both strange and exotic and contains hints of nature gone awry. Fran is reluctant to involve himself in the recovery of the dead bird, but Eduardo insists they take the bird to the police. Afterwards, they receive significant attention from the media for having helped expose that the water had been poisoned.

Eight years later Míster Piernas claims to have seen a dead woman floating in the same lagoon. Fran introduces the scene, informing the reader that a disruption has occurred in the suburb: "Ocho años más tarde ocurrió algo que me demostró que la

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[1] Massey is careful to point out the embedded power relations that go hand-in-hand with such exchanges, stating, "This is that all these relations which construct space, since they are social relations, are always in one way or another imbued with power. That is to say, such relations are not just neutral 'connections' between one cultural constellation and another, or others; they reflect in their form and their direction geographical differences (uneven development) in cultural influence, fashion, economic power, the spatial structure of media industry, the traces of migrations perhaps centuries ago, trade routes, the access to ownership of computers, the dominance of Hollywood—and a host of other phenomena" (125).

superficie, o sea, la vida es inquebrantable y que no se conmociona por mucho tiempo" (64). Míster Piernas, nervous that the police will not accept his story that he was not involved with the woman's death, refuses to report what he had seen. Fran's mother decides that it is best not to get involved and the sighting of the dead woman remains a secret. Adding to the mystery of this event is that Fran's eccentric adult friend, Alien, tells Fran that the woman does not exist. Alien insists that the sighting of the dead woman in the lagoon is a suburban myth that is retold in different versions every few years, each time with a different woman: "Son rubias, morenas, viejas, jóvenes, blancas, negras, asiáticas. Depende de la fantasía de cada cual" (84). Here there is a unbalance concerning the treatment of violence. While the discovery of dead birds in the lagoon creates a community fervor that draws an inordinate amount of attention, a recurring tale of a dead woman in the water remains an unmentionable subject that, according to Alien, is the result of "Sugestión colectiva" (83). This event teaches Fran that violence against women is easily masked by a collective denial of its existence.

As the adolescent era of Fran's life comes to a close, he begins to feels the pangs of remaining trapped in a suburban existence devoid of meaning and purpose: "Estaba muy aprrepentido de haber perdido tiempo. Y lo más doloroso estaba de lo que lo iba a perder en el futuro. No estaba acostombrado a aprovecharlo, no sabía cómo hacerlo. [...] Mi madre me repetía una y otra vez: Estudia. Tienes que hacer algo. Pero qué era algo." (141). At eighteen, having failed the "selectividad," Fran becomes inspired by an old childhood memory of a Chinese girl, Wei Pang, whose family restaurant he used to frequent. Through his memory, he romanticizes her exotic looks and sees her 'otherness' as representative of alternative realities outside the *urbanización*:

> Sabía que había conocido a Wei Pang porque cuando veía por Madrid a una chica oriental sentía algo. Digamos que entre la urbanización y China había una especie de tierra de nadie, que era donde se esperaba que yo prosperase, pero donde también podía ahorgarme, perderme, dejar de existir. (146)

Fran's next decision, one of his few, is that he must travel to China to learn Chinese.

This is the one decision Fran makes that delineates any intention of altering his static position. When his father refuses to pay for a trip to China, Fran's final thought is on the idea of fatherhood: "Creo que sólo algunos padres representan a su vez la idea de padre, como algunas esposas la idea de esposa y algunos empleados de grandes almacenes la idea de empleado de grandes almacenes. Porque nada más que unas cuantas personas son las elegidas para simbolizar al resto de las personas" (151). Fran's perception of fatherhood, the nurturing side of masculinity, is one of immense distance from his personal reality. The first part of the novel ends on this note of elusive fatherhood.

During the second part of the novel, we follow Fran's life in the present. His existence, instead of amplifying with age, is closing in on him ever more tightly. Instead of attending university, he works in a video rental store located in the major shopping center in his suburb. His mother, financially strained due to his father's abandonment, has returned to work and is finding escape from loneliness and tedium by consuming daily lines of cocaine. Fran's life consists of watching countless hours of videos, both at work and at home, and his one fantasy is about someday directing his own short film. Fran criticizes the clients that frequent the videoclub, stating, "Da igual que la peli sea buena o mala, la babosean, la aniquilan, la hacen puré en su cabeza. Ahí va otra, suelo

pensar, pasto de los cerdos" (157). However, practically in the same line of thought, Fran reveals that watching videos has become his latest way to avoid time:

> Podría correr un poco al mediodía, que es cuando dispongo de tiempo libre y cuando menos frío hace, pero siento pereza. Una gran pereza. Está la televisión. Está el sofá con una manta de viaje de cuadros. Están las cintas de vídeo que tengo la necesidad de seguir viendo cuando salgo del trabajo. [...] Me he propuesto vérmelas todas. Tal vez es el único propósito serio que me he hecho en mi vida. (157-8)

Fran's life continues with these monotonous gestures with little interruption until his childhood friend Eduardo gives him a key to his Madrid apartment with instructions to keep it safe until his return. Eduardo then promptly disappears without leaving behind any clues as to his whereabouts or possible fate. Following Eduardo's disappearance, Fran begins driving into the city to enter Eduardo's apartment, partly to investigate and partly to have an excuse to leave the confines of the *urbanización*. It is on one of these visits that he meets Yu, Eduardo's girlfriend. Yu is a married Taiwanese woman who has come to Madrid to study art and to escape her rich husband. For Fran, Yu embodies the same feelings that the memory of Wei Pang represented. With nothing of his own to focus on, Fran thinks of Yu as an exotic escape from his repetitious life of movies and vague fantasies. Yu, as the quintessential Other, is the 'orientalized' being that, following Said's notion developed in his work *Orientalism*, the Western gaze eroticizes, relegating it to the status of object rather than subject. Fran develops no clear intellectual connection with Yu and their relationship never reaches beyond the physical. For Fran, Yu's body becomes the locus of his affection: "El paraíso está en el cuerpo de Yu. Aunque parezca que he aprendido poco, he aprendido que en el fondo todo lo que no

tenemos y queremos está en otro cuerpo, en el que me hundo porque todo lo que en esa persona no soy yo y puedo probar con la boca me produce un gran placer" (304).

Fran and Yu's relationship exists solely within the confines of Eduardo's apartment. Never venturing beyond those walls, Fran reconfigures his position as a lethargic youth by creating a situation in which he exerts control. Telling Yu to "desnúdate" and dressing her in the same Chinese-style clothes that he remembers Wei Pang wearing, he ensures that she remains a fixed player within the bounds of his fantasy:

> De no haber conocido a Wei Pang, probablemente Yu no hubiera tenido la trascendencia que tiene. Puede que todo se hubiese reducido entre nosotros a un hola y adiós la primera vez que nos encontramos en el apartamento. Sin embargo, son cosas que ocurren, de un gusano sale una mariposa, y de Wei Ping ha salido Yu. (276)

When Yu leaves Madrid to travel back to Taiwan, Fran's position of superiority disintegrates and he is left with an empty apartment that no longer serves its purpose as a refuge from the mundane *urbanización*.

Yu's departure has nothing to do with duty or love, she explains, but is simply a matter of money (305). This also the attitude displayed by Fran's mother who is engaged to marry a dentist solely for the financial security he promises to provide. In his own right, Fran is also preoccupied with money. As he explains,

> Me cansa la pobreza. Tal vez tendría que buscar un trabajo de verdad, de esos de lo que sales agotado y cuya remuneración te permite ser un comsumista medio. Echo de menos consumir con regularidad. Ir, por ejemplo, a unos grandes almacenes y encapricharme con chorradas y comprármelas (233).

Despite these musings, Fran does nothing to move himself out of financial inferiority and he continues to remain paralyzed by non-action. In fact, Fran's life seems dangerously close to being mapped according to the conventional plan of adulthood: he will work, marry, earn money, take care of his mother, buy a house, and live out his life in the suburbs (192, 274). What is worrisome about this path is not the path itself, but rather Fran's inaction in choosing this life for himself.

Sánchez is effective in portraying the redundancy of the *urbanización*. Fran frequently repeats that the *urbanización* is part of "la ciudad más perezosa del mundo" (256, 286, 325), or "más dormilona del mundo" (315), or "más ociosa" (329). The space, like Fran, is tiresome in its complacency: "La urbanización es continua, inagotable, porque su aparencia se fortalece con cada nueva construcción, con cada añadido" (280). Mirroring the listlessness of the environment, Fran's existence seems caught in an endless stream of monotony: "Consumo los días que quedan para ir al apartamento viendo películas y dándome paseos por la urbanización" (273). When Fran wanders the suburb he reflects on the invariable landscape that has resulted in continuous, uninterrupted time: "Kilómetros y kilómetros de este mismo trayecto un día tras otro, un año tras otro" (288).

Fran is aware that his lethargy is solidifying his place among his peers as a lower-class citizen (283-4). He realizes that he is becoming part of the urban proletariat whose jobs demonstrate no marketable purpose: "Hay que reconocer que este lugar es de los que no trabajan y de los que trabajamos en él con trabajos que no son verdaderos trabajos" (176). In the following description, Fran relates his position in society with the physical distance of Madrid:

> La mitad de los compañeros de mi curso están trabajando, como yo. Los otros estudian en la universidad. Apenas nos vemos, salvo cuando pasan

> por el videoclub. Creo que ocupo el escalón más bajo de todos ellos. No tengo que preocuparme por caer más. Estoy tranquillo. Madrid surge al fondo compacto y rojizo, como la boca de un gato. Uno nace y se encuentra con que ahí está Madrid, al final de la autopista. (171)

Space connects to identity and Fran sees Madrid not as place of freedom, as we have seen in the other works of this study, but rather represents a place to which he does not completely belong. The *urbanización*, like Fran, is the forgotten extension of the city that exists on the periphery of something greater: "Desde mi misma casa se puede ver la autopista, ardiente y eléctrica, vibrante, que nos deja aparte del tiempo, desterrados de discurrir de esa potente luz de la lejanía que recorre la tierra sin parar, que nos cerca y que sin embargo nor ignora" (189).

Despite appearances, Fran is not apathetic. On the contrary, he shows remarkable kindness towards the emotional suffering of others, especially loneliness. For example, he is often told that he is a Romantic because of his unexpected tendency to dwell on the feelings of others. While not overly demonstrative, he is never cruel and has a sympathetic and observing eye for those people who are unhappy. What the reader fears most is that Fran will fail to discover his own unhappiness and that the routine of living one day to the next will devour any sense of self as he contemplates taking yet another wearisome job. What we hope most for Fran is that he evoke his imagination more actively to direct his own path.

The somewhat predictable finale of the novel has Fran moving beyond his spatial confines. Spurred by the death of his neighbor, Fran fulfils the statement he made to his father when he first told him he would travel to China. By embarking on this trip, Fran moves himself outside the borders of the *urbanización* and overcomes what has been his

largest obstacle—not knowing how to take the first step. Up to this point, Fran's strategy has been to avoid the future in order not to have to take responsibility for his past (146). In fact, one of the convincing elements of *Últimas noticias* is that we doubt Fran's self-proclaimed complacency. The trip to China catapults Fran into action as he leaves the constriction of the suburb behind for the romantic ideal of love. Fran's leaving can be read as resistance to a conformed identity based on the cultural rules of the *urbanización*. Indeed, as Massey points out, many young people's travels are "an attempt to undermine the dominant assumption of settledness as the better option" (128). We observe Fran on the cusp of his own *Bildungsroman* where he will, if the future script can be foreseen, undoubtedly face a multitude of life-altering experiences. In my view, Fran's departure marks a turing point from the other novels of this project. For one, Fran abandons the motherland where, presumedly, his identity was formed. This is a decidedly different path of action in which the other protagonists studied here have not engage. In addition, I read Fran's initiative to leave a sign that the cultural and political borders of Spain are expanding. Indeed, while many of the other issues of Fran's life remain unresolved, such as Yu's devotion to him and his relatively innocent and underdeveloped world view, the reader is relieved to have Fran engaged in an imaginative process that renews his ability to conjecture a reality past the *urbanización*.

It may be valid to read Fran's chronic disinterest in joining the ranks of 'productive' working adults as resistance to a prescribed masculinity that exists as a cog in the world market economy. However, I believe one should exercise caution when considering such a conclusion because I do not find this novel to be advocating resistance through stasis or through the rejection of monetary gain. After all, Fran leaves Spain only after receiving an unexpectedly large amount of cash. In this novel, money does not

guarantee escape, but it does help. Had Fran not received the money, it is easy to imagine him taking the job stamping people's cards at the 'polideportiva' and continuing his distilled fantasies of becoming a well-known film director. Money notwithstanding, I read Fran's departure as a hopeful message that the Spanish youth of today do possess desires that reach past the artificiality of their consumerist worlds. And, that underneath the countless manicured communities that exist along metropolitan borders one can still find elements of surprise.

If we recall the elements put forth by Dorca, Spitzmesser, and Knutson, I believe that *Últimas noticias del paraíso* falls squarely into the pattern of the Spanish postmodern urban novel.[2] Perhaps identifying these narrative traits in Sánchez's work narrows the gap between themes that are considered either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Furthermore, *Últimas noticias* raises many of the same concerns found in the Catalan novels as well as works by Martín Gaite and Rosa Montero. For instance, the novel examines the role of motherhood. While Fran's mother is emotionally distant through parts of the novel, she is a mother who worries about her son, and it is refreshing to have a Spanish mother who is not either already dead or posed to die within the first chapter.

Similar to the previous works, there is a preoccupation with space and identity formation. In contrast to the women protagonists, howerver, Fran does not find solace in the freedom to wander the city streets. Rather, his 'spatial practices' only work to further

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[2] Knutson points out that *Últimas noticias* does not follow the postmodern narrative structure of experimenting with a distortion of written language and that the plot line does not try to imitate "rapid video editing" as do other works classified as postmodern (93). However, I would argue that *Últimas noticias* does portray a film-like quality by narrating some passages as if they were being played out in 'real time' while other parts jump ahead weeks, months, or years.

solidify his spatial solitude. His final escape comes from a dramatic physical distancing of the suburban space, rather than from a daring penetration of the city streets.

More importantly, there is a poignant look at the role of the absent father that is not addressed in quite the same manner as in the other works I consider. In my own view, *Últimas noticias* constitutes one of the few novels by Spanish women writers in which the father is not acting as a symbolic substitute for Generalísimo Franco and his patriarchal regime. Rather, I find this novel asking the forgotten question, "And what of fatherhood?". In this sense, the novel raises questions that still need to be addressed, such as defining the emerging role of masculinity in the twenty-first century Spain. I believe that these are important questions for women writers to be asking if the goal is to involve men in the process of reconfiguring gender roles to be more just and inclusive.

Throughout this study I have let the texts speak for themselves while providing historical and theoretical support for the various uses of the urban space as portrayed by Spanish women writers. By attempting to draw connections between the urban space and Spanish narrative, I have aspired to demonstrate that the city plays a vital role in how women protagonists reconstitute their identities. In the final analysis, it was my hope to point to some of the new conceptualizations of the city space being considered by women writers. Sánchez's narrative plots present and future concerns for the urban centers of the Iberian peninsula. Her work widens the consideration of the spatial to include issues of masculinity, which, like femininity, holds its own set of discursive structures.

For the protagonists of this study, the city holds an indelible sway on identity formation. For the women protagonists, the city holds the key to self-expression. For Fran, the city is a reminder of his alienation and static existence. Both instances prove counterintuitive to how we have traditionally perceived the gendered city space. What

these Spanish women writers help demonstrate is that space can be reworked to incorporate new visions of gender that do not fall into prescriptive meanings of man or woman.

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